

James Gilchrist *tenor*Nathan Williamson *piano***Gustav Holst** (1874-1934)

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|---|------------------------------|------|
| 1 | A Vigil of Pentecost* | 2:48 |
| 2 | The Ballad of Hunting Knowe* | 1:54 |

From Twelve Humbert Wolfe Songs

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|---|-------------------|------|
| 3 | Persephone | 1:31 |
| 4 | A Little Music | 1:53 |
| 5 | The Dream-City | 4:25 |
| 6 | The Floral Bandit | 2:07 |
| 7 | Betelgeuse | 4:05 |

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

- | | | |
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| 8 | June Twilight | 2:51 |
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Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)

- | | | |
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| 12 | Down by the Salley Gardens | 2:34 |
| 13 | Snow | 2:36 |
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Frank Bridge (1879-1941)*Four Songs (1925)*

- | | | |
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| 17 | Speak to me, my love! | 5:57 |
| 18 | Dweller in my deathless dreams | 4:52 |
| 19 | Journey's End | 4:06 |

Total duration: 63:37

*First recordings

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Gustav Holst
including two
first recordings

Rebecca Clarke

Ivor Gurney

Frank Bridge

James Gilchrist *tenor*Nathan Williamson *piano*

This disc is the first of three volumes of British song composed over the last 100 or so years. Each volume will feature composers whose careers broadly covered one of the periods surrounding each of the two World Wars, and from 1960 onwards. Our threefold aim for the series is to demonstrate the tremendous richness, diversity, and individuality of British song, to represent repertoire which has been overshadowed (often for perfectly good reasons – being on a similar theme/setting similar texts, for example), and to more closely examine composers whose success in other genres has led to their songs being overlooked.

Sung music was at the centre of the so-called British music ‘Renaissance’ – the development of a distinctive British style by native composers in the late-19th and early-20th centuries – in such diverse forms as Elgar’s oratorios, Parry and Stanford’s liturgical music, parlour songs and Gilbert and Sullivan (although why British composers were less successful in ‘serious’ opera until 1945 is the subject for a different discussion).

Whereas British composers of chamber music and symphonic works are often seen within the long shadows of their German and French peers, British song has always been as idiomatically distinctive as those by their European counterparts. Indeed, there are few British composers who came to maturity in the first part of the 20th century who did not make a considerable and long-lasting contribution to the song repertoire – Walton is the most notable exception, unless you count *Façade* – and for many, song is the focus of their creative efforts, in a similar manner to composers like Hugo Wolf in Germany or France’s Henri Duparc.

Many of the early compositional efforts by the four composers on this disc were in song, but they continued in the genre throughout their lives. Of Rebecca Clarke’s entire output of 90 or so works, 53 are songs and another dozen choral works; Gustav Holst, whose other music was, in his lifetime (much to his disappointment) – and remains (much to our loss) – overshadowed by the sensational success of *The Planets*, wrote 98 songs, most of them unpublished to date; Frank Bridge composed nearly 70; Ivor Gurney, more particularly a song-composer (as well as a poet), over 300.

Born in the late 1800s but working predominantly in the 20th century, these four composers span a period of extraordinary social, cultural and political upheaval, the First World War being the most obvious but far from the only symptom of destructive forces which swept away so much from the past and ushered in so much of the new. In Britain, a unique mingling of diverse musical currents created a rich and fertile feeding ground of influences on which a new generation of composers could draw: not only the modernism of Debussy, Bartók and early Schoenberg, but a renewed appreciation of British folksong, and the rediscovery (literal, in many cases) of English music from the Renaissance and early Baroque which prompted the revisiting of modal harmonies in response to the then vociferous debate between tonality and atonality. Add the lingering influences of Edwardian marches, sacred music and ephemeral (if charming) salon instrumental miniatures, and the stage was set for the realization of an astonishingly varied, yet recognizably distinctive, British musical language.

Two songs by Gustav Holst, recorded here for the first time, demonstrate some of this diversity. **A Vigil of Pentecost** dates from 1914, the same year he began work on *The Planets*, and its opening bars are obviously a sketch for 'Venus'. It is interesting that the planet based on 'peace', so often the promise of religions, should have begun life setting an overtly sacred (if not conventionally Christian) text by Alice M. Buckton. But whereas in 'Venus' there is scarcely a cadence of any sort, in *Pentecost* Holst bookends these progressions with clear tonal cadences, creating a rather more formal liturgical and ceremonial atmosphere.

Setting words by E.A. Ramsden and composed in the 1920s, **The Ballad of Hunting Knowe** sets a devilish ghost story using the folk-fiddle language so deftly employed in the *St Paul's Suite* of 1913. *Hunting Knowe* presumably refers to what is now known as Hunters Knowe, an area of forest in the Scottish Borders laced by numerous tributaries of the River Tweed.

Imogen Holst described the **Twelve Humbert Wolfe Songs** as "possibly the turning-point in the journey towards the warmth of the music [Holst] wrote at the end of his life". They have a neo-classical freshness about them and, if not exactly poly-stylistic, certainly draw on a colourful range of images – particularly in 'The Floral Bandit' with its parodies of music by Schubert and Purcell. The songs depart from the old religions and supernatural superstitions, turning towards the clean lines of modernity and new worlds, 'The Dream-City' foreshadowing the post-war spirit of 1945 – was Nye Bevan, the begetter of the National Health Service, taking a cue from Wolfe, the 'Civil Service poet', in speeches like "We have

been the dreamers, now we shall be the builders"? Or anticipating adventures to come in space, where "birth they do not use nor death" – in 'Betelgeuse'? These songs were never intended as a cycle, and not published as a set until 1969, when the order was that chosen by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, who first recorded them earlier that year.

Rebecca Clarke's life story is an extraordinary one, with numerous twists and turns, some successes and many more disappointments. Yet the personality that could write such passionate and sumptuous music, share concert platforms with Myra Hess, Schnabel, Heifetz and Casals, endure patronizing neglect as a female composer and in her mid-fifties cheerfully take on work as a governess, of all things, still remains something of a mystery.

Born in Harrow in 1886, Clarke had a difficult, if musical, upbringing. Her dominating father, who would beat his children even for biting their fingernails, terminated her studies firstly at the Royal Academy of Music in 1905 after her harmony teacher proposed to her, and then again at the Royal College of Music in 1910 after a row (ironically enough) over his extra-marital affairs.

She embarked on an illustrious career as a violist and came of age as a composer with the Viola Sonata (1919) – "my one whiff of success", as she put it – and Piano Trio (1920) as well as many songs and choral works written during and after the same period. But she struggled for recognition and stopped composing at the end of the 1920s, bar a brief flourish of works around 1940, even though she lived until 1979. The splendid efforts of the Rebecca Clarke Society and musicologist

Liane Curtis in presenting a fuller picture of Clarke's work and life have been met with threats of legal action from her estate, and many compositions, as well as diaries, letters and other writings, remain unpublished.

Her music for voice may be on a less ambitious scale than her chamber works, but is of equally high quality, full of her trademark passion and imagination, with each work beautifully crafted and finished. The shorter songs in particular are technically brilliant, focussed miniatures. The harmonic and rhythmic ambiguity of *June Twilight* skilfully captures John Masefield's hazy summer scene while the opening two pages of *A Dream* use a haunting semi-tone motive to depict W.B. Yeats' vision of a solitary grave, with which the song also concludes with an air of resignation – in between are two totally unrelated bars of luscious, sensual harmonies for the words "she was more beautiful than thy first love".

Eight O'Clock sets one of A.E. Housman's most macabre and grizzly texts, with a chilling bell-like ostinato summing up the sense of impending doom. By contrast, *The Seal Man*, setting a Masefield prose text, is rather more expansive and balladic, featuring recitatives, dialogue, and a full-blooded central outpouring, all underpinned with haunting leitmotifs. It is surely one of the most thrilling English songs in the repertoire.

Ivor Gurney's life is as linked in the popular imagination to the Western Front as Beethoven's is to deafness, yet his studies at the Royal College had been interrupted by a breakdown in 1913. If there is any traction in the theory that the war might have spurred him on to greater achievements, it surely only points

to the foreboding of his condition pre-1914 (the notion that fighting in the trenches did anyone good being axiomatically ludicrous).

Written before the war, *Snow* (with a text by Edward Thomas) and *Sleep* (John Fletcher) are among his most powerful songs, indeed among the most powerful I know by any composer, and not just in this country. Just as Stanford said Gurney was unteachable, so I find him almost unanalysable. I am hypnotized by the terrible darkness of his songs, their depth of feeling and fragile, naive tenderness. Yet his music also displays a freshness and spontaneity which I cannot put my finger on. He seems to display almost no direct influences – I would say Schubert more than anyone – yet he does nothing overtly original either. His use of harmony, particularly in another Thomas setting, *Lights Out*, is in many senses flawed, meandering and repetitious. If it is intended as a portrait of an unravelling mind, it is so convincing as to make us believe he must himself be unravelling as he writes it.

A setting of Yeats' *Down by the Salley Gardens* is all the more affecting for its lucidity, calm acceptance and lack of sentimentality. His music is a complete one-off, existing purely on its own terms and succeeding or failing simply by its effect on the individual listener.

As Gurney the soldier was deeply affected by his active service, so Frank Bridge the pacifist responded to the horrors of the conflict with ever more ambitious, radical, and complex music. His *Four Songs* of 1925, setting three poems by Rabindranath Tagore and one of Humbert Wolfe (Holst also set the same text),

are “still full of the warmth of his pre-war works”, as Peter J. Pirie puts it. Certainly, they are far less harmonically ambitious than his Piano Sonata (1924) or the later String Quartets, but the sense of space which pervades them speaks of emptiness rather than any peace or relaxation. They are often performed with orchestra, for which it seems likely they were conceived, the piano part reading more like an orchestral reduction and the long-breathed vocal lines closer to opera or oratorio than the salon.

After the heightened romanticism of the opening three songs, the last, ‘Journey’s End’ – the sole Wolfe setting in the quartet – is a simple lullaby, with comforting, lilting rhythms throughout, except in the final outburst at the start of the poem’s last line. The questions posed by the text – where do I sleep?, who will look after me?, what happens in the morning? – are those of a nervous child left at boarding school for the first time, so affecting in their innocent naivety, and the implied reward for his suffering is nothing more (or less) than peaceful rest. I have no doubt Bridge addressed this song to the generation of shattered individuals, Gurney among them, who returned from the Western Front. After all the heroism shown in war, they are in the last analysis simply a group of boys (or ‘lads’, as Housman described them) looking for rest. Most have interpreted the final lines – “you are not called when journey’s done” – as death. I see it as more comforting. They are, finally, going to be left alone in peace.

Nathan Williamson © 2020

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)

1 *A Vigil of Pentecost*

(Alice M. Buckton, 1867-1944)

Listen! The shores of other climes with golden songs are ringing!
Listen! The breezes of the dawn their heaven-borne echoes bringing!
Bow down! and bow the heart and knee tonight in worship lowly,
Bow down and hear earth’s children sing the songs of joy most holy!
They come in waves of white-robed wonder
Over hill and ocean they come!
And all the races rise to follow in their motion.
Hail them! the name they cry is one,
And one the heavenly story!
Hail them and join O soul tonight to theirs,
Thy song of glory.

2 *The Ballad of Hunting Knowe*

(E.A. Ramsden, 1860-94)

Why dost thou tremble so, my Burd,
Why dost thou look so lorn?
Mother, on Hunting Knowe I heard
The Magic Hunter's horn
Call Away! Away! Away!

I saw him on his coal black horse,
His nostrils fiery dints,
He made no sound among the gorse,
But fire flew from the flints.

His girt black hound beside him ran,
And I was sore afraid.
He touched me with his coal black han,
He scared thy little maid,
Calling Away! Away! Away!

The maiden caught her mother's hand,
She trembled more and more.
Mother, he comes from Shadowland,
I hear him at the door!
Calling Away! Away! Away!

Tis' nothing but the mill, my Burd,
The mill wheel turning fast!
Mother, it was his voice I heard,
He calls as he rides past,
Calling Away! Away! Away!

Lie down, my maid, and never fear,
Mother her watch will keep.
No wicked thing's a coming near,
Lie down my maid and sleep.

The maiden slept, the mother wept,
But when they both were still,
A girt hound from the upland crept,
And waited by the mill,
Calling Away! Away! Away!

And when the night mists softly stole
Over the valley farms,
A ghost rode over the Hunting Knowe
With a maiden in his arms.
Gone away, away, away!

From **Twelve Humbert Wolfe Songs**

(Humbert Wolfe, 1885-1940)

3 *Persephone*

Come back Persephone!
As a moonflake thin,
Flutes for the dancers
You danced with begin.

Leave the deep hellebore,
The dark, the untranquil -
For spring's pale primrose
And her first jonquil.

Again they are singing
(O will you not heed them?)
with none now to answer,
and none to lead them.

They will grow older,
'Till comes a day
When the last of your maidens
Is tired of play:

When the song as it rises
Faints and droops over,
And your playmates go seeking
A gentler lover.

Listen the dancers!
The flutes oh listen!
Hasten Persephone!
Persephone! Hasten!

4 *A Little Music*

Since it is evening,
Let us invent
Love's undiscovered
Continent.

What shall we steer by,
Having no chart
But the deliberate
Fraud of the heart?

How shall we find it?
Beyond what keys
Of boyhood's Spanish
Piracies,

False Eldorados
Dim with the tears
Of beauty, the last
Of the buccaneers?

Since it is evening,
Let us design
What shall be utterly
Yours and mine.

There will be nothing
That ever before
Beckoned the sail
Or from any shore.

Trees shall be greener
By mountains more pale,
Thrushes out-singing
The nightingale,

Flowers now butterflies,
Now in the grass,
Suddenly quiet
As painted glass,

And fishes of emerald
Dive for the moon,
Whose silver is stained
By the peacock lagoon.

Since it is evening,
And sailing weather,
Let us set out
For the dream together;

Set for the landfall,
Where love and verse
Enfranchise forever
The travellers.

5 *The Dream-City*

On a dream-hill we'll build our city,
And we'll build gates that have two keys –
Love to let in the vanquished, and pity
To close the locks that shelter these.

There will be quiet open spaces,
And shady towers sweet with bells,
And quiet folks with quiet faces,
Walking among these miracles.

There'll be a London Square in Maytime
With London lilacs, whose brave light
Startles with coloured lamps the daytime,
With sudden scented wings the night.

A silent Square could but a lonely thrush
On the lilacs bear to cease
His song, and no sound else –
Save only the traffic of the heart at peace.

And we will have a river painted
With the dawn's wistful stratagems
Of dusted gold, and night acquainted
With the long purples of the Thames.

And we will have – oh yes! the gardens
Kensington, Richmond Hill and Kew,
And Hampton, where winter scolds, and pardons
The first white crocus breaking through.

And where the great their greatness squander,
And while the wise their wisdom lose,
Squirrels will leap, and deer will wander,
Gracefully, down the avenues.

6 *The Floral Bandit*

Beyond the town – oh far! beyond it
She walks – that lady – have you seen her?
That thief of spring, that floral bandit
Who leaves the grass she walks on greener.

And she can sing – the blackbirds hear her –
Those little coals with throats of flame –
And they can find, alighting near her,
No sweeter practice than her name.

What is her name? O ask the linnet,
For human tongue would strive in vain
To speak the buds uncrumpling in it,
And the small language of the rain.

Who is this lady? What is she?
The Sylvia all our swains adore?
Yes, she is that unchangingly,
But she is also something more.

For buds at best are little green
Keys on an old thin clavichord,
That only has the one high tune –
That, since the first, all springs have heard.

And all first love with the same sighing
Tunes, though more sweetly touched, has lingered,
As though he were forever trying
Toccatas Purcell might have fingered.

But no one knows her range nor can
Guess half the phrases of her fiddle,
The lady who fore ev'ry man
Breaks off her music in the middle.

7 *Betelgeuse*

On Betelgeuse
The gold leaves hang in golden aisles
For twice a hundred million miles,
And twice a hundred million years
They golden hang and nothing stirs,
On Betelgeuse.

Space is a wind that does
Not blow on Betelgeuse,
And time – oh time – is a bird,
Whose wings have never stirred
The golden avenues of leaves
On Betelgeuse.

On Betelgeuse
There is nothing that joys or grieves
The unstirred multitude of leaves,
Nor ghost of evil or good haunts
The gold multitude
On Betelgeuse.

And birth they do not use
Nor death on Betelgeuse,
And the God, of whom we are
Infinite dust, is there
A single leaf of those
Gold leaves on Betelgeuse.

REBECCA CLARKE (1886-1979)

8] *June Twilight*

(John Masefield, 1878-1967)

The twilight comes;
The sun dips down and sets,
The boys have done
Play at the nets.

In a warm golden glow
The woods are steeped.
The shadows grow;
The bat has cheeped.

Sweet smells the new-mown hay;
The mowers pass
Home, each his way,
Through the grass.

The night-wind stirs the fern,
A night-jar spins;
The windows burn
In the inns.

Dusky it grows. The moon! The dews descend.
Love, can this beauty in our hearts end?

9] *The Seal Man*

(John Masefield, 1878-1967)

And he came by her cabin to the west of the road, calling.
There was a strong love came up in her at that,
And she put down her sewing on the table, and "Mother," she says,
"There's no lock, and no key, and no bolt, and no door.
There's no iron, nor no stone, nor anything at all
Will keep me this night from the man I love."
And she went out into the moonlight to him,
There by the bush where the flow'rs is pretty, beyond the river.
And he says to her: "You are all of the beauty of the world,
Will you come where I go, over the waves of the sea?"
And she says to him: "My treasure and my strength," she says,
"I would follow you on the frozen hills, my feet bleeding".
Then they went down into the sea together,
And the moon made a track on sea, and they walked down it;
It was like a flame before them. There was no fear at all on her;
Only a great love like the love of the Old Ones,
That was stronger than the touch of the fool.
She had a little white throat, and little cheeks like flowers,
And she went down into the sea with her man,
Who wasn't a man at all.
She was drowned, of course.
It's like he never thought that she wouldn't bear the sea like himself.
She was drowned, drowned.

10 *A Dream*

(W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939)

I dreamed that one had died in a strange place
Near no accustomed hand;
And they had nailed the boards above her face,
The peasants of that land,
And, wond'ring, planted by her solitude
A cypress and a yew:
I came, and wrote upon a cross of wood,
Man had no more to do:
"She was more beautiful than thy first love,
This lady by the trees",
And gazed upon the mournful stars above,
And heard the mournful breeze.

11 *Eight O'Clock*

(A.E. Housman, 1859-1936)

He stood, and heard the steeple
Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people
It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,
He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;
And then the clock collected in the tower
Its strength, and struck.

IVOR GURNEY (1890-1937)

12 *Down by the Salley Gardens*

(W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939)

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

13 *Snow*

(Edward Thomas, 1878-1917)

In the gloom of whiteness
In the great silence of snow,
A child was sighing and bitterly saying; "Oh,
They have killed a white bird
Up there on her nest,
The down is fluttering from her breast!"
And still it fell through that dusky brightness
On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

14 *Lights Out*

(Edward Thomas, 1878-1917)

I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way, however straight,
Or winding, soon or late;
They cannot choose.

Here love ends,
Despair, ambition ends;
All pleasure and all trouble,
Although most sweet or bitter,
Here ends in sleep that is sweeter
Than tasks most noble.

There is not any book
Or face of dearest look
That I would not turn from now
To go into the unknown
I must enter, and leave, alone,
I know not how.

15 *Sleep*

(John Fletcher, 1579-1625)

Come, Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving
Lock me in delight awhile;
Let some pleasing dream beguile
All my fancies; that from thence
I may feel an influence
All my powers of care bereaving.

Though but a shadow, but a sliding,
Let me know some little joy!
We that suffer long annoy
Are contented with a thought
Through an idle fancy wrought:
O let my joys have some abiding!

FRANK BRIDGE (1879-1941)

Four Songs (1925)

16 *Day after day*

(Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941)

Day after day he comes and goes away.
Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.
If he asks who was it that sent it,
I entreat you do not tell him my name –
For he only comes and goes away.

He sits on the dust under the tree.
Spread there a seat with flowers and leaves, my friend.
His eyes are sad, and they bring sadness to my heart.
He does not speak what he has in mind;
He only comes and goes away.

17 *Speak to me, my love!*

(Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941)

Speak to me, my love!
Tell me in words what you sang.
The night is dark.
The stars are lost in clouds.
The wind is sighing through the leaves.
I will let loose my hair.
My blue cloak will cling round me like night.
I will clasp your head to my bosom;
And there in the sweet loneliness
Murmur on your heart.
I will shut my eyes and listen.
I will not look in your face.
When your words are ended,
We will sit still and silent.
Only the trees will whisper in the dark.
The night will pale.
The day will dawn.
We shall look at each other's eyes
And go on our different paths.
Speak to me, my love!
Tell me in words what you sang.

18 *Dweller in my deathless dreams*

(Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941)

You are the evening cloud
floating in the sky of my dreams.
I paint you and fashion you
Ever with my love longings.
You are my own, my own,
Dweller in my endless dreams!

Your feet are rosy-red
With the glow of my heart's desire,
Gleaner of my sunset songs!
Your lips are bitter-sweet
With the taste of my wine of pain.
You are my own, my own,
Dweller in my lonesome dreams!

With the shadow of my passion
Have I darkened your eyes,
Haunter of the depth of my gaze!
I have caught you and wrapt you,
My love, in the net of my music.
You are my own, my own,
Dweller in my deathless dreams!

19 *Journey's End*

(Humbert Wolfe, 1885-1940)

What will they give me, when journey's done?
Your own room to be quiet in, Son!

Who shares it with me? There is none
Shares that cool dormitory, Son!

Who turns the sheets? There is but one
And no one needs to turn it, Son!

Who lights the candle? Everyone
Sleeps without candle all night, Son!

Who calls me after sleeping? Son!
You are not called when journey's done.



Photograph: Patrick Allen

JAMES GILCHRIST began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time career in music in 1996. His musical interest was fired at a young age, singing first as a chorister in the choir of New College, Oxford and later as a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge.

James' extensive concert repertoire has seen him perform in major concert halls throughout the world with conductors including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington and the late Richard Hickox. He is considered a master of English music, and equally at home in Baroque repertoire – the *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* feature prominently in his schedule.

James' impressive discography includes recordings of *Albert Herring* (title role) for Chandos, *St John Passion* with the AAM and the critically-acclaimed recordings of Schubert's song cycles for Orchid Classics.

Recent highlights include *St Matthew Passion* with both Tafelmusik Baroque in Toronto, and Kings College Cambridge as part of Stephen Cleobury's final Easter week as Director of Music, Haydn's *Creation* with Dallas Symphony Orchestra and for a staged production with Garsington Opera and Ballet Rambert, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

In the 2019-20 season, appearances include the role of Rev. Adams *Peter Grimes* with Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner at Den Norske Opera, Oslo, and Grieghallen in Bergen. Elsewhere on the concert platform, James joins Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki for a tour of Europe, and *St Matthew Passion* with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Egarr.

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Raising the profile of women composers



Photograph: Mark Witter

NATHAN WILLIAMSON leads an individual career as pianist, composer, teacher and artistic director. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Oxford, and Yale, where he also held a prestigious fellowship.

Nathan recently celebrated Beethoven's 250th anniversary with a cycle of the complete Piano Concertos with the Prometheus Orchestra in Aldeburgh. He has recently performed at many leading venues including Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw, Barbican Centre, and the Aldeburgh, Lucerne, and

Bolzano festivals. He is a member of the new music ensemble, Piano Circus, artists-in-residence at London's Brunel University, who have commissioned over 100 new works and regularly tour internationally.

Nathan has developed a close relationship with SOMM Recordings. Their first CD, *Great American Sonatas* (2017), was hailed by Musical Opinion as "a landmark in recordings of American piano music" and *Colour and Light* (2019), of British 20th-century piano repertoire, was chosen as Album of the Month in International Piano Quarterly: "No praise could be high enough for Williamson's performances... he unearths musical treasure beyond price".

Recent compositions include a major song cycle for tenor James Gilchrist, a Cello Sonata for Charles Watt, and a children's opera for the Mahogany Opera Group's ground-breaking *Snappy Operas* project. Nathan has also been commissioned by Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra, Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, Bury St Edmund's Cathedral and his work has been recorded by NOW Ensemble (New Amsterdam) and Piotr Szewczyk (Navona Records).

Nathan lives in Southwold, on the Suffolk coast, where he founded and directs the Southwold Concert Series and the Southwold Music Trust, seeking to make music a central part of the local community through performance and education initiatives. He is director of the Alwyn Music Festival, staging events with a strong emphasis on contemporary and 20th-century British music across Suffolk.

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 [YouTube https://bit.ly/3hUT2Zv](https://bit.ly/3hUT2Zv)