

MUSIC TALKS 2018–2019

MUSIC

IN TIME AND PLACE:

NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC AFTER TRISTAN



MUSIC TALKS

Now in its sixth season **Music Talks** is a small organisation which presents lecture-recital series and one-off musical events appealing to wide range of audiences in unusual and beautiful settings.

Our specialist presenters are selected not just for their knowledge but also for their outstanding communication skills and infectious enthusiasm, ensuring that you need no prior knowledge of music to enjoy the sessions. Supporting materials are provided online for course members at

www.musictalks.org.uk

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MUSIC IN TIME AND PLACE: NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC AFTER TRISTAN

Venue Christ Church Kensington, Victoria Road, London W8 5RQ.

Ten minutes from Royal Albert Hall, five minutes from Gloucester Road tube.

Dates

Wednesday mornings 10.15–12.15

Autumn term 2018

October 10, 17, 31; November 7, 14, 21

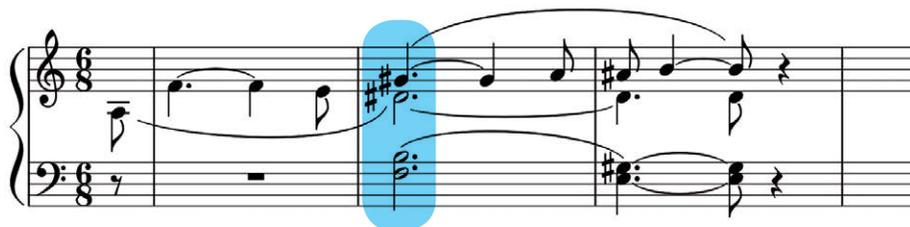
Spring term 2019

February 6, 13, 27; March 6, 13, 20

The famous 'Tristan' chord in Wagner's 1865 opera changed music for ever. Conveying a sense of harmonic uncertainty, it unsettled the expectation that music sits comfortably in one key, venturing occasionally into related keys but always returning to a reassuringly familiar tonal 'home'. After Tristan, tonality began to dissolve, and composers had to think afresh.

While some continued to espouse well-trying forms like the symphony, pouring new material into 'old' structures, others pioneered new approaches to writing, developing techniques no longer reliant on the accepted rules of keys and harmony. Performers too had to cultivate different skills, while audiences were obliged to embrace new ways of listening. Everything was changing, and so was music.

Music in Time and Place spotlights a series of major works across Europe and the USA, each illustrating a particular style of music after 1900. Though the music is always centre stage, we also consider the context – historical, political and cultural – of the work's premiere, capturing a sense of what it was like to be there, on that day, at that performance. Sessions include occasional contributions from artists and writers adding further perspective. Finally, we examine the intriguing area of performance reception: what those present – audience, performers and critics – thought of the music they were hearing, and why.



Richard Wagner, Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, 10 June 1865, Munich

MUSIC IN TIME AND PLACE

Wednesday 10 October, 10.15–12.15

Claude Debussy: L'après-midi d'un faune

December 1894, Paris

Katy Hamilton *Presenter*

It seems astonishing now that the premiere of this most sensuous, revolutionary work went almost unnoticed at the time, but Debussy's magical realisation of the Symbolist poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé has become one of his best-loved pieces. We raise the curtain on *fin-de-siècle* Paris, its poetry, its love of ambiguity and exoticism, and this orchestral work which, in Mallarmé's own words, transforms his words 'into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness'.



Wednesday 17 October, 10.15–12.15

Arnold Schoenberg: The 'Scandal' Concert, 31 March 1913, Vienna

Karl Lutchmayer *Presenter*

Two months before the premiere of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Schoenberg and his circle presented a concert in the hallowed halls of the Musikverein. Following fast on the heels of the great success of his Gurrelieder the previous month, the Expressionist outlook of the music proved too much for the bourgeois audience in the last days of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and a full-blown riot ensued. Just as with Gavrilo Princip's fateful bullet the following year, this could be said to have marked the turning point from 19th century certainties to 20th century existential crises.



Wednesday 31 October, 10.15–12.15

William Walton Symphony No. 1 in B flat minor, 3 December 1934, London

Katy Hamilton *Presenter*

The musical scene of 1930s England was a vibrant, edgy, and rapidly darkening world. Benjamin Britten was approaching adulthood; Stravinsky came visiting the capital; but the heady freedom of the jazz age was threatened by the growing clouds of war. William Walton's energetic Symphony no. 1 is brimming with a potent mix of driving, jazzy energy, borderline atonality and a nod (or a thumping of the nose?) at contemporary British Nationalism.



AUTUMN TERM 2018

Wednesday 7 November, 10.15–12.15

Kurt Weill: *Der Dreigroschenoper* (Threepenny Opera)

31 August 1928, Berlin

Jeremy Sams *Presenter*

John Gay's 1728 satirical ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera* inspired a collaboration two centuries later between ardent anti-capitalists Weill and Brecht. The result was *The Threepenny Opera*, a sardonic updating of the original show. Its straightforward narrative, cabaret-like tunes, all underpinned by the familiar sound of a German dance band belie the darkly disturbing themes, tuggish overtones and earthily visceral characterisations. This was entertainment for the people, not the elite.



Wednesday 14 November, 10–12.15

Charles Ives Sonata No. 2 for Piano: Concord, Mass.,

1840–60, 28 November 1938, Cos Cob, Connecticut

Aaron Copland Quiet City, 29 January 1941, New York

Katy Hamilton *Presenter*

What does America sound like? In these two contrasting works, Charles Ives and Aaron Copland present views of town and country – from the writers Thoreau and Emerson to the isolation of city living and the search for the American dream. Their premiere performances fell within just a few years, on the eve of the Second World War: a meeting of generations as Ives looked back to the words and popular music of the nineteenth century, and Copland mused on the opportunities and isolation of the twentieth.



Wednesday 21 November, 10.15–12.15

Witold Lutoslawski: *Paganini Variations* 1941, Warsaw

Karl Lutchmayer *Presenter*

Amidst the destruction and roundups of Warsaw under the German occupation, Poles were forbidden from taking part in cultural events. Only café concerts remained, where, as a piano duo, Lutoslawski and Panufnik went far beyond the expected popular music to play their own, frequently modernised, transcriptions of music from Bach to Ravel. Of the over 200 works they performed, only the arresting Paganini Variations survives. Far from the tradition of such a title, it was a veritable call to arms for the continuation of the intellectual life of the city.

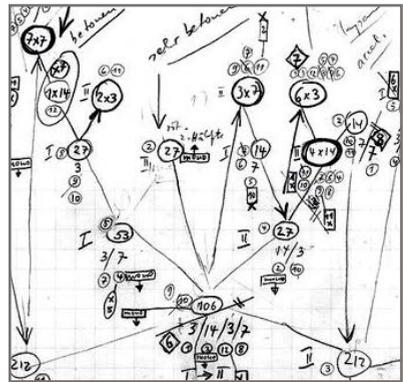


MUSIC IN TIME AND PLACE

Wednesday 6 February, 10.15–12.15

Pierre Boulez: and Les Flèches 8 December 1944, Paris
Karl Lutchmayer *Presenter*

Although appointed as a teacher of harmony at the Paris Conservatoire (under the Vichy government who had dismissed Bloch under the Statut des Juifs), Olivier Messiaen was a magnet to a wide range of young avant-garde musicians who gathered for his analysis seminars conducted in a private house in Paris. Centred as much on composition as analysis, the classes later became legendary, changing the face of European composition through attendees such as Boulez and Stockhausen.



Wednesday 13 February, 10.15–12.15

Richard Strauss Metamorphosen 25 January 1946, Zurich
Karl Lutchmayer *Presenter*

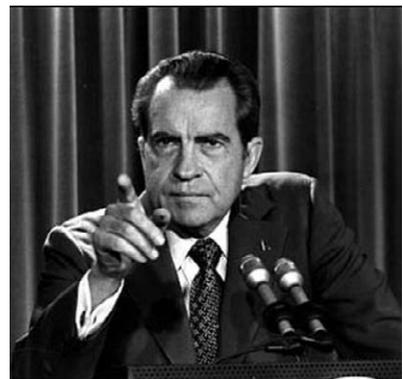
Completing Karl's series of lectures of events based around music and war, this session looks at Strauss' complex relationship with the Nazi regime. Culminating in *Metamorphosen*, the lush, post-Romantic work for strings written in the last months of the war, we trace the composer's disgust for the ideology, but impotence in the face of self-interest. How should we understand the difference between a musician's actions and his works?



Wednesday 27 February, 10.15–12.15

John Adams Nixon in China 22 October 1987, Houston
Katy Hamilton *Presenter*

In what was to become the first of a string of operas based on contemporary events, Minimalist composer John Adams tells the story of Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. This eclectic score features references to everything from Gershwin and Wagner to Philip Glass and Johann Strauss – with Nixon's own words even set in a way to capture his recognizable speech patterns. A little over a decade after Nixon's political demise and the Watergate Scandal, *Nixon in China* brings the 1970s vividly to life, as American and Chinese leaders alike are forced to ask: 'How much of what we did was good?'



SPRING TERM 2019

Wednesday 6 March, 10.15–12.15

Dmitri Shostakovich String Quartet No.8. 1960, Leningrad
Stephen Johnson *Presenter*

Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet is one of the very few twentieth century chamber works to achieve widespread popularity. Yet its language can be challenging, and its tone is heartbreakingly elegiac. What is it about this profoundly troubled piece that speaks to so many? And why is its message not ultimately bleak? Stephen Johnson looks at the music in detail, and offers some possible answers.

Wednesday 13 March, 10.15–12.15

Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story 26 September 1957,
New York
Jeremy Sams *Presenter*

In his 2007 book 'The Rest is Noise', Alex Ross describes West Side Story as a 'beautifully engineered piece of pop theatre... a sophisticated essay in twentieth-century style'. Bernstein was a prodigiously gifted composer and charismatic conductor who worked in a range of styles. The dazzling success of West Side Story possibly detracted from his more 'serious' works, a fact that haunted the composer throughout his life.

Wednesday 20 March, 10.15–12.15

Today: Why music?

Katy Hamilton and Karl Lutchmayer *Presenters*

After educating, inspiring and entertaining us throughout this season, Katy Hamilton and Karl Lutchmayer find themselves in the spotlight. In this session they reveal the origins of their own tastes in music since 1900 – their likes and dislikes, blind spots and passions. True to Music Talks tradition, the course concludes with a drinks reception.



PRESENTERS

KATY HAMILTON

Katy Hamilton is a freelance researcher, writer and presenter on music. Her area of specialism is the music of Johannes Brahms and his contemporaries, and she has also been involved in projects covering subjects as diverse as the history of the Edinburgh Festival, the role of émigré musicians in post-1945 British musical life, and variety shows at the Wigmore Hall in the early twentieth century. She has provided concert introductions and programme notes for Wigmore Hall, Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals, National Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, Royal College of Music and St George's, Bristol. Katy has taught at the Royal College of Music, the University of Nottingham and Middlesex University, and appears on BBC Radio as a Brahms specialist and as part of the CD Review team.

www.katyhamilton.co.uk



STEPHEN JOHNSON

Stephen Johnson is a music journalist who has broadcast frequently for BBC Radio 3, 4 and World Service, major projects including fourteen programmes about the music of Bruckner for the composer's centenary in 1996, and written regularly for the Independent, Guardian, BBC Music Magazine and Gramophone. His Radio 3 documentary, *Shostakovich: Journey into Light*, was nominated for a Sony Award in 2007, and in 2009 another Radio 3 documentary, *Vaughan Williams: Valiant for Truth* won him and producer Jeremy Evans a Sony Gold Award. His long-established interest in links between creativity and mental illness is reflected in his work for the charitable trust The Musical Brain, and for Cheltenham Festival science projects. His latest book 'How Shostakovich changed my mind' (Notting Hill Editions, April 2018) is a personal reflection on music's power: "*I sensed a glimmering of a possibility. If Shostakovich could find the 'method', the thread of logic, in his teeming, cascading thoughts, then perhaps I could too.*"

www.stephen-johnson.co.uk



JO LEWIS

Jo Lewis is an artist trained at Edinburgh University, Leith School of Art, Edinburgh and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Valence, France. Based in London, Jo also works as a freelance gallery educator and artist teacher, mainly at the National Gallery and Dulwich Picture Gallery. Recent projects include large-scale commissions for Paris Baguette's flagship store in Beijing, and in London, for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. In September 2017 she was invited to present her work and travel in south-west China, and will also be showing in Paris in May 2018. www.jolewisart.com



KARL LUTCHMAYER

Karl Lutchmayer is equally renowned as a concert pianist and a lecturer. A Steinway Artist, Karl performs across the globe and is a regular guest lecturer at conservatoires around the world, including the Juilliard and Manhattan Schools in New York and the Mehli Mehta Foundation in Mumbai, his family home. Karl studied at the Royal College of Music in London and the Moscow Conservatoire, and was recently awarded the Bharat Gaurav lifetime achievement award. www.karllutchmayer.com www.facebook.com/Karl.Lutchmayer



JEREMY SAMS

Jeremy Sams is an internationally acclaimed director, writer, translator, adaptor and composer, who works with enviable authority in repertoire as diverse as Shakespeare, Sondheim, Mozart, Wagner and film (his 2005 score for *Enduring Love* won an Ivor Novello Award). Sams's diverse talents have taken him inter alia to ROH, ENO, Garsington Opera, Welsh National Opera, Metropolitan Opera New York, Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre, Donmar Warehouse, Almeida, London's West End and Broadway.



BOOKING

Fees:

Whole course: £400

Autumn 2018 only: £220

Spring 2019 only: £220

Telephone bookings: 07872 505922

Email bookings: mail@musictalks.org.uk

Credit card and online bookings: 020 7591 4314 (10.00–16.00 Mon–Fri; £1.95 fee)

Cheque: payable to Music Talks mailed to 65 Kenilworth Ave, London SW19 7LP

BACS: sort code: 20-96-89 Account no: 40014958 Name: Music Talks

Please note that places on Music Talks courses and events are non-transferable, and refunds will only be made if the course is cancelled.



1894 Paris

1913 Vienna

1934 London

1928 Berlin

1938 Cos Cob, Connecticut

1941 Warsaw

1944 Paris

1946 Zurich

1987 Houston

1960 Leningrad

1957 New York

2019 London

MUSIC TALKS

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“Your exceptional speakers provide fantastic insight into music.”

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“Truly splendid.... life enhancing.”

“Deeply, deeply satisfying.”

“Thank you for such an excellent, exciting, brilliant course.”

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