

Remembrance

A CONCERT

SHELDONIAN THEATRE
OXFORD

SATURDAY 2 JUNE

7.30 PM



POST-WAR: COMMEMORATION, RECONSTRUCTION, RECONCILIATION

Tonight's concert is the culmination of *Post-War: Commemoration, Reconstruction, Reconciliation*, a Mellon-Sawyer Seminar Series which has been running at the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University in 2017–18. It has brought together academics from many different fields, politicians, people who have played a role in peace negotiations and leading figures from cultural policy and the charitable sector. They have been joined by novelists, poets, artists and musicians whose work has marked war in some way.

Featured speakers have included author Aminatta Forna, architect Daniel Libeskind and composer Jonathan Dove.

The Series has been divided into three strands: Textual Commemoration (October–December 2017), Monumental Commemoration (January–March 2018) and Aural Commemoration (April–June 2018). Each strand was launched by an event featuring an internationally-renowned figure from the arts. These launch events were followed by two panel-led workshops each term. There have also been three events aimed directly at post-graduates: a training day in object-based research methods, a postgraduate forum and a one-day conference.

Tonight's Concert and the Series as a whole have been funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in memory of John E. Sawyer.

Thanks, too, to Villa Maria for its support.

*The Launch of the
Textual Strand: Award-
Winning Novelist
Aminatta Forna, OBE
in Conversation with
Professor Elleke Boehmer.
Image credit: John Cairns
Photography.*





PROGRAMME

SIMON OVER | *conductor*

ANNABEL DRUMMOND | *violin*

ANNA LEESE | *soprano*

JON STAINSBY | *baritone*

TESSA PETERSEN | *guest concertmaster*

CITY CHOIR DUNEDIN (NEW ZEALAND)

THE PARLIAMENT CHOIR

SOUTHBANK SINFONIA

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS | *The Lark Ascending*

AUGUSTA HOLMÈS | *La Nuit et l'Amour*

RAVEL | *Le Tombeau de Couperin*

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

ANTHONY RITCHIE | *Gallipoli to the Somme*
(*European première*)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS | *The Lark Ascending*

One of the most beloved of all English orchestral works, *The Lark Ascending* is also (appropriately enough, as this programme celebrates an Anglo-New Zealand collaboration) immensely popular in New Zealand, and has been a consistent favourite in Radio New Zealand's annual New Year's Day countdown programme, *Settling the Score*.

Vaughan Williams originally composed *The Lark Ascending* in 1914 for violin and piano, only months before the outbreak of the war. Despite being beyond the statutory age for military service, he enlisted and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and latterly as a gunner. He took his inspiration for the piece from the poem 'The Lark Ascending' by English poet George Meredith, selecting these lines to publish on the flyleaf of the score:

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.

Till lost on his aerial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

Vaughan Williams channels the essence of Meredith's poem through the solo violin, soaring and wheeling above the orchestra in a beautiful evocation

of flight and birdsong. He draws on the folk music-associated pentatonic scale (using only five notes) to evoke an English pastoral scene that is timeless. The premiere of *The Lark Ascending* had to be postponed until 1920, the same year the composer re-scored it for solo violin and orchestra. This version, now the more often performed of the two, premiered in 1921. Whilst it was written before the war broke out, its invocation of the English countryside and the image of the bird soaring above the landscape touched a nerve with a war-weary public in the years after the armistice. *The Lark Ascending* speaks eloquently of a rural idyll for which many felt they were fighting, and for many more the piece evokes a sense of a lost era, or perhaps a quintessentially English landscape.

AUGUSTA HOLMÈS | *La Nuit et l'Amour*



Augusta Holmès (1847–1903) was a French composer of Irish descent. She showed precocious musical talent as a child but was denied access to the Paris Conservatoire. In fact her mother actively disliked music, and tried to prevent her studying it. She was driven to attempt to stab herself with a dagger in protest, until her father allowed her to study music privately. She began to compose at thirteen, and ultimately studied composition with César Franck. Saint-Saëns offered her the dubiously ambiguous compliment: ‘Like children, women have no idea of obstacles, and their willpower breaks all barriers. Mademoiselle Holmès is a woman, an extremist.’

She was, by any standards, extraordinary. Dynamic, brilliant and exuberant, she moved in the most elite literary and musical circles of Paris. It was scarcely possible to be taken seriously as a female composer in the 1800s, and in order to get her early works published she was obliged to assume the pseudonym Hermann Zenta. She did not limit herself to the small, feminine songs and chamber works that, if a woman were permitted to compose at all, she might decorously write. Holmès wrote over one hundred songs,

but they were only a small part of her output. She created an astonishing quantity of music, including twelve symphonic poems, cantatas and four operas, often written with a political agenda. She was her own librettist, and wrote the lyrics to almost all her songs and oratorios, as well as the libretti of her operas.

The colourful, vibrant and rarely performed *La Nuit et L'Amour* (*Night and Love*) forms part of Holmès' symphonic ode *Ludus Pro Patria* (*Patriotic Games*), an evocation of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes' great painting of Picardy youths in battle training.

MAURICE RAVEL | *Le Tombeau de Couperin*

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) was a French composer, pianist and conductor. He is often associated with impressionism along with his elder contemporary Claude Debussy, although both composers rejected the term. In 1908 Vaughan Williams, feeling that he was limited by the harmonic language he had inherited from early  **twentieth century** musical London, travelled to Paris to become one of Ravel's few pupils. The colours and orchestration techniques he learnt with Ravel influenced his work, and  **ped** him find a more varied palette and means of expression, **The Lark Ascending** being one example.

When Germany invaded France in 1914, Ravel tried to join the French Air Force. He considered his small stature and light weight ideal for an aviator, but was rejected because of his age and a minor heart complaint. After several unsuccessful attempts to enlist, Ravel finally joined the Thirteenth Artillery Regiment as a lorry driver in March 1915, when he was forty. Stravinsky expressed admiration for his friend's courage: 'at his age and with his name he could have had an easier place, or done nothing'. Some of Ravel's duties put him in mortal danger, driving munitions at night under

heavy German bombardment. He suffered from insomnia and digestive problems, underwent a bowel operation following amoebic dysentery in 1916, and had frostbite in his feet the following winter. After the war, those close to Ravel recognised that he had lost much of his physical and mental stamina.

Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* is a beautifully wistful and reflective suite orchestrated by the composer from his own longer set of piano miniatures. Written between 1914 and 1917, it is a poignant homage to French baroque music, but also to friends of the composer killed in the First World War. The orchestral version clarifies the harmonic language of the suite and brings sharpness to its classical dance rhythms; among the demands it places on the orchestra is the requirement for a virtuosic oboe soloist, as the oboist takes the melody in the *Prélude* and the *Menuet* as well as for a section of the *Rigaudon*, where it is accompanied by guitar-like pizzicati.

PRÉLUDE

in memory of First Lieutenant Jacques Charlot (who transcribed one of Ravel's piano works)

FORLANE

in memory of First Lieutenant Gabriel Deluc (a Basque painter from Saint-Jean-de-Luz)

MENUET

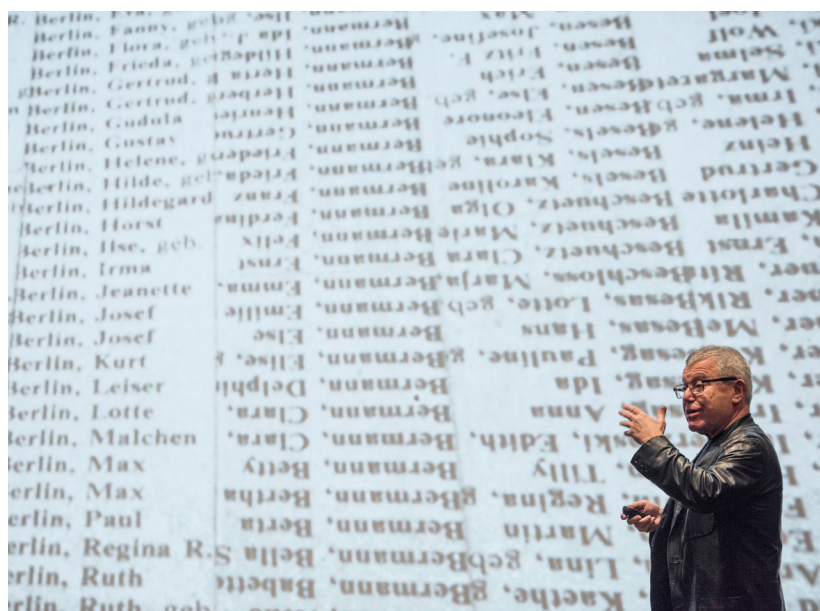
in memory of Jean Dreyfus (at whose home Ravel recuperated after he was demobilized)

RIGAUDON

in memory of Pierre and Pascal Gaudin (two brothers and childhood friends of Ravel, killed by the same shell in November 1914)

‘Tombeau’ is a musical term from the seventeenth century meaning ‘a piece written as a memorial’. Despite Ravel’s personal despair at both the ravages of the war and his loss of his mother in 1917, the work is not sombre, but was in fact criticised at the time for being too light-hearted. Ravel’s response to the criticism encapsulates a profound truth about the nature of grief, memorialisation and art’s relationship to both: ‘The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence’.

—KATE KENNEDY



Globally-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind lecturing at Oxford Brookes University for the opening of the Monumental Strand. Image credit: John Cairns Photography.

ANTHONY RITCHIE | *Gallipoli to the Somme*, op.191 (2016)

PROGRAMME NOTE BY THE COMPOSER

How does one create a piece of music commemorating World War I? It is a daunting task, to say the least. There are already many great works that comment on this conflict, Britten's *War Requiem*, for one, a piece that I have loved since I was a teenager. This was an anti-war statement that resonated through a generation. *Gallipoli to the Somme* is more quietly anti-war, and aims to make a humanist statement about ordinary peoples' experience of the war. Ordinary people – soldiers, nurses, lovers, children from different nationalities – they are represented in some small way in this work, through diary entries, poems, traditional texts and songs, and even a military plan of battle. It is, of course, not possible to cover every perspective. There are four nations represented in the work: New Zealand, Britain, Germany and Turkey. The perspective that binds the whole structure together is provided by a soldier, Alexander Aitken, from the Otago Battalion in New Zealand. Aitken wrote a book about his experiences with the same title as this work: *Gallipoli to the Somme*, published in 1964, many years after the war. Aitken was a remarkable man, a professor of mathematics at Edinburgh University, and also a fine violinist.

Therefore, my composition traces Aitken's journey from his arrival in Gallipoli, his experience of Christmas 1915, his preparation for battle at the Somme, the loss of his comrades, and encounters with the German army. The sound of his solo violin, which he took with him through the war, also pervades the piece. Somehow the violin survived and found its way back to Otago Boys High, Aitken's old school. I have used extracts from Aitken's book, which are surrounded by a wide variety of other texts, most contemporary with the war. There are several poems by soldiers who died during the war, along with traditional song texts with re-composed music. There are even re-compositions of Schubert and Handel, resulting

from Aitken's experiences and thoughts. One example: at the Somme, Aitken sees a sign-post with a finger pointing the direction to the town of Ypres. Even by September 1916 the name 'Ypres' was infamous, and reminded Aitken of Schubert's famous song *Der Wegweiser* (*The Signpost*) that contains the ominous line 'There's a road that I must wander / Where no traveller returns'. This is sung by the baritone.

The work ends with words by the great Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, taken from the Anzac war memorial in Canberra. This healing text is set to the same music that begins the work, providing a frame for the whole oratorio. Another unifying element in the work is the recurring 'battle music' – harsh, relentless, astringent and repetitive. There is no escaping the ugliness of war. The 'battle music' uses texts in different languages each time: Maori, English, German, and there is a purely instrumental version featuring the solo violin.

Gallipoli to the Somme was commissioned from Anthony Ritchie by the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra. Funding from Creative New Zealand for the commission is gratefully acknowledged.



*Anthony Ritchie,
composer of Gallipoli
to the Somme.*

*Image credit:
Dunedin Symphony
Orchestra.*



SIMON OVER | *conductor*

Simon Over studied at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, Royal Academy of Music and Oxford University. For ten years he was a member of the music staff of Westminster Abbey, and Director of Music in the Palace of Westminster. He is Founder-Conductor of the Parliament Choir. Since 2002 he has been Music Director of Southbank Sinfonia and Artistic Director of the Anghiari Festival (Tuscany). Conductor of the Malcolm Sargent Festival Choir from 1995 to 2015 and Music Director of Bury Court Opera from 2000 to 2016, he is also Guest Conductor of the City Chamber Orchestra (Hong Kong), the Goyang Philharmonic Orchestra (Korea), Orquestra de Barra Mansa (Rio, Brazil) and he is Principal Guest Conductor of Dunedin Symphony Orchestra (New Zealand). As pianist and conductor, Simon has appeared with many internationally-acclaimed artists, including Sir Thomas Allen, Sir James Galway, Dame Emma Kirkby, Dame Felicity Lott, Sir Willard White and Dame Edna Everage. Together with Philippa Harris, General Manager of Dunedin Symphony Orchestra, Simon was instrumental in the commissioning of *lipoli to the Somme*, in response to Creative New Zealand's collaborative arts projects to mark the First World War Centenary.



ANNABEL DRUMMOND | *violin*

Annabel Drummond was born in Dunedin and grew up in a musical household (her father was a music professor and her mother a piano teacher). She was a member of the New Zealand National Youth Orchestra and went on to study at the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater 'Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy' in Leipzig. She has toured and recorded with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.



ANNA LEESE | *soprano*

Since graduating first from the University of Otago (Dunedin, New Zealand) and then London's RCM Benjamin Britten International Opera School, New Zealand soprano Anna Leese has performed widely in the UK, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand with orchestras, choirs and opera companies. This has included performances at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Wigmore Hall and the Royal Albert Hall, and with Opera Holland Park, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Prince Consort and Classical Opera Company (UK). She made her début at the 2006 BBC Proms with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Sir Roger Norrington, and has appeared in opera gala concerts with Jose Carreras, and with Carlo Rizzi. Anna has recorded Elgar's **De Apostles** in Canterbury Cathedral with the Canterbury Choral Society, a recital disc with Graham Johnson (EMI), a Haydn disc (Michael Storrs Music) and 'Italian Love Songs' (Champs Hill).



JON STAINSBY | *baritone*

Jon Stainsby is a lyric baritone establishing a varied career in opera, oratorio and recital. A graduate of the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, he has appeared as a Young Artist with De Nationale Opera Amsterdam, Garsington Opera, Longborough Festival Opera, and the Britten Pears Programme at Aldeburgh. He has been acclaimed in Opera magazine for his 'outstandingly alert responses to text, music and stage partners' and in Opera Now for possessing 'a voice as commanding as his stature'. Jon was recently awarded the David Gosman Award following his performance in the final of Southbank Sinfonia's Peter Hulsen Orchestra Song Award.



TESSA PETERSEN | *guest concertmaster*


Tessa Petersen, New Zealand violinist, is Senior Lecturer in Violin at the University of Otago and the 11th Concertmaster of the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra since it began in 1966. A graduate of Otago University, Tessa received many academic and performance awards and was leader of the National Youth Orchestra of New Zealand before leaving to pursue postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music, London, under a prestigious British Commonwealth Scholarship. Tessa has performed in various recordings for the Collins Classics, Koch International, Gasparo and Ode record labels. Her 2012 Ode CD release, **18th: Mozart Fellowship**, features works by New Zealand composers for solo violin and violin/piano. Most recently she features in a 2015 recording for the Ode label, **Father and Son**, in works by Anthony Ritchie.




ANTHONY RITCHIE | *composer*

Anthony Ritchie studied composition at **Canterbury** University, and completed a Ph.D on the music of **Bartok**. He studied composition at the Liszt Academy in Hungary, before becoming Composer-in-Schools in Christchurch, in 1987. He moved to Dunedin in 1988 to be Mozart Fellow in composition, at Otago University, and later was Composer-in-residence with the Dunedin Sinfonia completing his **Symphony No. 1 Boum**. **Since** 2005, ten CDs of his compositions have been released. **Fjarren: In the Distance** with Anthony's **Corinet Quintet** and **Potakaunui at Dawn** won **Best** Classical Album in the 2016 NZ Music Awards. His **Symphony No.4 Stations** was selected as one of the Recordings of the Year by MusicWeb International, 2015. He is currently Professor of Music at Otago University.

SOUTHBANK SINFONIA

Southbank Sinfonia is internationally recognised as a leading orchestral academy, each year bringing together 33 of the world's most promising **graduate** musicians to provide a much-needed springboard into the profession. Its annual fellowship provides unparalleled opportunities to gain crucial orchestral experience and the skills that 21st-century musicians need to thrive, often in partnership with leading performing arts organisations including the Royal Opera and Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. From their Free Rush Hour Concerts at St John's Waterloo to taking centre-stage in the National Theatre's acclaimed production of *Amadeus*, the musicians bring their own exploratory impulse to classical music, asking anew what orchestras have the power to communicate in the modern world. By virtue of their youth, energy and excellence, Southbank Sinfonia players not only bring fresh resonance to the stage but are also ideally placed to act as role-models who inspire many younger musicians on the Southbank and beyond. To find out more about the orchestra and its next performances, visit  southbanksinfonia.co.uk.

PARLIAMENT CHOIR

The founding of the Parliament Choir in 2000 arose from a discussion between Lord Filkin and Simon Over (then Director  Music at St Margaret's Westminster) about the difficulty of belonging to a choir when working in Parliament. The need to work during evenings made it very hard to attend rehearsals. The choir now holds weekly rehearsals in St Mary Undercroft (the chapel within the Palace of Westminster) during parliamentary sessions, which allows MPs and Peers to leave rehearsals at the sound of the division bell in order to vote. In 2010 the Parliament Choir celebrated its tenth anniversary with performances 'Of all Persons and Estates', a setting of the Parliament prayer by Nick O'Neill, and Britten's *War Requiem*.

CITY CHOIR DUNEDIN

Members of City Choir Dunedin, based in New Zealand, join forces with the Parliament Choir this evening. City Choir Dunedin has been entertaining audiences for more than 150 years. The Choir traces its origins back to the Dunedin Philharmonic Society, which gave its first public performance in 1863. In 2013 City Choir Dunedin toured New Zealand with the **New Zealand** Symphony Orchestra, performing the Verdi *Requiem* in Dunedin and in the major centres of New Zealand, joining forces with Auckland Choral Society, Orpheus Choir of Wellington and Christchurch City Choir. In 2014 the choir travelled to Auckland to perform *A Sea Symphony* by Vaughan Williams, and enjoyed performing it again the following year in Dunedin with the Southern Sinfonia (now DSO) and members of Auckland Choral.



The Post-War research team with Jonathan Dove and Kate Kennedy following the launch of the Aural Strand. L–R: Niall Munro, Johana Musálková, Kate McLoughlin, Rita Phillips, Jonathan Dove, Kate Kennedy, Alexander Donnelly, Catherine Gilbert. Image credit: John Cairns Photography.

A century ago, a soldier took his violin to the frontline. His story is told in a poignant new oratorio by Anthony Ritchie, which is presented tonight alongside masterworks of the era by Vaughan Williams and Ravel.

Music's capacity to find connections across cultural and political divides is celebrated in the Parliament Choir, comprising members of both Houses of Parliament and staff of all parties. The Lords, MPs and their staff are joined by guest singers from New Zealand's City Choir Dunedin, and the acclaimed Southbank Sinfonia which unites outstanding graduate musicians from all over the world, conducted by Simon Over.

This concert is sponsored by the Mellon Foundation in memory of John E. Sawyer and concludes the international seminar series Post-War: Commemoration, Reconstruction, Reconciliation.



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