

scottish
ensemble



COURT & COUNTRY

WITH CHRIS STOUT & CATRIONA MCKAY

CONCERT PROGRAMME

Tue 13 March	Eden Court, Inverness
Wed 14 March	The Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock
Thu 15 March	Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Fri 16 March	Caird Hall, Dundee



THE PERFORMERS

Scottish Ensemble

<i>Leader</i>	Jonathan Morton*
<i>Violin</i>	Cheryl Crockett*, Clio Gould*, Liza Johnson
<i>Violin</i>	Daniel Pioro, Jo Green, Laura Ghiro, Abigail Young**
<i>Viola</i>	Jane Atkins, Andrew Berridge, Carol Ella
<i>Cello</i>	Naomi Pavri, Su-a Lee, Alice Allen
<i>Double Bass</i>	Diane Clark
<i>Harpsichord</i>	Jan Waterfield

Soloists

<i>Fiddle</i>	Chris Stout
<i>Scottish Harp</i>	Catriona McKay

* Violinists in Brandenburg Concerto

** One of this year's SE Young Artists: promising students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland selected to join us on tour – go to scottishensemble.co.uk/learning_for_details

THE PROGRAMME

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3

J. S. Bach (*with second movement by Sally Beamish*)

15 mins

Seavaigers

Sally Beamish

20 mins

interval (approx. 20 mins)

Violin Concerto in E Major

J. S. Bach

20 mins

Divertimento for Strings

Béla Bartók

25 mins

Dealer In Hope

Chris Stout [arr. Stout & McKay]

5-10 mins

All running times are approximate. The programme order was correct at time of printing; any changes will be announced from the stage.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, BWV 1048 (1708-1721)

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Andante (by Sally Beamish)
- 3 Allegro

In 1717, Bach was appointed Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen – a highly significant event in his life. The young Prince loved music and gave the equally young composer the freedom to compose the music he wanted to, and not just the standard ‘service music’ that would make up his commissions. It was during this time that so much of his most important, brilliant instrumental music was composed: the Unaccompanied Suites for Cello and the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin are prominent examples, as are the six instrumental pieces we now know as the Brandenburg Concertos.

In 1721, Bach compiled six pieces into one score and sent it away, full of hope, to a man called Christian Ludwig Margrave of Brandenburg. Margrave had seen Bach playing two years earlier and asked him to send some compositions. The composer duly dedicated these six, now extremely famous, works to him in the hope of showing Margrave exactly what he could do. There’s no evidence to show that Margrave ever sent a reply, or that he ever even heard them played (but, as history has shown us, it didn’t harm Bach’s career too much in the end).

The six pieces – each of them with a distinct personality, as if deliberately creating a musical portfolio of just what he could do with style and mood – are written in ‘concerto grosso’ form. It was a style pioneered by Italian composers, but which Bach took to new heights by giving solos to each instrumental family, creating unusual combinations of instruments and more.

The third concerto, in G major, was written for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and harpsichord. An interesting characteristic is that it doesn't have a notated second movement but instead a single bar with two chords in. Although there is actually no direct evidence to support it, it's generally accepted that Bach's intention was that these chords should surround, or follow, a cadenza improvised by a harpsichord or violin player. In modern performance, this gets interpreted in a variety of ways. For this concert, composer Sally Beamish has provided a second movement for fiddle, harp, harpsichord and string orchestra, which links and musically interweaves with the rest of the concert programme. [Rosie Davies]

Sally Beamish (1956 -) Seavaigers (2011)

- 1 Storm
- 2 Lament
- 3 Haven

Seavaigers is a collaboration between its composer, Sally Beamish, and two of the foremost soloists in the Celtic tradition, Chris Stout and Catriona McKay. The score leaves space for much

improvisation in the solo parts, and the piece was the result of many discussions and ideas from Sally, Chris and Catriona.

The title, meaning ‘Seafarers’, refers to both the seafaring people of the North Sea, and to the two soloists. The stretch of water between the two Northerly ports of Dundee, where Catriona is from, and Chris’ birthplace of Shetland has claimed countless lives over the centuries, but is also one of the most beautiful and romantic seascapes in the world, home to seabirds, whales, dolphins and endless changes of light and weather. Strong emotions are always connected to dangerous journeys, and this piece reflects the anticipation, fear, comradeship and adventure of sea voyaging.

The first movement, 'Storm', begins with a shimmering dawn over the water. After launching into a reel which becomes increasingly unsettled and harmonically dark, it resolves into optimism. The 'Lament' refers to many seafaring tragedies. The music consists of one very simple melody, which repeats and overlaps with varying ornamentation, written and improvised. The solo improvisations continue as the last movement begins, steering a final exhilarated course towards home. Just before the end, the opening music returns, as if land is in sight.

Seawaigers was commissioned by Celtic Connections and the Edinburgh International Harp Festival, with funding from Creative Scotland. It was first performed by Chris Stout, Catriona McKay and Scottish Ensemble, directed by Jonathan Morton, at Celtic Connections in the Fruitmarket, Glasgow, January 2012, and at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival, April 2012.

interval (approx. 20 mins)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) **Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042 (1717-1723)**

- 1 Allegro
- 2 Adagio
- 3 Allegro assai

Of all the pieces in today’s concert, Bach’s E major Violin Concerto is one of the furthest away from us in terms of time, but probably closest in terms of familiarity. Little is known about the work’s origins, however. Bach probably wrote the concerto between 1717 and 1723, while he was in charge of secular music at the court of Cöthen, and later revived the piece for performances with the Collegium Musicum ensemble that he led in Leipzig.

He almost certainly conceived the work's solo part for himself to play: although he was first trained as a keyboard player, he was also a skilled violinist. His son Carl Philipp Emanuel later wrote: “From his youth up to fairly old age, he played the violin purely and with a penetrating tone and thus kept the orchestra in top form, much better than he could have from the harpsichord.”

The concerto is extrovert in spirit, and written in the then-fashionable Italian style, sandwiching a slow movement between two fast ones. But the Italian influence doesn’t stop there. The first movement owes much to the three-part da capo form found in much Italian opera of the time, and its decisive E major opening chords, sparkling scales and brilliant, driving repeated notes bring Vivaldi and Corelli to mind. The solo violin is carefully integrated into the orchestral fabric

throughout the movement, emerging for solo displays of virtuosity. After a sudden change to C sharp minor for the introspective middle section, the soloist has a short cadenza before leading us back into the unmistakable opening music.

The slow movement is a poignant lament in C sharp minor, focused around a gently plodding theme in the lower strings above which the soloist floats an embellished aria of graceful nobility. The short final movement whizzes by in a flash, its easy-going, dancing melody alternating with contrasting episodes that put the soloist firmly in the spotlight – listen out for demanding double-stops in the third, and impetuous demisemiquavers in the fourth. [David Kettle]

Béla Bartók (1881 - 1945) **Divertimento for Strings, Sz.113 BB. 118 (1939)**

- 1 Allegro non troppo
- 2 Molto adagio
- 3 Allegro assai

Commissioned by one of the real heroes of 20th-century music, Paul Sacher – a Swiss music lover, conductor and patron who founded the Basel Chamber Orchestra in 1926 – Bartók wrote the Divertimento in 1939 on the eve of World War II. It was completed in 15 days in August while Bartók was staying at Sacher’s chalet in Switzerland; Sacher himself brought the news of war to Bartók, whereupon he returned to Budapest.

Because of the events surrounding its composition, commentators have looked for a political subtext in the music, particularly in the introspective slow movement. However, it seems more likely that Bartók was expressing grief for his mother, who was seriously ill. She eventually died that December, and Bartók was so distraught that he could not even go to the funeral. If the slow movement is dark, the outer movements are not. There is a gentleness and softness to them, but also light and life. [Svend Brown]

Chris Stout (1979 -) [arr. McKay and Stout] **Dealer In Hope (2017)**

Dealer In Hope is the latest iteration of a tune which began life as *Jon’s Stomp*. As part of its celebration of Jonathan Morton's 10th anniversary as Artistic Director and Leader in 2015, SE asked Chris Stout, a friend and previous collaborator, to write a tune. A fitting symbol of where Jon had led the group, and the innovative collaborations he had pursued, the melody was presented to Jon at a celebratory concert in May 2015, and duly played from the stage.

The idea and the melody then grew. Sitting down to work on it again, and with ‘some magic’ added by Catriona, it became *Dealer In Hope*, the second track on the pair’s new album, *Bare Knuckle*. The next task was to teach it to SE musicians to perform, but with a vital twist: they were going to do this without writing down a single note. Instead of simply transcribing the music and distributing this to the players, across 2017, the duo led a series of workshops in which the SE musicians learnt the piece entirely by ear.

Speaking about the sessions, Chris said: “That was a really important thing to do, as we didn’t have to start writing down the things that shouldn’t or couldn’t be written down, such as certain elements or styles. The SE players just used their natural musicality, and that was fundamental

to the sound of the music, because it sounded genuine. It didn't sound like a bunch of classical guys playing folk music or a bunch of folk guys playing classical – it sounded exactly as it should have, and felt really natural.”

A practice associated with traditional music playing, the idea of playing by ear comes from the fact that this music doesn't sound like it looks like on the paper, and is often played and learnt through feeling and freedom, not by a precise following of the notes. As a practice rooted in traditional playing, and far more rare in classical learning, this made for three challenging yet hugely satisfying workshops.

The title, a nod to Jon's position as leader of the string orchestra, refers to a quote from Napoléon Bonaparte: “a leader is a dealer in hope”. [Rosie Davies]

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



Chris Stout & Catriona McKay

Combining a respect for tradition with a spirit of experimentation, across the past twenty years of performing together, fiddler Chris Stout and harpist Catriona McKay have been merging and sculpting their roots in Scottish traditional music with their own fresh vision. With Chris hailing from the Fair Isle (Shetland Islands), and Catriona from Dundee, whilst their music is inspired by traditional roots, the result is very much their own – music celebrating freedom, music of stark beauty, music of driving and immediate energy, music to be shared in its intimate moment.

As well as three releases as a duo – *Laebrack* (2005), *White Nights* (2010) and most recently *Bare Knuckle* (2017) – Chris and Catriona have recorded a disc with Seamus Begley (2014) and Sally Beamish's *Seavaigers* with Scottish Ensemble, also released in 2014. To celebrate the release of *Bare Knuckle*, they performed a concert at Celtic Connections (18 January 2018) featuring a diverse selection of creative collaborators from their musical career to date, including Scottish Ensemble, King Creosote, Brazilian vocalist and body percussionist Marcelo Preto and more, to highly positive five and four-star reviews. The duo are also touring Scotland across March and April 2018.

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