

Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group



Blossoming in Bristol

Sat 18th February, 16:00

Arnolfini



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Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Toshio Hosokawa b. 1955 *Blossoming* (2007, 15')

Dai Fujikura b. 1977 *Perpetual Spring* (2017, 10')

Charlotte Bray b. 1982 *Beyond* (2013, 4')

Hollie Harding b. 1986 *Motion* (2018, 6')

Interval

György Ligeti 1923 – 2006 *String Quartet No.2* (1968, 20')

Clarinet **Oliver Janes**

Violin 1 **Philip Brett**

Violin 2 **Stefano Mengoli**

Viola **David BaMaung**

Cello **Arthur Boutillier**

Blossoming

Toshio Hosokawa

Toshio Hosokawa's works have had a flower as their theme for a long time, and recently the image of a lotus has dominated his composing. *Blossoming* was inspired by this image.

Hosokawa says: *'The lotus sends its roots deep into the mud beneath the surface of the pond; the stem stretches through the water toward the surface and the sky; the bud is blossoming toward the morning sunshine.'* This work is a very beautiful quartet with a fantastic soundworld.

Perpetual Spring

Dai Fujikura

I was researching the Portland Japanese Garden online, looking at photos and at their tweets. It is already beautiful just seeing those, and I found I was yet again to focus on nature for my inspiration.

Perpetual Spring is organic, the clarinet melts into the string quartet, and the strings extend their "stems" to wrap around the clarinet wherever it moves.... As is the amazing thing about nature: the roots and stems of trees, they wrap around anything, breaking through the asphalt roads, concrete walls...

Every time I see these aspects of the power of nature, I feel that we should never underestimate the power of "quiet" nature. This piece is about framing nature.

Dai Fujikura, Edited by Alison Phillips

Beyond

Charlotte Bray

Written in Berlin in the early summer of 2013 as a gift for a friend on his departure and return to his homeland of Israel. An impassioned melody flows freely and sweetly. I wanted to principally explore the dark lower register of the instrument, as well as the special sound quality found high on each string. Long questioning phrases hang in the air, yet a sense of closure is finally reached.

Charlotte Bray

Motion

Hollie Harding

This piece is a variation on Benjamin Britten's Tema "Sacher" (1976) and was commissioned by, and created in collaboration with, cellist Amy Jolly.

It draws upon physical action patterns and ideas identified in Britten's theme through Carnal Musicological Analysis, action mapping and tracking. It aims to highlight the physicality of the cellist and as such, is as much about the theatre of the performance actions, as it is about the sounding results.

String Quartet No. 2

György Ligeti

György Ligeti wrote the second of his two String Quartets in 1968, when he was in his mid-forties and already a noted composer at the forefront of the European avant-garde. In this piece, a unifying theme persists throughout all five movements. It is a commitment to an idea of texture: several instruments are engaged in a single texture, sometimes they meld together almost into unanimity, and at other times drift apart, but never lose their textural similarity. This “micropolyphonic” technique is the abiding idea of the piece, applied repeatedly across its many changeable atmospheres. Ligeti has said that the Second Quartet is his favourite work from this period in his life.

The Quartet opens with a texture of frenetic, hushed activity, punctuated by aggressive outbursts of forte playing. The energy accumulates, and the quartet is asked to reach a climax where they perform “very ferociously, maximum force, as if crazed”, leaping through jagged lines of sevenths and ninths. The movement ends in a hushed series of chromatically descending harmonics.

The second movement opens with an almost static fantasy on one note, played very softly with various timbres. The image evoked might be a shimmering, primitive organism beheld under a microscope.

In the third movement, which the composer entitles “Come un meccanismo di precisione”, pointillism is the order of the day. The quartet plays pizzicato almost exclusively throughout.

The fourth movement is characterized by furious, slashing chords, which evoke a pitched battle between pairs of players, the movement requires playing “with exaggerated haste,” pressing the bow “strongly on the strings (scratching noise).” In places the activity breaks off abruptly to reveal a frozen chord, which holds the ear in suspense until the next outburst. The movement ends with the most vicious passage of all, a set of sul ponticello attacks, played “short and harsh” at the frog of the bow, stopping “as though torn off”.

The last movement opens with a swaying, shimmering feeling, the entire quartet rhapsodizing very softly between two pitches in variable gentle rhythms, a sense of light seen dimly through water. Finally the movement returns to the same two pitches with which it began, and with one final swift scale in the softest dynamic, the work closes.

Misha Amory

Dai Fujikura

Composer

Born in 1977 in Osaka Japan, Dai was fifteen when he moved to UK. The recipient of many composition prizes, he has received numerous international co-commissions from the Salzburg Festival, Lucerne Festival, BBC Proms, Bamberg Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra and more.



He has been Composer-in-Residence of Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra since 2014 and held the same post at the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France in 2017/18. Dai's first opera *Solaris*, co-commissioned by the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Opéra de Lausanne and the Opéra de Lille, had its world premiere in Paris in 2015 and has since gained a worldwide reputation. A new production of *Solaris* was created and performed at the Theatre Augsburg in 2018, and the opera received a subsequent staging in 2020.

In 2019, his *Shamisen Concerto* was premiered at Mostly Mozart festival in New York Lincoln Center and there have so far been 9 performances of this work by various orchestras. 2020 sees the premiere of his fourth piano concerto *Akiko's Piano*, dedicated to Hiroshima Symphony's Peace and Music Ambassador, Martha Argerich and performed as part of their "Music for Peace" project. His third opera "A Dream of Armageddon" was premiered in New National Theatre Tokyo in the same year.

His works are recorded by and released mainly on his own label Minabel Records in collaboration with SONY Music and his compositions are published by Ricordi Berlin. Dai is currently focusing his attention on upcoming works including an opera on the life of Hokusai, a concerto for two orchestras, and a double concerto for flute and violin.

Charlotte Bray

Composer

British composer Charlotte Bray is one of the most esteemed and in-demand composers of her generation. Championed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London Sinfonietta,

and Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, her music has been performed at festivals in Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Tanglewood, Aix-en-Provence and Verbier and with renowned conductors including Marin Alsop, Sir Mark Elder, Oliver Knussen, Jessica Cottis, Daniel Harding, and Karina Canellakis.



The world premiere of *Ungrievable Lives* for string quartet, was performed on 7 April by the Castalian Quartet at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg. It was inspired by a new installation by artist Caroline Burraway, comprising 13 children's dresses handmade from discarded refugee lifejackets. The work will also be performed at Wigmore Hall, Konzerthaus Wien, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

In 2019 Bray was awarded an Ivor Novello Award for *Invisible Cities*. Winner of the Lili Boulanger Prize (2014), Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent (2014) and the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize (2010). Bray was selected as a MacDowell Norton Stevens Fellow (2015-16) and interviewed as part of BBC Radio 3's Composers' Rooms series 2015.

She is an Honorary Member of Birmingham Conservatoire, named as their Alumni of the Year 2014 (Excellence in Sport or the Arts), and was listed in *The Evening Standard's* Most Influential Londoners (2011). Composer-in-Residence with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group/Sound and Music (2009/10), Oxford Lieder Festival (2011) and Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival (2015), her residencies include MacDowell (2013, 2015), Liguria Study Centre Bogliasco (2013), and Aldeburgh Music (2010, 2015).

Toshio Hosokawa

Composer

Toshio Hosokawa was born in Hiroshima in 1955. Following studies in piano and composition in Tokyo, he came to Berlin in 1976 to study composition with Isang Yun at the Universität der Künste. In 1980, he participated for the first time in the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik where some of his compositions were performed.



Hosokawa's compositions include orchestral works, solo concertos, chamber music and film music alongside works for traditional Japanese instruments. Influences from both Western music - from Schubert to Webern - and traditional Japanese music can be recognised in his compositions. Hosokawa considers the compositional process to be instinctively associated with the concepts of Zen Buddhism and its symbolic interpretation of nature.

The orchestral work *Circulating Ocean* was composed in 2005 as a commission for the Salzburg Festival. Valery Gergiev conducted the world premiere in Salzburg. Today it has become a frequently performed piece, as is Hosokawa's piano concerto *Lotus under the moonlight*. It was premiered by the NDR Symphony Orchestra and the pianist Momo Kodama in 2006 as a tribute to Mozart.

Hosokawa has received numerous awards and prizes: among them the first prize in the composition competition for the 100th anniversary of the Berliner Philharmoniker (1982), the Arion Music Prize (1984), the Kyoto Music Prize (1988), the Rheingau Music Prize (1998) and in 2023 the Japan Prize of the University of California.

Hollie Harding

Composer

Hollie is a composer, researcher and curator of contemporary music events in the UK and overseas. She is interested in looking at different ways of constructing performance scenarios and exploring the impact this has on compositional processes and the listening experience.

Her piece *Melting, Shifting, Liquid World* is the first composition to incorporate the use of open-ear, bone-conduction headsets alongside live acoustic and amplified instruments to create a multi-layered sonic environment for the audience to move around and within. The project was awarded funding by Arts Council England, PRS Foundation's Women Make Music, Hinrichsen Foundation and Gemma Classical Music Trust and was the concluding piece of her Trinity Laban RDP Scholarship funded PhD in Composition at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

Hollie has worked with Amy Jolly, Alwynne Pritchard, Sjøforsvarets Musikkorps (Norwegian Navy Band), London Symphony Orchestra (Jerwood Composer Plus), London Philharmonic Orchestra (Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize), CHROMA ensemble, Castallian String Quartet, Ensemble Via Nova (Weimar) and DeciBells (Basel). Her work has been broadcast on Radio 3, Resonance FM and BBC4.

Hollie is interested in collaborating with performers, across art forms and mediums, most recently working with director Josh Ben-Tovim (Impermanence Dance) and George Monbiot on an audio-visual piece exploring themes of rewilding and human loss of connection with the natural world.

Hollie was one of four selected composers on the Cohan Collective 2018-21 residencies working with choreographers, dancers and members of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at Pavilion Dance South West. Teaching also plays an important role in Hollie's artistic life and she has been Associate Head of Composition (UG) at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama since 2020, prior to this she was a lecturer at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (composition and professional studies) 2013-2020.



György Ligeti

Composer

György Ligeti, born May 28, 1923 in Diciosânmartin (now Tîrnăveni), Transylvania, Romania, died June 12, 2006, Vienna, Austria, is a leading composer of the branch of avant-garde music concerned principally with shifting masses of sound and tone colours.



Ligeti, the great-nephew of violinist Leopold Auer, studied and taught music in Hungary until the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, when he fled to Vienna; he later became an Austrian citizen. He subsequently met avant-garde composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and became associated with centres of new music in Cologne and Darmstadt, Germany, and in Stockholm and Vienna, where he composed electronic music (e.g., *Artikulation*, 1958) as well as music for instrumentalists and vocalists. In the early 1960s he caused a sensation with his *Future of Music—A Collective Composition* (1961) and his *Poème symphonique* (1962). The former consists of the composer regarding the audience from the stage and the audience's reactions to this; the latter is written for 100 metronomes operated by 10 performers.

Most of Ligeti's music after the late 1950s involved radically new approaches to music composition. Specific musical intervals, rhythms, and harmonies are often not distinguishable but act together in a multiplicity of sound events to create music that communicates both serenity and dynamic anguished motion. Examples of these effects occur in *Atmosphères* (1961) for orchestra; *Requiem* (1963–65) for soprano, mezzo-soprano, two choruses, and orchestra; and *Lux Aeterna* (1966) for chorus. These three works were later featured in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), his music appeared in later movies, including several others by Kubrick. In *Aventures* (1962) and *Nouvelles Aventures* (1962–65), Ligeti attempts to obliterate the differences between vocal and instrumental sounds. In these works the singers hardly do any "singing" in the traditional sense.

Ligeti was the recipient of many honours, including the Grand Austrian State Prize for music (1990), the Japan Art Association's Praemium Imperiale prize for music (1991), and the Theodor W. Adorno Prize from the city of Frankfurt for outstanding achievement in music (2003).

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Creating music for everyone and reflecting the beauty and challenges of our world today.

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group is a world-renowned new ensemble that has commissioned over 175 pieces of music from the finest composers and emerging talent. We have provided over 400 free music workshops to young people and raised over £325,000 for new music. We believe that music has the power to bring people of all ages and backgrounds together. We build an inclusive community of composers, musicians, and audiences; enabling them to share their spark of imagination, creating beautiful and strange sounds.

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Birmingham Contemporary Music Group



Cherry Blossom Concert 2022 | Anthony Crutch

Coming up at BCMG

Cherry Blossom Concert

Sun 2nd April, 15:00

Oozells Square, Brindleyplace

BCMG's free Cherry Blossom Concert is back! In collaboration with Ikon Gallery, we are bringing a moment of calm to your Sunday lunchtime. This will be an hour-long sensory event for all ages. Grab a coffee from one of Brindleyplace's local cafés and feel free to drop in and out as you please.

Blossoming in Birmingham, *Conducted by Kazuki Yamada*

Sat 29th April, 19:00

CBSO Centre

Welcoming Kazuki Yamada to his new role as Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor for CBSO, and in keeping with BCMG in Bloom, we present music inspired by the natural world. Experience immersive and dramatic music inspired by nature.

T R E E

Fri 12th May, 19:00

Birmingham Town Hall, *Conducted by Michael Wendeborg*

Join us in exploring the connections between nature and humankind in an enchanting musical programme that includes the world premiere of Christian Mason's new Sound Investment commission *The Singing Tree*, with text by Paul Griffiths, and the seminal *Concertini* for ensemble by Helmut Lachenmann.

www.bcmg.org.uk/concerts

Free Workshops for Young People

At BCMG, our work doesn't stop in the concert hall. Our vibrant Learn & Take Part programme engages young people with new music, as performers, composers, and listeners, both in and out of the classroom.

Out of School Programme

Monthly **Music Maze** workshops are a wonderful opportunity for children to experiment with sound and create their own music. ***Music Maze is open to children aged 7 - 11.***

BCMG Young Composers is a termly series of workshops led by composer Kirsty Devaney. Young people work to compose a piece for BCMG musicians and contribute to a collaborative work with their peers. **BCMG Young Composers is open to young people aged 11 - 14.**

At **Creative Composing Lab**, young people work with composer David Horne to create a piece for a trio of BCMG musicians. This year there will be a special focus on composing for film. **Creative Composing Lab is open to young people aged 14 - 18.**

www.bcmg.org.uk/learning

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www.bcmg.org.uk/concerts



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