



Leicester
International
Music
Festival

Lunchtime Concert:
Thursday, 7th December 1pm



'Madeleine Dring was born on the moon and can therefore claim to be a pure-bred lunatic. Arriving on a speck of cosmic dust she came face to face with the human race and has never really recovered.'

Madeleine Dring 1923-1977, a centenary celebration concert

Nicholas Daniel (oboe) & Antonio Oyarzabal (piano)

Madeleine Dring: Three Piece Suite 12'

Madeleine Dring: Danza Gaya. 3'

Madeleine Dring: Valse Française 3'

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Six Studies in English Folk Song 11'

Madeleine Dring: Mazurka 3'

Madeleine Dring: Idyll 5'

Cole Porter/Madeleine Dring arr Nicholas Daniel: In the still of the night 5'

Madeleine Dring: Four Dances. Tango, Sarabande, Waltz and Italian Dance 12'

Nicholas Daniel, OBE

Nicholas Daniel has long been acknowledged as one of the world's great oboists and is one of Britain's best-known musicians. In a distinguished career that began more than four decades ago he has become an important ambassador in many different musical fields, and has significantly enlarged the repertoire for his instrument with the commissioning of hundreds of new works. Nicholas dedicates his life to music in many varied ways, playing, recording, and broadcasting widely as a soloist and with many of the world's leading ensembles. He is proud to support and patronise many important initiatives, charities, and trusts. He is highly sought after as a teacher, including being a Professor at the Trossingen Musikhochschule in Germany. Nicholas is the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orion Orchestra.

Antonio Oyarzabal was born in Bilbao in 1989. He finished high school with honours, obtaining the highest grade in piano. At the Musikene, in San Sebastian, he obtained his bachelor's degree under the pianists Marta Zabaleta and Miguel Borges, and trained in contemporary piano repertoire with Ricardo Descalzo. Antonio also completed a harpsichord diploma, with honours. Subsequently, he came to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he completed his masters as part of the Artist Diploma programme, studying with Caroline Palmer.

Antonio has worked with many conductors, such as Vasily Petrenko, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Afkham, Jun Märkl, Peter Stark, John Wilson, Leo McFall, James Blair, and Pierre Cao, performing in venues such as Royal Albert Hall (BBC Proms 2014), the Barbican, Casino Kursaal in Interlaken, Auditorio Nacional de Madrid, Fundação Gulbekian in Lisbon, Philharmonie Gasteig in Munich, Philharmonie Kasel, Grafenegg Auditorium, CERN in Geneva, and the Musikverein in Vienna.

Antonio's three albums have all received the Golden Melomano Award from Melomano Magazine. The most recent, *La Muse Oubliée*, was recorded on the Ibs Classical record label and featured piano works written by women. It received a 5-star rating from BBC Music Magazine, and was chosen as one of the best five piano albums of 2021 by Fanfare Magazine (US). There were also highly positive reviews in other magazines and from The Observer. The album has been featured on radio stations such as Classic FM, BBC Radio 3, National Radio of Israel, Radio Nacional (Spain). Antonio's work in the field of women composers has led to him being named as an Ambassador for Donne.uk

Madeleine Dring 1923-1977

Madeleine Dring was born on 7th September 1923 in Hornsey, Middlesex. After spotting her talent, Madeleine's primary school headteacher suggested she should audition for the junior department of the Royal College of Music and, at nine-years-old, she won a scholarship to study violin and piano. Incidentally, her violin teacher was Freda Dinn, who went on to write the Observer's Book of Music, and whose other passion, the recorder, led her to become the UK champion for the instrument and an enormous influence on countless young musicians.

Madeleine's composition classes at the College were with Leslie Fly. From those early days, there were signs that she was developing a style of her own: 'I've finished the piano piece on Mr. Fly's little theme . . . I said I hoped I'd excluded all "squishy" chords from my piece. He says I'm to keep off them for now. Just after he'd layed [sic] down the law the other week (he's done it before but those funny little chords keep slipping in), he was extemporising and played a beauty. He had to laugh and said, "You've got me doing it now."'

Winning another scholarship at 16, Madeleine moved up into the senior department of the Royal College and had lessons with Percy Buck and then, with Herbert Howells. On occasion, she was also taught by Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was very supportive of her work.

In 1947, Madeleine married Roger Lord, a fellow student. They met in a drama class and a close relationship began after she accompanied him for an audition. Lord went on to be principal oboist of the LSO for over 30 years, playing in all of the orchestra's recordings from that era, including the popular 'André Previn's Music Night' and sessions for the Beatles and for the Star Wars films.

Madeleine's favourite composer was Rachmaninov, and she owned a huge collection of his music. Her own work was diverse, individualistic, and hard to categorise however, but Francis Poulenc, George Gershwin and Cole Porter were undoubtedly influences. She certainly saw herself as a maverick, writing: 'Madeleine Dring was born on the moon and can therefore claim to be a pure-bred lunatic. Arriving on a speck of cosmic dust she came face to face with the human race and has never really recovered.'

Madeleine was a keen theatrical performer, as well as a pianist and singer. She often combined those passions, writing and composing songs and incidental music for West End revues, which were popular after the second world war. She generally avoided large scale works: like other women composers, domestic expectations in the 1950s and 60s were a problem:

‘I am writing some more songs and piano music but the mundane things of life do get in the way.’

Roger Lord thought there were further reasons for the lack of recognition his wife received:

‘In the ‘50s the critics used to dismiss any new work unless it paid obeisance to Schoenberg’s 12 note [sic] a-tonal system. Works like “Pierrot Lunaire” and Wozzeck [sic] of Berg, innovative and original as they were, to some extent made life difficult for the traditional, tonal composer. It always seems to be difficult with publishers, unless you “hit the headlines” in some ways, and they think there is money to be made. I don’t think Madeleine was ever disillusioned, but I think she was disappointed at the way the things were going in the composing field. She loved . . . highly sophisticated tonal music. Present day freedom to do what you like hardly existed 50 years ago. Publishers gradually got scared because of photocopying coming in, with enormous loss of income from sales of sheet music.’

In spite of these obstacles, there is an unmistakable elan in her songs and instrumental pieces, which suggests she loved working on smaller canvases. In a more serious vein, she set poems by, amongst others, Shakespeare, Herrick, and Betjeman.

In 1977, Madeleine Dring died suddenly and unexpectedly, following a cerebral haemorrhage. Subsequently, her devoted husband, Roger Lord, succeeded in transcribing, completing, and publishing a substantial quantity of his late wife’s work, for which we should be extremely grateful:

‘I think that Madeleine herself would like to be remembered for her songs and piano music, and for the pieces including oboe, which were mainly written for me to play.’

Madeleine Dring: Three Piece Suite 12'

I Showpiece

II Romance

III Finale

The Suite for Harmonica and Piano was originally composed in the 1970s at the request of the British classical harmonica player Douglas Tate, having met her at one of his recitals. Although it was written for harmonica and piano, it was never published in this form. Roger Lord transcribed the piece for oboe and published it in 1984 as *Three Piece Suite* for oboe and piano. An updated edition of this version was published in 2003.

Madeleine Dring: Danza Gaya. 3'

Danza Gaya was written in 1965 for two pianos, or for oboe and piano. The Royal College of Music has the original score. Dring composed a number of dance miniatures, some of which we will hear in today's concert. Many are now popular pieces for ABRSM students. *Danza Gaya* uses the *tresillo* rhythm (3+3+2 semi-quavers) which became popular in Cuba, having been imported from West Africa because of the Atlantic slave trade. It is commonly used in a variety of music, from habanera to Latin American styles such as tango and bossa nova, as well as Charleston and calypso. Dring's piece comes from a time when British popular music began to be influenced by sounds from the Caribbean.

Madeleine Dring: Valse Française 3'

This little waltz, its harmonic structure cleverly evoking an atmosphere of melancholy French nostalgia, also exists in a version for two pianos. Like much of her output, it was published in 1980, after her untimely death.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Six Studies in English Folk Song 11'

I Adagio – *Lovely on the Water*

II Andante sostenuto – *Spurn Point*

III Larghetto – *Van Diemen's Land*

IV Lento - *She borrowed some of her Mother's Gold*

V Andante Tranquillo – *The Lady and the Dragoon*

VI Allegro vivace – *As I walked over London Bridge*

These six studies were written for and dedicated to the cellist May Mukle, who gave the premiere with her sister Anne, on 4 June 1926 at the Scala Theatre, London, as part of the English Folk Dance Society Festival. Vaughan Williams wrote that his aim in setting the songs was for them to be 'treated with love' and this is certainly lovely, gentle music, with only the last song adopting a contrasting brisk tempo. They have been transcribed by the composer and others for violin, viola, clarinet, bassoon, alto sax, tuba and – the version we will hear today – for cor anglais. Nicholas Daniel recorded the Folk Song Studies with the Doric String Quartet in 2021 (Chandos) – highly recommended!

Vaughan Williams was a leading member of the English folk song revival, devoting, it is said, 30 days a year for ten years travelling the country until he had amassed a total of 800 songs in his collection. In addition to the works which explicitly quote these songs, many of the composer's most popular works were inspired by the folk-song idiom and its modal harmonies: *On Wenlock Edge*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, *The Five Mystical Songs*, *The Fantasia on Christmas Carols* and *The Lark Ascending*, for example.

In a concert devoted to the memory of one woman composer, it is worth taking a moment to consider another: May Mukle, the dedicatee, was a noted cellist and composer, who 'by the turn of the century.....was fully recognized not only as an outstanding musician but as one of the most remarkable cellists this country had produced' (The Times). Her career included concert tours to Australia, Africa, and Asia and, in 1925, she played at New York's Aeolian Hall with Percy Grainger and Lionel Tertis. She was an original member of the Society of Women Musicians, present at the organization's first meeting in 1911 and was a member of the all-women English Ensemble, with violinist Marjorie Hayward, violist Rebecca Clarke, and pianist Kathleen Long.

Madeleine Dring: Mazurka 3'

This *Mazurka* is the first of three dances from a piano suite, written in 1967/8, but only published in 1981 at the instigation of Robert Lord. The other pieces are *Pavane* and *Ländler*.

Madeleine Dring: Idyll 5'

Idyll was originally written for viola and piano, but Roger Lord, disappointed that the piece remained unplayed and unpublished for many years,

transcribed the solo part for oboe, his own instrument, to which it is well suited. The only recording of *Idyll* was made in 2007 by Thierry Cammaert, oboist of the Quartz Ensemble, a Belgian wind group. Of all Dring's works in this concert, this is possibly the most 'modernist': a chromatic solo line moves in delightfully unpredictable directions, before soaring in reverie above a lilting piano part.

Cole Porter/Madeleine Dring arr Nicholas Daniel: *In the still of the night* 5'

Madeleine Dring arranged three Cole Porter songs: *In the Still of the Night*, *Every Time We Say Goodbye* and *Where, Oh Where*, demonstrating her ability as an arranger as well as a songwriter. Dring's cabaret songs featured in her many West End revue performances, including the *Airs on a Shoestring* series, for which she wrote and performed much music, as did Flanders & Swann (*Guide to Britten* and *Excelsior* were written for this revue). Other songs in this genre include *Snowman*, a love song from a woman singing to a snowman built by the man she secretly loves, and *Model Models* – a satirical take on the absurdities of haute couture.

Madeleine Dring: *Three pieces - Tango, Sarabande, WIB Waltz + Italian Dance* 12'

These *Three Pieces* were composed in the 1960s, originally for flute and piano. Like many of the pieces in this concert, they were published by Cambria after her death thanks to the work of Roger Lord and the enthusiasm of the American pianist, Leigh Kaplan. The title, *WIB Waltz*, reveals that the suite was written for the distinguished British flautist, William Bennett.

Italian Dance, for oboe and piano, is one of Dring's better-known pieces and was published during her lifetime (1960). It is based on the *tarantella* (*dance of the spider*), which originated in Taranto, southern Italy, dating back to at least the 15th century. The *tarantella* began as a cure for a condition called tarantism, which was believed to be caused by the bite of a spider widely thought to be poisonous. The spider's victim, who was typically a woman, engaged in a frenetic dance, accompanied by musicians playing fast-tempo music, to "expel" the venom from her system. Coming full-circle in this concert, this piece is known to have also been played on the harmonica.

Lunchtime Concerts 2024

18th January: Guildhall School of Music Winds

The Guildhall School's flagship wind ensemble visits Leicester for the first time.

1st February: Chetham's School

A welcome return visit by the very talented students of the UK's largest specialist music school.

15th February: Iyad Sughayer (piano)

The third instalment of Iyad Sughayer's Mozart Sonata cycle.

29th February: Bone-Afide (trombone quartet)

BONE-AFIDE is an international chamber ensemble made up of some of Europe's leading young Trombonists. The group strives to showcase the versatility of the Trombone, performing works from all genres and periods with the aim of defying stereotypes surrounding the instrument.

14th March: Hélène Clement (viola) & Alasdair Beatson (piano)

Best known as a member of the Doric Quartet, French violist Hélène Clément is the current holder of the viola previously owned by both Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten. This instrument, made by Francesco Giussani, in Italy, in 1843 was given to Britten as he left England in 1939 by his 'musical father'. Since first playing this viola, Hélène has aimed to create a testament to both composers by championing their repertoire for the viola, including Bridge's cello sonata arranged for viola. Her partner is the outstanding Scottish pianist, Alasdair Beatson, who has built an enviable reputation for his work with singers and instrumentalists.

11th April: Theo Platt (baritone) & Keval Shah (piano)

British-Russian baritone Theodore Platt has received several prizes: He was the winner of the 3rd Prize at the Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition, 2nd Prize at the 2019 Kathleen Ferrier Award, and 1st Prize at the 2018 Lies Askonas Competition.

Keval Shah is a sought-after accompanist and chamber musician, appearing at venues including Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall. He has been engaged at the Aldeburgh festival, Oxford Lieder festival, and Heidelberger Frühling Festival.

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