

## **Ensemble 10:10 November 4 programme notes**

In a concert filled with thrillingly contrasting landscapes, Geoffrey Paterson makes his eagerly awaited return to Ensemble 10:10 bringing three classic pieces from three giants of the recent past – Takemitsu, Birtwistle and Ligeti (whose 100th anniversary we celebrate this year).

Meanwhile Tansy Davies and a new work from Royal Philharmonic Society prize-winner Michael Betteridge bring us up to the minute.

### **Geoffrey Paterson: conductor**

Geoffrey Paterson returns to Liverpool after conducting the opening concert of Ensemble 10:10's 2022/23 season.

Paterson studied composition at Cambridge and trained as a répétiteur at the National Opera Studio and as a Jette Parker Young Artist at the Royal Opera House – where he was mentored by Sir Anthony Pappano – before starting his career as a pianist and assistant for some of the world's most distinguished opera conductors.

Since winning the Leeds Conductors' Competition in 2009 at the age of 25, he has established an international reputation as a conductor of 'impressive command' (The Telegraph) and 'impeccable grace' (The Guardian).

He is widely admired for his keen grasp of detail, responsiveness to musicians and his ability to shape and make music from the most complex scores with natural authority.

The 40-year-old's musical enthusiasms cover a wide range of repertoire, and he is particularly renowned for his work in the field of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and contemporary music.

Among world premieres he has conducted are works by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and James Dillon, and his performances of masterpieces by the greatest composers of the last 100 years (including Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio and Ligeti) have been widely praised.

### **Ensemble 10: 10**

Ensemble 10:10 was founded in 1997 by members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. It soon became integrated into the regular concert giving of Liverpool Philharmonic, able to draw on the talents of the whole orchestra as required.

It is central to Liverpool Philharmonic's commitment to new writing and, in particular, supporting composers from Liverpool and the North West Region.

Ensemble 10:10 has performed in a variety of venues across Liverpool. As part of Liverpool Philharmonic's ground-breaking collaboration with the University of Liverpool, Ensemble 10:10 started a new era in April 2022 – it became resident at the Tung Auditorium within the university's Yoko Ono Centre.

### **Tansy Davies: *Inside Out 2***

Tansy Davies' vital, visceral music embraces a wide range of influences, from the classical to avant-garde, funk and experimental rock and encompasses classical, choral and stage work.

Davies – who has a background as a horn player, electric guitarist and vocalist – was born in Bristol in 1973 and studied composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Royal Holloway, University of London.

A former BBC Young Composer, in 2009 she was presented with a prestigious Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award, designed to give artists the freedom to develop their own creative ideas.

Brilliantly imaginative, and often wonderfully offbeat, she has been described as one of the most distinctive voices in British music today.

Along with composing works for many leading orchestras, her work is also championed by ensembles worldwide and at a host of international festivals.

Last April Ensemble 10:10 gave the premiere of Davies' *glider* for bass clarinet and seven instruments at the Tung Auditorium, with the solo part taken by RLPO clarinettist Ausias Morant.

*Inside Out 2* (2003) was commissioned by the Bergamo Ensemble which premiered it at the Sounds New Festival in Canterbury. It was later included on *Troubairitz*, an album dedicated to Davies' work.

Listen out for short brittle sounds and long soft sounds which are woven into a tapestry of broken patterns, cycles and grooves, all moving at slightly different speeds, in a piece one reviewer described as a "brittle bricolage of pizzicato and percussion sounds" and another as "a compact study in pungent counterpoint and incisive rhythms".

**Listen to *Inside Out 2* from the album *Troubairitz*.**

<https://nonclassical.bandcamp.com/track/inside-out-2>

### **György Ligeti: *Melodien***

Hungarian-Austrian composer György Ligeti has been described as 'one of the most distinctive and original voices of Modernism' whose music is 'complex, clever and challenging...yet surprisingly down to earth'.

Born in Transylvania in 1923 to Hungarian-Jewish parents, he lived in Hungary before moving to Austria in the year of the Hungarian Revolution, later becoming an Austrian citizen.

His earliest works were influenced by the musical language of Bartók, but it was his work in electronic music with Stockhausen and then his 1958-9 orchestral piece *Apparitions* which helped make his reputation with the European avant-garde.

A constant innovator, Ligeti produced complex and challenging – but accessible – works with an emphasis on what he called micropolyphony (the layering and building up of dense sound textures from different fragments of melody).

*Melodien for Orchestra* dates from 1971 and was commissioned by the city of Nuremberg to mark the quincentenary of the birth of the great German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer.

Ligeti's work underwent a change in style and direction after the 1960s, and *Melodien* can be seen as a transitional piece.

The composer himself described how in this work he had “tried to loosen up the dense micropolyphony of my musical language and make it more transparent...the musical form unfolds like stretched fabric in the continuously flowing time, but the individual voices no longer merge as in my earlier music. Rather they can be heard individually in their superimposition and interweaving.”

**Listen to Ligeti's *Melodien for Orchestra*.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ\\_cK04ilbM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ_cK04ilbM)

## **Michael Betteridge: *Ode to Urbanity* – Royal Philharmonic Society commission (World Premiere)**

Manchester-based composer, conductor and animateur Michael Betteridge presents a world premiere in this November concert at the Tung Auditorium.

Betteridge enjoys an eclectic range of influences, including Britten, Sondheim, Caroline Shaw and John Adams, with storytelling and energy at the heart of the music that speaks to him.

Much of his output to date has been vocal and opera music, often working collaboratively with communities and leisure-time music makers, and with large scale pieces including works for the BBC Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and Opera North.

The 35-year-old was commissioned to write a new work for Ensemble 10:10 by the Royal Philharmonic Society after becoming one of the composers chosen to join the 2023 RPS Composers programme.

*Ode to urbanity* reflects the changes Betteridge has seen since he first moved to Manchester as a university student as well as a reflection on what it means to make somewhere your home.

He explains: "Split into two movements with an interlude, the first section explores those changes to the Manchester skyline and is centred around a sequence of pitches that is obsessively developed. Initially this sequence takes a while to find momentum – as if breaking ground and discovering itself – before becoming more melodic and expansive.

"Nonetheless, even as fragments of musical material grow and contract there is a perpetual sense of unevenness and unwieldiness, a sense of something never settling.

"Eventually it reaches its zenith before succumbing to a persistent upwards whole tone scale that has been heard fleetingly throughout the movement thus far.

"A delicate and piano-led interlude gives us a moment to catch our breath before we head into the second movement. In direct contrast to the first, it starts with high string harmonics and a pastoral oboe solo, which swiftly becomes a duet with muted trumpet.

"This melodic material unfolds each time with a series of upward fifths that becomes a feature in this movement. Inspired by strophic form of folk music and romantic song, we hear variations of this melody across the orchestra before a simple piano coda in the Lydian mode.

"Memories of the whole tone scale from the first movement make a brief appearance as the work gently comes to a close."

## **Toru Takemitsu: *Tree Line***

Toru Takemitsu – the foremost Japanese composer of the post-war period - combined Western modernism with Japanese tradition in a series of what have been described as understated, 'crystalline' compositions.

Born in Tokyo in 1930, he enjoyed a career that spanned almost half a century and was a prolific composer of orchestral, chamber and voice works, along with more than 100 scores for film, television, radio, theatre and dance. He also wrote widely on aesthetics and music theory.

Takemitsu was introduced to Western classical music on American forces radio, and at the age of 18 he conceived the idea of electronic music technology, later using electronic tape-recording techniques in his compositions.

His early influences included Messiaen, Webern and Debussy, along with John Cage whose emphasis on timbre and the power of silences within music echoed elements of the Japanese tradition of 'ma' (the idea of a pause in time or an interval in space which is filled with possibility) and helped Takemitsu see how he could successfully embrace those elements in his own music.

*Tree Line*, described by one critic as "ecstatically luminous...orchestrated with exquisite delicacy", was composed in 1988 for Oliver Knussen and the London Sinfonietta and takes its

name from a stand of acacia trees lining a road in the mountains where Takemitsu worked, and along which he enjoyed walking to clear his mind.

That restfulness is echoed in what is a subtle piece full of instrumental colour and which shows the influence of Debussy in its use of chords to create a calming harmonic rhythm.

A gentle rising melody winds through the centre of the work which also offers beautiful colours and gliding strings and winds, while in some passages the composer also makes use of microtones - intervals smaller than a semitone, a style often found in traditional southeast Asian music.

**Listen to Toru Takemitsu's *Tree Line*.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpKwqUI8Gbo>

### **Sir Harrison Birtwistle: *Secret Theatre***

A towering figure in British music for more than 50 years, Sir Harrison Birtwistle was – as one eulogy described him after his death last year – “an utterly distinctive composer who wrote music of delicate beauty”.

Born in 1934 into a farming family at Accrington, ‘Harry’ Birtwistle took up the clarinet at seven and studied the instrument, along with composition, on a scholarship at the Manchester College of Music (now the Royal Northern) where he co-founded the New Music Manchester group. Fellow students included Peter Maxwell Davies.

Alongside a busy and acclaimed composing career, during which he explored nearly every genre of music, he also became a professor at universities including Princeton, Cornell and King’s College, London, and an associate director at the National Theatre.

Like Takemitsu, Birtwistle’s 1984 work *Secret Theatre* was commissioned by the London Sinfonietta – in fact it completed a trilogy of works commissioned by them from the composer and was performed in a concert to celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In it Birtwistle creates a powerful, gripping and mysterious aural drama with each instrument emerging from a ‘great commotion’ to give its own musical monologue before the general melee returns, creating tensions between solo and ensemble voices.

Its composer explained: “What I do is something I call instrumental role-playing...I don’t write an actual piece and then add a number of instruments – it’s more like a play with persons that way, how they sound and what they say.”

Incidentally, *Secret Theatre* was also the first work by Birtwistle that Geoffrey Paterson conducted - as an 18-year-old university student. He later went on to work with the composer several times, including on the premiere of his chamber opera *The Cure*.

**Listen to Sir Harrison Birtwistle's *Secret Theatre*.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G4I3qiC3eE>