

# THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY

Featuring

COMPOSERS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Presents a Concert of

# New Chamber Music

On Romantic Themes

Violin: Leora Cohen, Arpan Sharma | Viola: Alexander Gunasekera  
Cello: Alex Lau | Piano: Murray Chapman

Wednesday 12 June 2019 | 6 PM

St John's College Old Divinity School



THE  
PHOENIX SOCIETY

ADMISSION FREE



# **New Chamber Music**

## **On Romantic Themes**

<b>El grito</b>	<b>By Vivek Haria</b>
<b>Hadean Rondo</b>	<b>By Rajan Lal</b>
<b>The Conquests of Zeus</b>	<b>By Oliver Rudland</b>
<b>Neverendum</b>	<b>By Ignacio Mañá Mesas</b>
<b>Meditation</b>	<b>By Alex Lau</b>
<b>Paeon</b>	<b>By Maxim Meshkvicev</b>
<b>Quintet</b>	<b>By Richard Woods Rogan</b>



**Old Divinity School, St John's College, Cambridge.**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019, 6.00pm**

## THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY:

Senior Associate: Professor Sir Roger Scruton, FBA, FRSL

Senior Musical Associate: Timothy Brown

Senior Treasurer: Dr Alan Howard

Artistic Director: Oliver Rudland

Secretary: Rajan Lal

Publicity Officer: Ignacio Mañá Mesas

Junior Treasurer: Richard Woods Rogan

Concert Manager: Sebastian Blount

Social Secretary: Rebekah Sturge

*The Phoenix Music Society* was founded in 2017 at the University of Cambridge by Oliver Rudland, Sebastian Blount, Rajan Lal and Rebekah Sturge to nurture the composition, performance and promotion of new tonal music.

We are a group dedicated to the discussion, creation and performance of tonal music who aim to create an open and viable environment for the creation of music, which is genuinely tonal in nature - rooted in the past, whilst looking to the future.

The society takes its lead from thinkers such as the American composer Steve Reich, who has written, 'the reality of cadence to a key or modal center is basic in all the music of the world (Western and non-Western). This reality is also related to the primacy of the intervals of the fifth, fourth, and octave in all the world's music as well as in the physical acoustics of sound. Similarly for the regular rhythmic pulse.'

So far the society has produced three successful concerts:

*Musical Fables*; a concert of new orchestral music at the Fitzwilliam College Auditorium conducted by Mark Biggins, chorusmaster for English National Opera.

*Encounters with Persian Verse, Art & Music*; an evening of new vocal chamber music and poetry readings with the Iranian Duo, Nasim-e Tarab, and the Ligeti String Quartet.

*WWI Armistice Centenary Concert*; a commemorative concert of new choral and orchestral music with choral scholars from Gonville & Caius, St John's, Queen's, Homerton and Selwyn Colleges at Great St. Mary's, the University Church, Cambridge.



DERIVATIONES MELIUS QUAM UTOPIA

## THE PHOENIX CHAMBER ENSEMBLE:

<b>Violin I</b>	<b>Leora Cohen</b>
<b>Violin II</b>	<b>Arpan Sharma</b>
<b>Viola</b>	<b>Alexander Gunasekera</b>
<b>Violoncello</b>	<b>John Hutchinson</b>
<b>Piano</b>	<b>Murray Chapman</b>

***El grito*** for string trio  
by Vivek Haria

Violin: Arpan Sharma, Viola: Alexander Gunasekera, Violoncello: Alex Lau

***Hadean Rondo*** for violin and piano  
by Rajan Lal

Violin: Leora Cohen, Piano: Rajan Lal

***The Conquests of Zeus*** for violoncello and piano  
by Oliver Rudland

Violoncello: Alex Lau, Piano: Murray Chapman

***Neverendum*** for violin duo and piano  
by Ignacio Mañá Mesas

Violin I: Leora Cohen, Violin II: Arpan Sharma, Piano: Murray Chapman

***Meditation*** for piano quartet  
by Alex Lau

Violin I: Arpan Sharma, Viola: Alexander Gunasekera,  
Violoncello: John Hutchinson, Piano: Alex Lau

***Paeon*** for string quartet  
by Maxim Meshkvicev

Violin I: Leora Cohen, Violin II: Arpan Sharma,  
Viola: Alexander Gunasekera, Violoncello: John Hutchinson

***Quintet*** for piano quintet  
by Richard Woods Rogan

Violin I: Leora Cohen, Violin II: Arpan Sharma,  
Viola: Alexander Gunasekera, Violoncello: John Hutchinson  
Piano: Richard Woods Rogan

## PROGRAMME NOTES:

*El grito* for string trio  
by Vivek Haria

Lorca is one of my literary heroes and I wanted to reflect the different ways in which 'torment' permeates this poem by not only giving each part its own soloistic moments, but also by varying the timbral qualities within the String Trio.

Metric ambiguity and jagged rhythms are prominent from the outset. They are just a few of the features associated with themes of distress and pain typically found in the Spanish 'Cante Jondo' genre.

EL GRITO

(*THE CRY*)

La elipse de un grito va de monte  
a monte.

*The arc of a cry curves from hill to hill.*

Desde los olivos,  
será un arco iris negro sobre la noche azul.

*From the olive trees, a black rainbow over the blue night.*

¡Ay!

*Ay!*

Como un arco de viola, el grito ha hecho vibrar largas cuerdas del viento.

*Like a viola's bow,  
the cry has made the long strings of the wind vibrate.*

¡Ay!

*Ay!*

(Las gentes de las cuevas asoman sus velones.)

*(The people of the caves put their oil lamps out.)*

¡Ay!

*Ay!*

***Hadean Rondo*** for violin and piano

by Rajan Lal

This short piece for violin and piano employs a fairly typical arch model, framing an inner Saint-Saens inspired Rondo with two ethereal sections that quote the (in)famous Cesar Franck Violin Sonata. The central point of my arch offers the most stable and functional tonal language in the keys of F major and E-flat, both chromatic neighbours to the home key, with the two outer ethereal frames gradually meandering towards stable tonality in the first instance and gradually allowing it to dissipate in the second. Thus, the arch form present is not only thematic, but part of a calculated harmonic plan.

Many thanks to Leora for her continued advice as this project has progressed and most of all for joining me on stage this evening to premiere the work!

***The Conquests of Zeus*** for violoncello and piano

by Oliver Rudland

- I. Leda
- II. Danae
- III. Europa
- IV. Semele

Each movement of this sonata for cello and piano depicts a scene from Greek mythology involving an encounter between Zeus (most often the cello) and a mortal woman (most often the piano).

In the first movement, Leda, who is quietly singing to herself beside a stream, is approached by Zeus in the form of a giant swan; she becomes increasingly fearful as he swims menacingly towards her. After forcing his great mass of flapping feathers and serpent-like neck upon her, Zeus departs guiltily, leaving a teary Leda behind, humming her once innocent tune again.

The slow movement depicts Zeus appearing as a shower of gold to a desperate and lonely Danae, locked away in a dark cavernous prison by an over-protective father. Zeus' golden transformation envelops her sensually and tenderly in an expression of consensual love.

A precursor to the horrors of the Minotaur is the encounter between Zeus (in the form of a bull) and the carefree Europa who is seduced by his beauty and mildness, and whisked away across the expansive sea to Crete. Their unlikely union is the subject of the scherzo-like third movement, which uses playful gestures in the cello to imitate the lowing of a bull and skittish exuberance in the piano accompaniment to depict Zeus' mesmerised dancing partner.

In the final movement the conquest is reversed, as Semele triumphs over Zeus' will by convincing him to reveal his true self. Three times Zeus forebodingly warns that to do so would destroy her, but Semele's persistent pleading wins him over. Having transformed himself back into the thunder-god of old, Semele's life evaporates away. Zeus' previous laughter at Semele's charms is mournfully transfigured into tears as he laments over the dead body of his doomed mistress.

Many thanks indeed to Murray and Alex for much dedicated work on this piece.

***Neverendum*** for violin duo and piano  
by Ignacio Mañá Mesas

The original title of this piece (**1.X.2017**) is a reference to the date of the Catalan independence referendum in Spain.

My intention was to portray the process of estrangement between two distinct political identities, aggravated by unfruitful dialogue and lack of understanding, which may ultimately have led to an irreversible loss of unity.

The first section of the piece establishes the piano and the violins as two contrasting personalities, incarnating the Spanish and Catalan nationalism, respectively. The disagreement is displayed in the antiphonal interchange between both groups, by means of using different tempi, dynamics and thematic material. The music in the second section depicts the subsequent riots and violent confrontations between Catalan nationalists and the police. Finally, the last section features the Spanish national anthem in a bitonal canon and...an apparent reconciliation?

***Meditation*** for piano quartet  
by Alex Lau

About two years ago, or so, I had (what seemed like) an especially deep meditation session, after which I immediately wrote the first section or so of this slow second movement of my piano quartet in three movements. I wanted to capture (not represent) a moment; and the feelings that were experienced within it. It is hard to produce a written account of what those feelings were exactly -- indeed attempting to communicate them through sound is one of the main objectives of music for me.

The structure of the meditation (and by extension my conception of language) largely informed the pacing of the piece. We begin with an introduction, led by the piano, in which the idea of a falling major third is introduced. This could be thought to signify a sort of induction. The viola then states the first of the two main themes. This theme is inspired by speech. It has a somewhat free phrase structure and visits a few different metres. The second theme is introduced in the piano and is decidedly in four; the degree of freedom now being tonality. It has a more mobile quality which gives way to some development. Some modulations and quotes from the first and last movements later, we reach a culmination point opening up the way for a point of stillness and it's time to return home. There are a few small alterations in the reprise of the first theme. The coda has a somewhat darker colour and anticipates some melodic material to appear in the rather more extrovert last movement.

***Paeon*** for string quartet  
by Maxim Meshkvichev

The first thing that may be noticed when *Paeon* begins is the minimalist nature of the music. The inspiration for this came from the title of the work, which means a 'song of praise', and may seem rather odd considering that the title comes almost always after the inception of the music. My mind had always been set on writing a jubilant and exalting piece for string quartet, and the one theme which drew me into writing what I did was the constant flow of the music, a constant outpouring of joy and happiness. The hushed intensity from the onset allows for the later sections to explode into jubilation, and the final flourish of chords, seemingly placed randomly and at odd time intervals, create a sense of expectation and excitement, which only personal imagination can provide. The middle section is much more subdued in nature, and can be likened to a chorale or hymn, tuning back to the idea of a 'song of praise'. The bed of held notes is pierced every so often by accented dissonances, and the first violin ostinato later on subverts the textural basis, with the hymn-like melody continuing on underneath, moving from voice to voice.

***Quintet*** for piano quintet  
by Richard Woods Rogan

This piece aims to create a dreamlike and disconcerting experience for the listener, presenting familiar musical idioms of household names such as Satie and Rachmaninoff with idioms that I can perhaps take credit for myself.

One bar of piano music, inspired by Liszt, was the seed that turned into a four bar motif that occurs twice in this piece. This motif in turn inspired two themes which govern the structure of the whole piece, each being presented alone before merging in a climactic orgy of late nineteenth century harmony. These are sandwiched between two spiralling sequences that start and end the piece, creating an episodic work written in a variety of harmonic languages.

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

We are deeply grateful to:

- St John's College for the use of the Main Lecture Theatre and Central Hall.
- Sally Sheppard and Sarah Hardy at St John's College for their efficient administrative assistance, and for organising the drinks reception.
- Gonville & Caius College, Christ's College and Selwyn College for the use of the Ruth Mott Room, Christ's Chapel and Selwyn Hall for the purposes of rehearsals.
- And last, but certainly not least, all of the players for giving up so much valuable time to rehearse the pieces during the stressful exam term!

## BIOGRAPHIES:

After gaining scholarships to study at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, **Leora Cohen** decided to attend Cambridge University, becoming leader of the University Orchestra and an Instrumental Award holder in her first year. In 2017 Leora led both the Chamber and Symphony orchestras at the Royal College of Music junior department as well as the National Youth Orchestra of GB, performing with Thomas Adès at the BBC Proms and touring to France to perform as part of Festival Berlioz. She also co-led the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at the Barbican in 2017 under Daniele Gatti. Leora has performed chamber music at the Wigmore Hall, Kings Place and on BBC Radio 3.

She made her solo debut at St Johns Smith Square playing Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* in 2016 and has performed many other concertos with orchestra since. In Cambridge, Leora has not only performed numerous recitals, but also concertos such as Vivaldi's Winter from the *Four Seasons* at Selwyn College, Bach Brandenburg Concerto No.5 in West Road Concert Hall and Mozart's third violin concerto with the 2020 orchestra for their inaugural concert. This summer Leora will be a part of Bowdoin Festival, USA and will join the London Sinfonietta for a concert in July. Leora is currently in her second year at Newnham College and studies violin privately with Ani Schnarch.



**Arpan Sharma** is currently a third year medic at Caius. Born and raised in Birmingham, he began playing the violin at the age of five as a member of the Young Strings Project at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. When he was eleven, he won an academic and music scholarship at King Edward's School, Birmingham, where he was a member of the Symphony Orchestra, and had the opportunity to play the solo violin part in the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto during his final year. He was also a first violinist in the National Children's Orchestra for five years and the National Youth Orchestra in 2013. In his first year at Cambridge, he was a member of the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra (CUCO, now CUO). He has also performed in several of the Gonville & Caius Music Society concerts, and this year, he served on the committee as the joint Orchestral Manager. In addition, he performed with the Phoenix Society for the first time on Remembrance Sunday last year and is looking forward to performing with them again tonight. Aside from music, Arpan enjoys football and cricket, and plays badminton once a week.



**Murray Chapman** is a second-year music student and pianist at Selwyn College. Since achieving a Distinction for his DipABRSM performance diploma in 2016, he has always been an ambitious performer attempting challenging repertoire. Having three times received prizes in the Norfolk Young Musician of the Year competition, he had the opportunity in 2017 to perform Grieg's Piano Concerto with the Norfolk County Youth Orchestra, in which he was a regular percussionist. His most proud performances, however, have been a series of solo piano recitals in Norwich, raising over £4000 for the charity Tearfund, the most recent of which was in January. Since arriving in Cambridge, Murray has enjoyed chances to perform in chamber and orchestral concerts as a pianist and percussionist, and also the opportunity to use his skills as part of the worship team at Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge.



**Vivek Haria** is a first-year undergraduate music student at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. As a composer, his works have been performed at The Winchelsea Arts Festival and the Royal College of Music, by the award winning Vasara Quartet, the Parry Voices Choir and Marie Sato (BBC Young Musician Woodwind Category Finalist 2018). He has received mentoring from internationally renowned composers including Mark Anthony Turnage, Robin Holloway, Michael Finnissy and Gregory Rose. His solo flute piece, *Bansuri*, which embraces elements of Indian Classical Music, was shortlisted in the BBC Proms Inspire Competition 2017 with the judges praising the “skill and imagination” of his work.

Currently a Choral Scholar in Gonville and Caius Choir, Vivek participated in the Classical Vocal programme of the Aberystwyth Summer Music Festival 2018 and featured as a soloist with the Dorian Chamber Orchestra in October. He has performed solos in Salzburg Cathedral, St Peter’s Basilica (The Vatican) and The Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. As well as partaking in a number of premiered works at the Royal College of Music’s Junior Department, Vivek’s own setting of *Ubi Caritas* was also performed there. In February 2018, Vivek had the privilege of participating in a Vocal Masterclass given by renowned British Baritone, Roderick Williams.

Alongside singing and composition, he has recently begun conducting and even directed a performance of Handel’s Coronation Anthems earlier this year. Whilst Vivek is uncertain about the musical discipline he would like to pursue after University, this is his first concert with *The Phoenix Music Society* and hopes it will not be his last!



**Rajan Lal** is a second-year undergraduate music student at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge.

He began learning the piano aged six with Nissho Astridge and later David Sams, with original aspirations to a concert performance career. These quickly denatured with the discovery of improvisation at aged ten and the realisation that he could combine this individuality with the rigours of classical training to produce original music for the concert hall. Following finalist appearances in the RPTS duet prize and Kent International piano course competitions, as well as the titles of both Mid-Kent and Medway young musician of the year 2016, Rajan said farewell to performing almost entirely and focussed on achieving his academic dream of a place at Cambridge University.

This is his fourth concert with *The Phoenix Music Society*. Previous performances include his tone poem for full Symphony orchestra: *The Transformation of Nebuchadnezzar*, written for the Society's inaugural *Musical Fables* concert in Lent Term last academic year, as well as his setting of Rumi's *Reality and Appearance* for the Ligeti String Quartet, harp and tenor voice. Rajan also set John Macrae's poem, *In Flanders Fields* for the Phoenix choir and orchestra during November 2018 as part of the society's *WWI Armistice Centenary Concert*.

Rajan acts as both society orchestral manager and secretary, and enjoys conducting his college orchestra and chorus in their termly concerts.



**Oliver Rudland** was born in West Yorkshire in 1983, and is well known for his modern, yet accessible, style of composition.

He began his musical life performing in local brass bands, orchestras and youth opera companies around Leeds. He went on to study composition with Joseph Horowitz and Huw Watkins, piano with Niel Immelman and conducting with Patrick Bailey at the Royal College of Music as a Foundation Scholar, and subsequently at the University of Cambridge, where he now teaches harmony, counterpoint, orchestration and composition.

His orchestral music has been played in master-classes directed by Sir James MacMillan, Colin Matthews and Mark-Anthony Turnage, and he has had chamber works performed at the Cheltenham International Music Festival, the Southbank Centre, and the DiMenna Center (New York City), as well as at many other venues and festivals across the USA and Europe. In 2008, his *Settings of Innocence and Experience* was commissioned for the Gonville and Caius College Choir, which was included as an anthem for choral evensong. Oliver was the composer-in-residence with the London Choral Sinfonia, directed by Michael Waldron, from 2015-16, who performed two newly commissioned works at St John's Smith Square, London.

As well as being a composer, Oliver is also a librettist and director. He has been closely involved with the staged production of all three of his operas: *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Carriageworks Theatre, Leeds, producer), *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark* (The University Church, Cambridge, producer and director), and *Pincher Martin* (Royal College of Music Britten Theatre, director), all of which have been highly acclaimed by both critics and audience members:

'This is an eloquent, succinct opera...in music and design *Pincher Martin* pinched and gripped. This opera deserves to live.' (*The Times*: ★★☆☆)

In 2017 Oliver founded *The Phoenix Music Society* with a group of his best and most enterprising composition students at the University of Cambridge, and acts as Artistic Director for the society.

Oliver is the director of music at St Dominic's Catholic Church, Downham Market, where he plays the organ and directs the joint St Edmund's (Anglican) and St Dominic's (Catholic) Ecumenical Choir.

For more information please visit: [www.oliverrudland.com](http://www.oliverrudland.com)



**Ignacio Mañá Mesas** (b. 1998) is a Spanish saxophonist and composer.

He started his musical studies at 'Cristóbal Halffter' Intermediate Level Conservatoire in Ponferrada (Spain) in 2006, and made his debut as a soloist in 2009 with the local Wind Band and later on, in 2014, with the Youth Orchestra of León (JOL). He has competed successfully in many competitions in Spain both as a saxophonist and a composer, winning the First Prize and the Special Prize in the Aldebi Young Musicians' National Competition 2010 and the First Prize in the National 'Intercentros Melómano' Competition 2012 in Castilla y León. In 2015, he passed his LTCL Saxophone Recital Diploma with distinction and finished his musical studies at 'Cristóbal Halffter' Conservatoire with honours, obtaining the Extraordinary Prize in Castilla y León with the best mark in his region and receiving a nomination for the National Music Award.

He then received an offer and a scholarship from Chetham's School of Music (Manchester, UK) to complete his academic studies, where he studied saxophone with Carl Raven and composition with Jeremy Pike for two years. He offered solo recitals, premiered and conducted his compositions at some prestigious venues, such as The Bridgewater Hall (Manchester), The Stoller Hall (Manchester), and The Arts Club (London). Since 2017, he studies Music at the University of Cambridge (St John's College).

In recent competitions, he was highly commended in the BBC Proms Inspire Young Composers' Competition 2018 and won the First Prize in the Cambridge University Musical Society Concerto Competition 2018.



Luke Alex Pitzer (**Alex Lau**) studied cello with Michael Nebe and has been learning the piano for twelve years, first studying with Gwyn Pritchard and then Tau Wey. He has explored a variety of genres in depth from Romantic and Post-Romantic Classical music to Ragtime and Jazz. This has resulted in various projects, such as the composition of a set (or bag) of rags; playing lots of Brahms with the Cambridge University Instrumental Award Scheme and writing music to reinterpret a Charlie Chaplin film, which was performed with 'Stringfever' in London.

Alex is also passionate about curating concerts in Cambridge, introducing local audiences to lesser-known composers such as Medtner and Albright. This year, he has been involved with jazz in Cambridge University Jazz Orchestra as well as in his own small groups, performing *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Cambridge University Wind Orchestra and acting as Musical Director for his favourite work of Musical Theatre, *Sweeney Todd*, alongside the inimitable Roddy MacSween. He is also a melodica enthusiast and believes the instrument has much potential. He seeks to study jazz piano (and the melodica) further in the near future.



**Maxim Meshkvicev** is in his first year reading Music at King's College, Cambridge, where he is also a tenor Choral Scholar, as well as a member of The King's Men, a close-harmony group at King's. Last year, he was a Choral Scholar at Portsmouth Cathedral, having sung previously in the Winchester College Chapel Choir for three years under Malcolm Archer. During his year at Portsmouth, he sung for the commissioning of the new Queen Elizabeth Royal Navy Aircraft Carrier, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, sung on BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong and co-directed the Choral Scholars' Close Harmony group, The Dolphin Consort (named lovingly after the local pub across the road!).

Other than singing, his compositions have been performed by the Portsmouth Cathedral Choir, the Dolphin Consort, the choir of The First Unitarian Church in Portland, Oregon USA, and his piece *I will grant peace* won runner up in the Tercentenary Anthem competition in London earlier this year. He has also conducted numerous concerts in the King's College Music Society, including *Welcome all Wonders*, a concert of modern choral pieces and a premiere by Francis Pott, and is the incoming president of the West Road Lunchtime Concert Series for 2019-20.



**Richard Woods Rogan** is a composer studying music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. Richard has written two works for choir and orchestra; a *Magnificat*, performed at the famous Sheldonian theatre in Oxford, and *A Prophecy Against Egypt*, performed at a Phoenix Music Society concert earlier this year. Other compositions include incidental music to productions of Shakespeare's plays *Love's Labours Lost* and a *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Oxford Festival of the Arts.

Richard started composing at a young age (earliest choral works written at age nine), winning the composing cup at the Oxford music festival twice in the following years with piano works. After this, Richard started studying Schillinger's compositional method with the gifted composer Dr. Jeremy Arden, on the back of which he achieved his first ensemble performance at age thirteen with a Romance for wind sextet performed in the SJE, Oxford. Reaching the final three the following year in a national competition held by the European String Teachers Association with a double bass duet saw a second chamber work performed in public concert. At age fifteen, Richard was fortunate enough to receive assistance and tuition for a choral work from the revered composer Cecilia McDowell (also performed at the SJE). This was followed by the *Magnificat*, the incidental music and an offer to pursue further study at the St Catharine's College.

Drawn by the freedom to write in 'non-contemporary' styles or even use pre-existing compositional theory, Richard is now the junior treasurer of *The Phoenix Music Society*, and is composing under the dedicated tutelage of Oliver Rudland.



**Please join us for drinks in the Central Hall  
after the concert.**

**A collection will be made for the benefit  
of the society.**

**Thank you for your generosity.**



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