



Wednesday 2 September 2020: 19:30

An introduction to Anna's music:

Anna Meredith's music is often described as 'uncategorisable'. When you've worked your way through the links below, you'll probably understand why.

Described as both a composer and producer, Anna is a creator whose works often combine and collide established categories: acoustic and electronic; audio and visual; composer and performer; 'classical' and 'pop'. Indeed, as these 'scare quotes' are meant to show, her works frequently make us question the need for any such categories at all.

However, in the spirit of our Musical Book Clubs – exploration, discovery and discussion – let's dig a little deeper as, if we hold these categories lightly in our minds as we listen to (and often watch) Anna's work, we'll find her compositions can often reveal a lot about how we normally think of music, both aesthetically and socially.

Take her 2016 composition 'ANNO', a commission by Scottish Ensemble, which boldly recontextualises Antonio Vivaldi's iconic 'Four Seasons' with new music for string orchestra and electronics. Performed live and in the round, this work is accompanied by projected animations by Anna's sister, visual artist Eleanor Meredith (who also creates the visuals for Anna's band – more on which in a moment).

Though one work is from three centuries ago, and one from just a little over three years ago, a remarkable fusion occurs between the compositions: because of a shared skill for unforgettable melodies, driving harmonic progressions and an absolute mastery of the short 3-5 minute form. Indeed, how Vivaldi builds many of the movements of the Four Seasons could be compared to the way many pop tracks are constructed – perhaps one source of their enduring popularity with modern audiences. (The Guardian has described Anna's work as 'majestic bangers'...perhaps Vivaldi could be similarly lauded!).

The immediacy and vibrancy of Anna's instrumental writing is matched by the playful, bright colours of the visuals that often accompany her music – evident throughout Anno, but also Five Telegrams, her 2019 composition for the BBC Proms and the music video for 'Paramour', a single from her band's acclaimed second album, FIBS. One of the things we can think about as we encounter Anna's work is the relationship between this recurring exploration of the relationship between the auditory and the visual, and what pairing one with the other can do for our experience of each.

On the surface, through their embrace of the latest technologies – from projections and augmented reality apps, to synthesisers and sequencers – Anna’s compositions may appear ultra-modern. And indeed they are. But, crucially, they do not break from the past in a destructive way, or deny the classical tradition from which they partly arise. Rather, by using classical instruments, forms and techniques in new ways, and in new surroundings – Anna’s music is able to shed a new light on the history of western classical music, and present a bright look into its future. Plus, it’s hard to imagine that Vivaldi wouldn’t have had a synthesiser or two in his collection if they had existed in his lifetime...!

Questions to Consider While Listening:

- **How do acoustic instruments and digital sounds interact?**
How does the sound of one affect our perception of the sound of other?
- **Why would you choose to write for a digital instrument?**
Or an acoustic one, for that matter?
- **What can digital instruments do that acoustic instruments cannot?**
And vice versa?
- **How do visuals affect your experience of listening to a piece of music?**
Do they clarify things? Or limit them?
- **What makes for an effective music video?**
Do we always need to see the performers performing?
- **What does a virtual/augmented reality music experience offer that a live performance cannot?**
And what about live performances can never be replicated?

Links:

**Anna Meredith &
Antonio Vivaldi:**

[Anno: Four Seasons](#) (the album)

[Anno: the Making Of](#) documentary

Anna Meredith

[Stoop \(Spring\)](#)

[Bloom \(Summer\)](#)

[Low Light \(Autumn\)](#)

[Solstice – Light Out \(Winter\)](#)

Paramour – [Music video](#)

Five Telegrams – [Live performance with visuals](#)

moonmoons – [The music](#)

moonmoons – [Making the Augmented Reality App](#)

moonmoons – [Download the app](#)