

Fitz**MUSIC**

11TH MARCH 8PM

TICKETS £3

PREMIERES:

MUSICAL FABLES

five symphonic poems

Crusade

The Labyrinth of Sallertaine

The Funeral Rites of King Skjoldr

The Shattered Memory

The Transformation of Nebuchadnezzar

by Kavi Pau

by Abigail Birch

by Sebastian Blount

by Oliver Rudland

by Rajan Lal

Mark Biggins conducts

The Phoenix Ensemble

An evening of new

orchestral music

Fitzwilliam College

Auditorium



Mark Biggins



THE
PHOENIX SOCIETY



Dedication

Tonight's performance is dedicated to the memory of **Robert Anderson** (1927 – 2015);
Classical Scholar, Egyptologist, Musician, Critic, Caian, Mentor (and friend),
who would have most heartily approved of *The Phoenix Society*, and its aspirations.
May he rest in peace.

Acknowledgements

Our sincerest thanks must go first and foremost to the Master of Fitzwilliam College,
Prof. Nicola Padfield QC (Hon), and the Director of Music at Fitzwilliam College,
Catherine Groom for allowing this concert to go ahead and for the use of the
Fitzwilliam Auditorium. We are also deeply grateful to:

- **The Gonville and Caius Music Society, The Conducting and Musical Leadership Fund** (awarded specifically to Sebastian Blount) and **The Milner Walton Fund** for financial support.
- **Sama Soltani** and **Daisy Nisbet** for the poster design.
- **Nik Palmer** at the University Reprographics Centre for his efficiency and efforts.
- **Peter Britton, Paul Ryder** and **Cliff Wilkinson** for helping to fix the musicians.
- **Myles Eastwood** for recording tonight's concert
- **Tristan Selden** for photographing the rehearsals.
- **Miles Golding** for agreeing to lead us (and his wife for allowing him to miss her birthday!)
- **Mark Biggins**, especially, for generously agreeing to conduct the concert pro bono.
- And, last but not least, everyone in the orchestra and organisational team for their time and dedication.

The Phoenix Music Society

The Phoenix Music Society is a new university music society founded to
nurture the composition, performance and promotion of *new tonal music*.

The Phoenix Music Society is a group dedicated to the discussion, creation and performance of tonal music, which seeks to create an open and viable alternative to the groups of composers already existing at the University, which we see as perpetuating an environment that is incompatible with the creation of the music that we wish to create; music which is genuinely tonal in nature
- rooted in the past, whilst looking to the future.



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THE
PHOENIX SOCIETY

THE PHOENIX ENSEMBLE

CONDUCTED BY MARK BIGGINS

FITZWILLIAM COLLEGE AUDITORIUM

Sunday 11TH MARCH 2018, 8.00pm

The Phoenix Ensemble

VIOLIN I

Miles Golding (guest leader)
William Campbell
Marietta D'Almeida
Elizabeth Tattersall
Ben Davis
Eilis Rowan

VIOLIN II

Jacob Fitzgerald (leader)
Seb Blount
Oliver Little
Johanna Finnemann
Francis Brown

VIOLA

Sebastian Lee (leader)
Gemma Taylor
Charlie Pearch
Lucy Crocker
Sarah Cox
Abigail Birch

VIOLONCELLO

Alex Lau (leader)
Lucy Roberts
Hannah Sherry
Ben Grant
Rosie Lester

CONTRABASS

Paul Moore (leader)
Zac Shane

PICCOLO

Kasia Warburton

FLUTES

James Ferrier
Beate Pauschmann
Jonathan Icton

OBOES

Richard Decker
(doubling cor anglais)
Benedict Percy
Daisy Lihoreau

CLARINETS

Lucy Walker
Duncan Fraser
(doubling bass clarinet)

BASSOONS

David Bartlett
Sally Thomas

HORNS

Frederike Schroeder
Ben Norris
Richard Sharman
Millie Lihoreau

TRUMPETS

Mark Simkins
Martin Dibb-Fuller
Owen Albajar

TROMBONES

Max Wilkinson
Harriet Haysom
Alastair Smith

TUBAS

Richard Dean
Liz Schofield

PERCUSSION

Zak Price
Murray Chapman
Sophie Purkis Charters

Organisational Team

Artistic Curator: Oliver Rudland

Concert Manager: Sebastian Blount

Orchestral Manager: Rajan Lal

Assistant Managers: Abigail Birch and Kavi Pau

MUSICAL FABLES NOTE: COMPOSITION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

In tonight's concert you will hear four completely new symphonic tone poems composed by students studying music at the University of Cambridge, all written within a clearly definable tonal idiom with inspired and memorable musical material – this is a bold and controversial occurrence and one, which in fact, crosses a taboo.

It is true, that we no longer live in the dark ages of high modernism, when anything vaguely resembling a harmonic progression or a melodic turn of phrase was immediately condemned as kitsch, pastiche or 'USELESS'. We live in an age of eclectic abundance in which a resurgence of tonality is strongly felt, whether it be the choral music of Eric Whitacre, or the operas of Jonathan Dove. This music sits besides, what Richard Taruskin has described as, the 'surrealist' works of Thomas Adès, and what I would define as the 'post-modern' works of composers like Mark-Anthony Turnage and Cambridge's former professor of musical composition, Robin Holloway. There is also, of course, the 'post-minimalist' works of John Adams and, new-kids-on-the-repetitive-music-block, like Nico Muhly.

Yet there are problems that I have with all of the above, if we are to describe their work as a complete and proper return to tonality. Eric Whitacre, the man who comes by far the closest with his profound, beautiful and genuinely original choral works, cannot write for the orchestra or the stage. Jonathan Dove, who can write well for both, does not quite escape from the minimalist straightjacket; browsing through his extremely impressive opera *Pinocchio* I found only one melisma in over three thousand bars of operatic music.

Adès and Turnage's music is more difficult to pin-down and criticise. They are best compared with the post-modern architecture of, for instance, the Strata Center at MIT in the USA. This is not a building which uses properly designed windows to utilise their necessity and beauty, but rather a deliberate distortion of these traditions in order to mock and defile them; it is a continuation of the inbuilt anti-tradition mentality of modernism. This is what the philosopher Roger Scruton has described as 'tonality in inverted commas' and is why Holloway also describes himself on his website as being, at bottom, an 'old-style modernist'. One swallow does not make a summer, and throwing a few major thirds and perfect cadences into a modernistic soup does not make a piece of music tonal.

Putting aside the fact that post-minimalism and the operatic genre seem to be at odds with each other in terms of what represents the best kind of writing for the human voice, there is in the music of John Adams and Nico Muhly a distinct lack of musical inspiration - although I would say *Nixon in China* is an exception to this. By musical inspiration, I mean the vital theme or slice of musical material that seems to resonate beyond it's technical construction; the tune, the *ohrwurm*, the catchy phrase or harmonic progression, what they call in the pop industry "the hook"; the essential element in any great piece of music that captures the imagination and drags you along with its development. Attending the recent performances of Nico Muhly's new opera *Marnie* at ENO, my companion and I were struck by the total absence of any musical material of this kind, all unremarkable save for the hymn tune quoted towards the end of the opera, which Muhly did not compose himself, of course.

This is the real challenge, because it is not just about writing 'tonal music' (which in my opinion is just another word *for* music), but about writing *inspired tonal music*; music which presents the mind with distinctive musical ideas and, as a consequence, spiritual nourishment. The pieces you will hear tonight all contain something of this kind, and this is why they have been chosen. You will not, I would like to think, feel short-changed by the new compositions that you will hear; you will from all of them be able to take some inspired material away with you – and yes, if you are a postman, you can whistle them on the street, if you so wish!

What you will not hear this evening is music of profound originality or containing ground-breaking innovation. You will hear influences from film music (and even game music!), snippets from the tradition of western art music – Wagner's influence appears as pungent as ever – you will hear the work of aspiring composers revealing the joy they have in their hearts for the music they love and that influences them, as they learn by composing through it, that is, you will hear music composed by student composers who are studying music. This is right and proper. No composer, no matter how cosmic their mature works in greatness and grandeur did not start out by sounding like their predecessors: Beethoven like Haydn, Wagner like Beethoven, Stravinsky like Wagner etc., for how else can one learn?! However, without wishing to sound too patronising, you will also glimpse the outlines of distinct personalities and the seeds of original thought, and mighty oaks from little acorns grow...

And this is the real problem with musical composition in Cambridge (and many other university music departments); the crushing and oppressive atmosphere, which expects everyone to be original and to have somehow sprung from nowhere developing "their own style", and even the whole idea that originality and innovation are the be all and end all of art – which is after all the *ideological legacy* of modernism. When you have taken a piece of music outside of its historical and cultural birthplace (as will inevitably happen) can you actually *hear* its originality; is this something one can *experience with the senses*? In my view, the obsession with originality is mistaking the symptom for the disease. When Stravinsky composed *Le Sacre du Printemps* (perhaps the most ground-breaking work in musical history) I don't think the composer was concerning himself too much with originality. I think his mind was focused upon the primitive stampings and grunts of a tribe of pagans dancing a virgin to death – the innovative chordal combinations and mind-boggling rhythms that resulted were merely necessitated by the expressive content of the subject matter that Stravinsky was bringing into artistic reflection. We observe that this was innovative in retrospect, but it was not the desire to be original that motivated the techniques hammered out in the music. To get oneself overly concerned about not writing "too conventionally", and to forget what one is trying to say with the music in place of pursuing an illusory goal of originality, is to mistake the effect for the cause.

Liberation from the oppression of the necessity to be original, therefore, can come from redirecting ones attention back onto the subject, which is perhaps why we have chosen to get 'The Phoenix Music Society' off the ground with a programme of programmatic music, and the composers have responded beautifully by furnishing you with interesting and readable notes and quotations to guide you through their musical fables and the labyrinths of their artistic aspirations. I hope you will take a moment to read them.

CRUSADE

By Kavi Pau

Inspired by the crusades, I chose to use the concept of conflict and war as a backdrop on which to base this work.

The piece begins with a march-like solo in free time for timpani. This, combined with the opening theme in the brass which uses parallel fifth sonorities, recalls a medieval call to battle. The piece constantly alternates between major and minor modalities, resulting in dissonant false relations (the clashing of notes a semitone apart). The entry of the strings and woodwind distils the intensity of the opening; the theme is broken up into cells and used across the texture. It is then treated fugally by the strings and the wind and gradually builds in texture, culminating in a final overlapping or stretto of the fugal subject. This, however, is interrupted by an altered recapitulation of the opening motive again in the brass.

The middle section of the piece is slower and introduces a yearning theme, which uses numerous suspensions to paint an atmosphere of mourning and sadness, following from the conflict represented by the opening section. Beginning solely with divided upper strings, the texture gradually becomes richer before the yearning theme is heard again in a rescoring for wind.

This leads to a series of birdcalls, which are in free time and reflect nature's answer to the opening timpani solo. At first, the birdcalls are heard in the flutes, before being imitated by the clarinets and finally by a single oboe. A final recapitulation of the aggressive opening, however, brings the listener back to reality and perhaps indicates the never-ending and circular nature of human conflict.

Written in 2014, *Crusade* is the first orchestral work that I wrote, and I am grateful to Oliver Rudland that it is finally being premiered tonight.

© Kavi Pau



THE LABYRINTH OF SALLERTAINE

By Abigail Birch

The Labyrinth of Sallertaine tells the story of a journey through a personal labyrinth of contrasting emotions and thoughts, with the goal of finally reaching peace and tranquillity. Although it is a conceptual and emotional labyrinth, the composition aims to capture the feelings and responses that would be experienced in finding your way through a real labyrinth as you would in an emotional one, with all its twists and turns and the uncertainties about which way to go next.



Sallertaine - Photo Roland OZIEL - Tous droits réservés

Sallertaine is a real place, though it doesn't actually have a labyrinth. It is a village in the Vendée region in the West of France, known mostly for its two historical churches and as an arts and crafts community. With an area covering about 49 km² and a population of 3036, it is clear to see the tranquillity and intimacy of Sallertaine. As such, Sallertaine

represents the destination of peace and serenity at the heart of the labyrinth so longed for in the music.

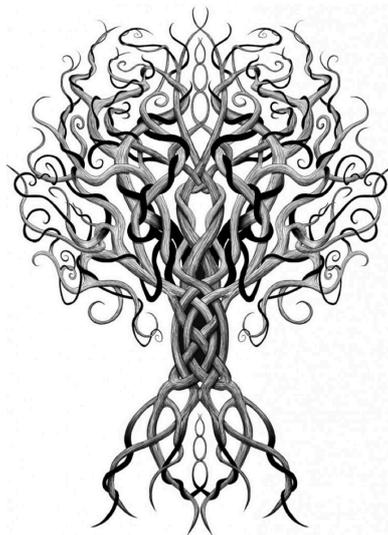
Through the melodic and atmospheric musical themes and development, the piece aims to represent all the feelings of mystery, confusion, complexity, challenge and doubt felt in the journey through the labyrinth. The music takes us on a journey with many changes of direction and pace, with the promise of a safe haven, but with difficult and dangerous challenges to overcome before reaching that goal. It starts with a sense of longing for calmness and tranquillity, a vision of what lies beyond the labyrinth and of why the passage through the labyrinth is worth attempting. In various places, certain parts of the piece still try to express this longing, looking ahead to the ultimate goal of peace and safety, often heard in the horn, flute or clarinet. However, this vision of the safe and secure destination is continually undermined by confusion, difficulties and doubt created by other aspects of the music. This is particularly evident in an extremely dark section of doubt in the middle of the piece highlighted by the brass section, the agitation created by the changing time signatures played by strings, and the confusion and perplexity in the build up to the return of the original melodies as all the instruments are added back into the melee. These sections are where the labyrinth is at its darkest and most dangerous and where the way forward isn't immediately clear or obvious. Within these sections, however, there are still clear displays of strength of character, fighting back against the dissonant chords and determinedly forcing back the return of the melody, representing the determination to overcome the challenges of the labyrinth and reinforcing the yearning for the serenity and calmness. This eventually results in a feeling of relief at the conclusion of the piece as we feel we have finally reached the end of our journey. It is only here we can find the answer to the question, have we finally achieved the peace so desired and reached the end of the labyrinth?

THE FUNERAL RITES OF KING SKJÖLDR

By Sebastian Blount

At the hour that was fated
Skjöldr then departed to the All-Father's keeping
Warlike to wend him; away then they bare him
To the flood of the current, his fond-loving comrades,
As himself he had bidden, while the friend of the Scyldings
Word-sway wielded, and the well-lovèd land-prince
Long did rule them. The ring-stemmèd vessel,
Bark of the atheling, lay there at anchor,
Icy in glimmer and eager for sailing;
The belovèd leader laid they down there,
Giver of rings, on the breast of the vessel,
The famed by the mainmast. A many of jewels,
Of fretted embossings, from far-lands brought over,
Was placed near at hand then; and heard I not ever
That a folk ever furnished a float more superbly
With weapons of warfare, weeds for the battle,
Bills and burnies; on his bosom sparkled
Many a jewel that with him must travel
On the flush of the flood afar on the current.
And favors no fewer they furnished him soothly,
Excellent folk-gems, than others had given him
Who when first he was born outward did send him
Lone on the main, the merest of infants:
And a gold-fashioned standard they stretched under heaven
High o'er his head, let the holm-currents bear him,
Seaward consigned him: sad was their spirit,
Their mood very mournful. Men are not able
Soothly to tell us, they in halls who reside,
Heroes under heaven, to what haven he hied.

- Beowulf vv. 26-54 trans. Lesslie Hall, Ph.D (J.H.U)



THE SHATTERED MEMORY (after Donna Tartt)

By Oliver Rudland

Days later, lying in the shuttered room, a thought flickered across Charlotte's mind beneath a mist of pills...
...tossing in her bed at night, trying restlessly to trace events to a possible first cause...
...what she needed was some small final memory to slip its hand in hers...

...the clean shirts out on the clothesline flailed and twisted and threw up their arms in despair at the coming rain...
The air smelled fresh and tight...
Laughter and talk within the house...
...the querulous voice of Charlotte's old aunt Libby rising high and plaintive for a moment...
Ida Rhew, the housekeeper, was in a foul temper. Sullenly she moved around the kitchen...
...pouring iced tea into tall glasses...
Robin ran outside, shrieking with laughter..."EdieEdieEdieEdieEdieEdie"...
But, oh, how Charlotte's mother loved Robin...
...running madcap across the lawn, screaming with delight.
"EdieEdieEdieEdieEdieEdie"...he sang it out across the yard...
...and when he saw the camera around Edie's neck he was off and hiccupping with laughter...
...he was skittish about it, sharp elbows and kneecaps scrambling to get away...
...she raised the camera and snapped it at him anyway...out of focus...in the corner of the frame a blurred shadow of Robin...
...as he ran out across the hazy lawn to meet his death which stood waiting for him - almost visible - in the dark place beneath the tupelo tree...
...dry thunder rumbling in the distance...

All day long she stared at the bedroom ceiling until the shadows slid across it...
To think about his last moments was soul-destroying, and yet she could think of nothing else...

...she was struck by the conviction that something was wrong...
She jumped up and ran out onto the porch...
...the volume of the gospel program turned obstinately loud... *softly and tenderly*...
The screen door banged shut... *Jesus is calling, calling to you and to me*...
...she had felt these dreamlike flashes of panic before...
...scanning the darkening horizon, "come home, Robin come home" she called...
...she turned and headed toward the backyard... *See on the portals, He's*...
...a ravelled wire of lightening flashed in the black clouds... *waiting and watching*...
...she could still hear Ida's gospel program... *watching for you and for*...
...a strong wind, cool with the coming rain, swept through the oaks overhead with a sound like giant wings and the lawn rearing up all green and bilious and heaving about her like a sea...
...she turned and ran back, quick, quick, but not quick enough.
...ringing from nowhere, and somewhere, and everywhere at once - the rich, unearthly vibrato of Edie's screams.
Come home, sang the radio choir melodiously.
...everything strangely lit beneath the stormy sky...
He was hanging by the neck from a piece of rope, slung over a low branch of the black-tupelo tree.

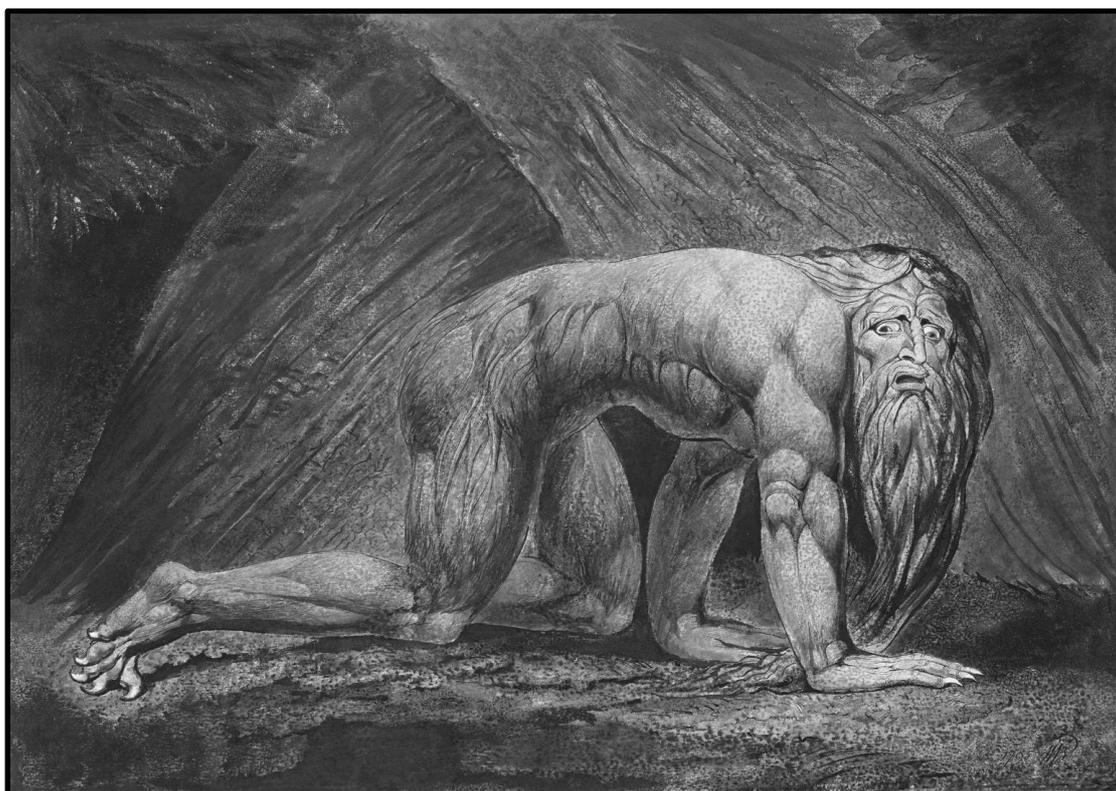
THE TRANSFORMATION OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

By Rajan Lal

The painting, *Nebuchadnezzar*, by William Blake depicts the legendary King of Babylon at his lowest ebb. Inspired by the apocalyptic *Book of Daniel*, it represents the climax of a story in which, through hubris, a ruler is doomed to lose his mind and descend into a state of animalistic madness.

According to the biographer Alexander Gilchrist, a viewer of the painting is faced with the 'mad king crawling like a hunted beast into a den among the rocks; his tangled golden beard sweeping the ground, his nails like vultures' talons, and his wild eyes full of sullen terror. The powerful frame is losing semblance of humanity, and is bestial in its rough growth of hair, reptile in the toad-like markings and spottings of the skin, which take on unnatural hues of green, blue, and russet.' This description formed the main inspiration for my piece, his seven years of mental torment depicted through a tortured passage of brassy writing in 7/4 time. However, I have gone one step further in the biblical account and included the king's redemption story. This entails his two dream-like liaisons with the divine, denoted by my two sections of duet scoring. Furthermore, the subsequent long and prosperous reign that saw the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world - is evident in my triumphantly decadent finale. The work also has a hidden quotation from Mahler's *Tragic 6th Symphony*, placed at a point in the narrative where all seems well in the world aside from the king's personal torment. This piece has been over a year in the making and I am proud of it as my contribution to an emergence of tonal composition in Cambridge.

© Rajan Lal



Nebuchadnezzar, William Blake

Mark Biggins recently graduated with distinction from the Royal College of Music where he studied conducting with Peter Stark and Howard Williams. This season Mark was appointed Assistant Chorus Master at English National Opera where he will work with their world-class ensemble over nine productions at the Coliseum and chorus master Daniel Kramer's new production of *La Traviata*. Mark has enjoyed masterclasses with Alexander Polishchuk, Jac van Steen and attended the Magnus Festival last summer with Alexander Vedernikov where he conducted the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Singers. As chorus master Mark has worked with Bernard Haitink, and has assisted Martin Andre at the Cheltenham Festival, Tim Murray at West Green House Opera as well as Vladimir Jurowski, John Wilson and Martyn Brabbins.



While a student of David Hill at Yale School of Music Mark was director of music at Battell Chapel and was a finalist in the ACDA conducting competition in Salt Lake City. He toured internationally and recorded for Hyperion with the Yale Schola Cantorum and collaborated with Bach Collegium Japan and the New York Philharmonic under the baton Masaaki Suzuki, Simon Halsey, Stefan Parkman and others. Alongside his debut with the Farnborough Symphony Orchestra, this season Mark will make concert debuts with the Sinfonia of Cambridge and University of London Symphony Orchestra and take up music directorships with the Petersfield Orchestra and Epsom Chamber Choir.

Miles Golding began his musical training in New Zealand. After completing a BMus at Victoria University in 1972, he studied the violin with Eli Goren and Sascha Lasserson in London, and soon began a successful free-lance career in symphony orchestras, chamber orchestras, chamber music and solo work that continues to this day. He was a member of Capricorn and the Meridian Ensemble, two chamber groups that encompassed styles from 18th century clarinet quintets through 20th century classics such as Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* to contemporary works. His interest in period performance led to associations with all the major London-based period ensembles such as The English Concert and the Academy of Ancient Music. Until recently he led the Armonico Consort in a wide variety of repertoire and styles, on both modern and period instruments, doubling vocally as the Drunken Sailor in their recent release of *Dido and Aeneas* on the Signum label, and he leads the reduced ensemble for Opera Brava's open-air summer performances in venues around England.

Miles is a trustee of the Harpenden Music Foundation, and enjoys supporting local musical activity, teaching the violin, music theory, and, with his wife, singer Catherine Denley, organising concerts with local musicians of all ages. With his fellow musicians of Pop-up Classical he presents informal chamber music soirées in local venues.



Kavi Pau is a third-year music student at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he sings as a choral scholar in the chapel choir. Aside from Caius choir, Kavi is a keen conductor, composer and continuo player and currently directs the Caius Men and, last year, the Cambridge University String Ensemble. Projects with CUSE included a 'Music through the Ages' concert in Michaelmas, where Kavi directed from the harpsichord, as well as a widely-praised 'Concerto Night' in Lent. Kavi has also organised and conducted performances for TCMS and GCMS, featuring wide ranging repertoire from Vivaldi's Gloria to motets by Bruckner and Bach. Kavi is the Junior Treasurer of Cambridge University Opera Society and most recently was the assistant musical director and continuo player for their production of *Radamisto* by Handel in Michaelmas 2018.



Photo: Tristan Selden

He was also musical director of the 2016 GCMS May Week Show, Carousal. Kavi is a competent organist, playing weekly services at St. Philip Howard Church in Cambridge. He has also accompanied various recitals at Gonville and Caius, Emmanuel and Murray Edwards colleges. As a répétiteur, he has worked on Charpentier's *La Descente* with CUOS as well as HMS Pinafore with the G&S society. Kavi has studied conducting with Sian Edwards and Nicholas Cleobury and harpsichord with Karim Said.

Abigail Birch is a first-year muso at Fitzwilliam and a member of Selwyn chapel choir. Although much of her time is taken up with the choir, she also enjoys playing viola in Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra and recently sang in the Vaughan Williams opera 'Riders to the Sea', performed in Selwyn College.

Abigail was brought up in Liverpool in a musical, scientific, sporty family which still reflects her interests now. Abigail was and is a keen footballer (and Liverpool supporter) and competed in athletics at local and county level. She still plays football in college, though her personal coach (her Dad) isn't there to encourage her from the touchline. Her Mum taught her music from a young age, teaching her piano, clarinet, guitar and, probably most importantly, music theory. This inspired Abigail to learn other instruments: violin, viola and timpani and to develop her singing, all of which she used in various ensembles both locally and in school. For these reasons and many more, Abigail is so glad her family can be here for the premiere of her composition today.

Abigail used her interests to raise money for charity (particularly Clatterbridge Cancer Charity) by putting on concerts and doing sponsored runs. These events have prompted an interest in the possibility of Music Therapy, which is linked to her love of science, and something she may want to develop in the future.



Sebastian Blount is a music finalist at Fitzwilliam College, Sebastian has a strong background in choral, orchestral and solo performance. Member of the renowned Trinity Boys Choir for 8 years and Head Chorister from 2014 to 2015, his experience ranges from performing as a treble at Covent Garden to recording new choral music and touring extensively at home and abroad. He plays a French violin of the Baillie school circa 1870, participating in orchestral ensembles and leading Trinity Symphony Orchestra on its North American tour in 2015. Previously taught by Tim Penrose and Richard Wilberforce (singing), Christian Persinaru (violin) and Nigel Clayton (piano), he was a regular competition finalist. He currently sings tenor in the acclaimed Choir of Gonville and Caius College and trains under David Lowe.



Photo: Tristan Selden

Although his interest in performance remains keen, Sebastian's main focus is now the creation of music. Studying composition under Oliver Rudland, he is particularly influenced by British composers of all periods, especially Thomas Tallis, Henry Purcell and Edward Elgar. He draws thematic inspiration from mythology and legend, especially the stories of Atlantis, Arthur and Beowulf. *The Funeral Rites of King Skjöldr* is a symphonic poem written within the tonal tradition, with a clear narrative structure which depicts the death and sea burial of a Geatish king as told in *Beowulf*. This is Sebastian's first orchestral work, to be followed by further large-scale works on similar themes.

Rajan Lal is a first-year undergraduate music student at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge. He began learning the piano aged 6 with Nissho Astridge and later David Sams, with original aspirations to a concert performance career. These quickly denatured with the discovery of jazz improvisation at aged 10 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.

He is especially passionate about the resurgence of original tonal composition in academic music circles, writing that: "In the New German school of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner, we had perhaps the most colourful sound aesthetic in Western music history. Alongside Mahler, this was the world that drew me to musicianship in the first place and continues to inspire my compositions to this day. Surely with the return of a rich, tonal sound palette, unhampered by an obsession with originality, the concert hall can grow into a force to rival the digital!" Rajan is also extremely proud of his mixed-race heritage and has plans to bring Hindustani classical music into an orchestral setting alongside conducting, film composition and other academic aspirations.



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 playing in local brass bands, orchestras and youth opera companies around Leeds. He went on to study composition with Joseph Horowitz and Huw Watkins and piano with Niel Immelman at the Royal College of Music as a Foundation Scholar, and subsequently at the University of Cambridge, where he now teaches harmony, counterpoint and composition. Oliver has supervised students studying at Clare, St Edmund's, Fitzwilliam, Gonville & Caius, St. John's, King's, Pembroke, Selwyn, Sidney Sussex and Trinity Colleges; he hopes one day to complete the set.



Photo: Jerome Woodwark

His orchestral music has been played in masterclasses directed by 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 other venues in the U.S. and Europe. His trombone sonata, *The Conquests of Zeus*, has been performed widely across Europe by Matthew Gee, principal trombonist of the London Philharmonic Orchestra

As well as being a composer, Oliver is also a librettist and a director. He has been closely involved with the staged production of all three of his operas: *The Nightingale and the Rose*, *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark*, and *Pincher Martin*, 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*: ★★★★★)

'Rudland appears to have achieved that rare and valuable object: a contemporary work that is both challenging yet accessible. Despite its disturbing subject matter, *Pincher Martin* is lyrical, inventive, and above all a thoroughly engaging work.' (*Bachtrack*: ★★★★★)

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. He is currently working towards a new large-scale, two-act opera due for completion in 2020.

Oliver is the director of music at St Dominic's Catholic Church, Downham Market, where he plays the organ and directs the choir.

For more information please visit: www.oliverrudland.com



Next Event:

Saturday 5th May, 7.30pm, Fitzwilliam Auditorium

An Evening of Persian Culture



Featuring:

Newly commissioned paintings by Sama Soltani, Iranian Artist

Readings in Farsi of poetry by Rumi, Khayyam & Attar

New songs setting Persian poetry in translation

The Ligeti String Quartet

آدم اعضای یک پی‌کردن‌دب‌نی
که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند
چو عضوی به درد آورد روزگار
دگر عضوها را نماند قرار
غم‌یت و کز محنت دی‌گران بی
نشاید که نامت نهند آدمی

*Adam's sons are body limbs, to say;
For they're created of the same clay.
Should one organ be troubled by pain,
Others would suffer severe strain.
Thou, careless of people's suffering,
Deserve not the name, "human being".*



**THE
PHOENIX SOCIETY**