

**Ensemble 10:10**  
**March 5 programme notes**

Jörg Widmann's love of Schumann impelled him to reflect, reconsider and then weave his own instrumental tapestry in and around Schumann's great song cycle *Dichterliebe*, sung tonight by our Artist in Residence Benjamin Appl. Geoffrey Paterson returns to guide us through this and the contrasting musical landscapes of Alexander Goehr and Pierre Boulez (to honour his 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary), and introduce new music from the Liverpool-born former Rushworth Composition Prize winner Nneka Cummins.

**Geoffrey Paterson** *conductor*

Hailed as a conductor with 'natural and charismatic authority' (*Opera World*), [Geoffrey Paterson](#) is renowned for his 'impressive command' (*The Telegraph*) and 'impeccable grace' (*The Guardian*) in repertoire extending from the Baroque to music of the present day.

His work in the concert hall and opera house is praised for his 'winning combination of assuredness, agility and enthusiasm' (*The Telegraph*) as well as his 'instinct for pace' (*The Spectator*) and 'innate feel for orchestral texture' (*MusicOMH*).

In 2020 he made his televised BBC Proms debut with Steve Reich's *City Life*, returning in 2022 to continue a longstanding collaboration with the London Sinfonietta and Norwegian saxophonist and composer Marius Neset. Other memorable concert performances in recent years have included Strauss' own film score reworking of *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Vienna and London; Nielsen's *Symphonia Expansiva* with the BBC Scottish Symphony; Strauss' *Bourgeois Gentleman* with the Hamburg Symphony; and Bernstein's *West Side Story* to an audience of 10,000 with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra.

In the current busy season Paterson is making concert debuts with the Warsaw Philharmonic and Arctic Philharmonic, and conducts for the first time at Covent Garden's Royal Ballet.

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

With a background in composition – he was a pupil of Alexander Goehr, alongside masterclass studies with Boulez and Eotvos – he brings insight, technical command and an exacting ear to music whose secrets are only revealed through a rare combination of fastidiousness and inspiration.

**Benjamin Appl** *baritone\**

Baritone [Benjamin Appl](#) is celebrated by audiences and critics alike for a voice 'that belongs to the last of the old great masters of song' with an 'almost infinite range of colours' (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and artistry that's described as 'unbearably moving' (*The Times*).

A former [Gramophone Award Young Artist of the Year](#), Appl was a BBC New Generation Artist 2014-16, a Wigmore Hall Emerging Artist and ECHO Rising Star in 2015-16. He was signed exclusively to Sony Classical from 2016-21 and began a multi-album deal with Alpha Classics

from autumn 2021. He started in music as a young chorister at the renowned Regensburger Domspatzen, later continuing his studies at the Munich School of Music and Theatre and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He had the good fortune to be mentored by the legendary singer Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

An established recitalist, Appl has performed at many leading international festivals and at major concert venues including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Konzerthaus Berlin and Vienna and the Musee de Louvre in Paris. He is a regular recitalist at the Wigmore Hall. In equal demand as a soloist on the world's most prestigious stages, he collaborates with the NHK Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Philharmonia, Vienna Symphony and Seattle Symphony among others.

A growing discography includes Schumann duets with Ann Murray accompanied by Malcolm Martineau, his debut solo disc *Stunden, Tage, Ewigkeiten* accompanied by James Baillieu, and a live recording of Schubert lieder with Graham Johnson. His first solo album for Sony Classical, *Heimat*, was Gramophone nominated and won the prestigious Prix Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau at the 2017-18 Academie du Disque Lyrique Orphees d'Or.

He was named as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's Artist in Residence for 2024/25. In addition to this Ensemble 10:10 concert, he conducted Handel's *Messiah* in Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and will return to the Tung Auditorium on June 18 [in recital](#) with pianist James Baillieu.

Listen to Benjamin Appl [sing Mahler](#) from the album *Forbidden Fruit* with pianist James Baillieu.

### **Nneka Cummins** *Flow State* (world premiere)

[Nneka Cummins](#) is a Liverpool-born composer and producer, and qualified solicitor, who studied at masters level at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and was awarded the Gareth Neame Scholarship, the Trinity College London Scholarship and the Director's Prize for Excellence in Composition.

Cummins won the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's [Rushworth Composition Prize in 2021](#), following which Ensemble 10:10 performed the composer's *Metal Tapestry* at the Tung Auditorium in 2022.

In 2022-23 Cummins was a Sound and Music New Voices Composer (supported by Arts Council England, PRS Foundation and the Vaughan Williams Foundation) and a Philharmonia Composer Academy fellow. A new work, *3 Planets*, was premiered at the Royal Festival Hall in May 2023. A concert recording has also been released.

As a current [nonclassical Artist in Residence](#), Cummins also had a new work performed at the Southbank's Purcell Room in [May last year](#).

Writing about *Flow State*, which receives its world premiere in this Ensemble 10:10 concert, Cummins explains: "*Flow State* is a collection of three distinct sonic worlds entitled: I Ease in, II Meandering Wings and III Flow State.

#### I. Ease In

Ease In is a reworking of one of my earliest established works exploring a rhythmic and lyrical voice, where players are invited to 'ease in' to the groove. Here, percussiveness is shared amongst the ensemble, notably through extended techniques played by the harp and double bass. Listen to how the melody is fragmented and hockets between the flute, clarinet and harp parts whilst the double bass provides the core rhythmic stability beneath.

## II. Meandering Wings

Meandering Wings, originally written as a flute and harp duet, was written as an observation of nature (and freedom) of fluttering birds or butterflies liberated in their course.

This is a lighter movement, where percussiveness remains but has a softer quality due to the flute and harp dominance. This movement introduces an ethereal sound world through the use of harmonics which is expanded in movement III. Loosely inspired by the harp's distant West African cousin, the kora, I was keen to explore the use of the harp as the core rhythmic focus by holding the ostinato in the second half of this movement.

## III. Flow State

Flow State is the only movement that utilises all players together. The sense of melodic flow experienced in movements I and II remains here, but it is more lyrical in quality. The movement's melody introduced on the opening, cyclically returns throughout the piece. The second half of this movement is the most atmospheric of all three movements, intended to create a wash of sound energy that continues to swirl within.

Flow State is a window into the place from which ideas flow and slowly reveal themselves. The sprouting of idea seeds, infinitely sown, unfurl in imperfect perfection. From the Flow State, we question, unpick and replant.

As a set, *Flow State*, in the revisiting of ideas, is a reminder to look back for what is useful and observe through the present lens."

## Alexander Goehr *Sinfonia*

[Alexander Goehr](#), who died last August at the age of 92, was a greatly significant 20<sup>th</sup> Century composer and teacher. Among fellow contemporary composers who the German-born English composer influenced are Robin Holloway, George Benjamin and Thomas Adès.

Son of the conductor Walter (who had studied in Berlin with Arnold Schoenberg) and classically trained pianist Laelia Goehr, Alexander Goehr studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music, where friends and contemporaries included Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle.

In the mid-1950s Goehr, pianist John Ogden and trumpeter Elgar Howarth, formed the [New Music Manchester](#) group, bringing European avant-garde to British ears. An early seismic moment for the composer – known as Sandy - was hearing his father conduct the UK premiere of Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*, and he later went to Paris to study with the French composer. It was there he became friends with Pierre Boulez.

[Goehr's](#) breakthrough came in 1957 with a performance of his cantata *The Deluge*, conducted by his father and inspired by Einstein who had in turn been inspired by Leonardo da Vinci. In the early 1960s, when he was considered a leading light in the avant-garde, he worked for the *BBC* and formed the Music Theatre Ensemble. Teaching in America and Leeds, in the mid 1970s he was appointed Professor of Music at Cambridge where he remained for almost 50 years.

A highly individual composer, one of the recurring features of his work was the exploration of the [symphonic form](#) and he wrote four symphonies. *Sinfonia* for chamber orchestra dates from 1979. It was commissioned by the English Chamber Orchestra and received its world premiere at the Royal Festival Hall in 1980 with Daniel Barenboim conducting. Scored for woodwind quintet, two horns – listen out for some demanding, rapid writing in the brass' high register – and strings, it runs to 23 minutes and opens with a driving *Introduzione: Lento · Allegro ma non troppo*, the longest of its six movements. In the brief *Praeludium* second movement, strings swell

and ebb away beneath a spiralling melody on winds, while the similarly short Centrum third and subsequent Recitativo are followed by a longer, sprightly Variazioni which develops from opening, skittish interplay between winds and brass. The work concludes with Dankgesang - a Song of Thanksgiving.

### **Pierre Boulez *Mémoriale***

**Pierre Boulez** was not a composer to write each and every work in splendid isolation of the next – instead often new pieces tended to grow and develop from existing compositions in what have been described as ‘tangled family trees’. Keen musical genealogists can detect this musical DNA running through his practise from decade to decade.

In 1971, Boulez marked the death of Stravinsky with a composition - ...*explosante-fixe*... (or ...exploding-fixed...), which over the course of some 20 years shape-shifted into a series of different pieces. *Mémoriale*, for flute and eight instruments and dating from 1985, is one such work. Taking the flute part from *explosante-fixe*, the seven-minute piece was dedicated to the Canadian flautist Lawrence ‘Larry’ Beaugard who was first flute in Boulez’s Paris-based contemporary **Ensemble InterContemporain**. Beaugard, a pioneer in computer music research, died of cancer in September 1985, aged just 28.

In a composer’s note, Boulez explained: “...*explosante-fixe*... is not a message, I think, which reflects Stravinsky’s influence on me. Stravinsky himself gave a comparable example when he wrote the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* in memory of Debussy, since these wind symphonies truly are extremely different from Debussy in their tone colour, form and musical ideas. It is the same with ...*explosante-fixe*... At first, the material was rather primitive; I worked it out some more in the next step. I assigned a very precise register to each instrument, in which each one moves independently of the others. That, so to speak, is the fixed dimension of ...*explosante-fixe*... At the same time, the instruments were to mutually influence one another, thus undermining the register boundaries.”

A showcase for solo instrument accompanied by octet, *Mémoriale* is introduced by the flute and then develops in kaleidoscopic form into a series of refrains which are interrupted by cheerful flourishes. The tone is often ambiguous but listen out for a long E-flat which can be heard at moments throughout the piece.

### **Jörg Widmann *Schumannliebe*\***

**Jörg Widmann** is considered one of the most versatile and intriguing artists of his generation. The multi-award-winning composer, conductor and clarinettist was born in Munich and studied the clarinet there with Gerd Starke and later with Charles Neidich at New York’s Juilliard School.

A passionate advocate of chamber music, he regularly performs with partners like Daniel Barenboim, Heinz Holliger, Tabea Zimmermann, Kim Kashkashian and Helene Grimaud, and also enjoys a busy solo career. From 2001 to 2015 he was professor of clarinet at Freiberg, where he also became professor of composition in 2009. In 2017 he was appointed to a chair at the Barenboim-Said-Academy in Berlin.

String quartets form the heart of his work, although his compositional catalogue also includes concertos for trumpet, violin, viola, flute, piano and horn – the latter receiving its premiere in Berlin in May 2024 under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle – and a trilogy of pieces for large orchestra on the transformation of vocal forms for instrumental forces.

*Schumannliebe*, a fantasy for baritone and ensemble, was given its premiere in Porto in October 2023 by Matthias Goerne and the Remix Ensemble, under the direction of Peter Rundel.

Widmann takes 16 poems written by the lyrical German poet Heinrich Heine that were set to music by Schumann in his 1840 song cycle *Dichterliebe*, which tells a musical story of love and betrayal. To these he adds Schumann's song *Dein Angesicht* as an epilogue. While leaving the sequence of the verses and the baritone line almost untouched, he has reimagined the orchestration to create quite a different sound from the original, incorporating harmonic accents, tonality, timbre and advanced playing techniques.

Widmann explained in an interview for [Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie](#): "I didn't distort the original but introduced greater clarity."