

Richard Woods Rogan: Trombone Concerto



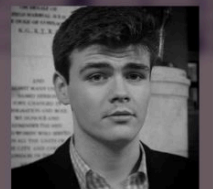
THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY



James Graham, Trombone

Ignacio Mañá Mesas: The Sanctuary of Berobreo

CONCERTO CONCERT



Samuel Huston, Clarinet

Rajan Lal: Piano Concerto No. 1

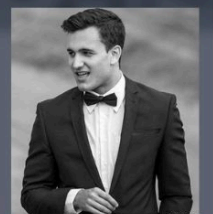
Tuesday 25 February 2020 | 8 PM
St John's College Palmerston Room

TICKETS £5/£3

Available on the Door



THE
PHOENIX SOCIETY



Rajan Lal, Piano



THE PHOENIX MUSIC
SOCIETY PRESENTS:

Three New Concertos

Trombone Concerto

by Richard Woods Rogan
Trombone soloist: James Graham

The Sanctuary of Berobreo

by Ignacio Mañá Mesas
Clarinet soloist: Samuel Huston

Piano Concerto No. 1

by Rajan Lal
Piano soloist: Rajan Lal



THE
PHOENIX SOCIETY

Palmerston Room, St John's College, Cambridge.

Tuesday 25th February 2020, 8.00pm

THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY:

Senior Musical Associate: Timothy Brown

Senior Treasurer: Dr Alan Howard

Artistic Director: Oliver Rudland

President: Rajan Lal

Secretary: Ignacio Mañá Mesas

Junior Treasurer: Richard Woods Rogan

Publicity Officer: Ujjawal Kumar

Social Secretary: Vivek Haria

The Phoenix Music Society was founded in 2017 at the University of Cambridge by Oliver Rudland, Sebastian Blount, Rajan Lal and Rebekah Sturge to nurture the composition, performance and promotion of new music.

We are a group dedicated to the discussion, creation and performance of new music who aim to create an open and viable environment for the creation of music, which is rooted in the past, whilst looking to the future.

The society takes its lead from thinkers such as the American composer Steve Reich, who has written, 'the reality of cadence to a key or modal center is basic in all the music of the world (Western and non-Western). This reality is also related to the primacy of the intervals of the fifth, fourth, and octave in all the world's music as well as in the physical acoustics of sound. Similarly for the regular rhythmic pulse.' So far the society has produced four successful events and concerts:

Musical Fables; a concert of new orchestral music at the Fitzwilliam College Auditorium conducted by Mark Biggins, chorusmaster for English National Opera.

Encounters with Persian Verse, Art & Music; a festival of Islamic artwork, Persian music, and new vocal chamber music with the Iranian Duo, Nasim-e Tarab, and the Ligeti String Quartet.

WWI Armistice Centenary Concert; a commemorative concert of new choral and orchestral music with choral scholars from Gonville & Caius, St John's, Queen's, Homerton and Selwyn Colleges at Great St. Mary's, the University Church, Cambridge.

New Chamber Music: On Romantic Themes; a chamber concert at the St John's Old Divinity School performed by Instrumental Award Scheme holders and other chamber musicians from across the University.



An Introduction from our President:

Tonight's concert represents something of a landmark occasion for *The Phoenix Music Society*. During Lent Term some three years ago, the idea of an organisation run by young composers for young composers in complete independence from established University music hierarchies was just a thought in the minds of four founding members. Now, three years down the line, the society has expanded to include student composers and performers from more than twenty different Cambridge colleges, has hosted four large-scale, independently funded concerts, runs an annual dinner for its members and has acquired official University recognised status.

Three New Concertos is perhaps the most musically ambitious venture the society has ever presented, but originally began as a personally driven desire to both write and perform my own piano concerto. Such a feat has been a dream of mine since as long as composition and performing have played dual roles in my life. The idea of a self-performed concerto is particularly meaningful to me as it resurrects the idea of the composer-virtuoso figure from the nineteenth century. Composer-performer figures such as Niccolò Paganini and Nikolai & Anton Rubinstein have few equivalents in the modern classical world and in many ways, high level pianism is almost entirely confined to the canon of the nineteenth century, rather than being intertwined with new music in the many strident ways it was previously cultivated through, most famously, Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann. It is a great pleasure to present this new work this evening in the context of two other concertos, lending to the overall concert a tripartite construction that mirrors a typical concerto form as a whole.

© Rajan Lal



THE PHOENIX ENSEMBLE:

Conducted by Oliver Rudland
& Ignacio Mañá Mesas

Violin I

Alex Semple (leader)
Alice Beardmore
Hannah Patterson
Marietta D'Almeida
Melissa Yuan

Violin II

Emma Robinson
Ujjawal Kumar
George Skeen
Arundhati Saraswatula
Alexander Yao

Viola

Jonathan Shaw
Krishna Amin
Sneha Kumar
Alice Yau

Violoncello

Hannah Wilkie
Nathanael Smalley
John Hutchinson
Adrian del Ser

Double Bass

Dominic Nudd
Kate Merrington

PROGRAMME NOTES AND BIOGRPAHIES:

Trombone Concerto

by Richard Woods Rogan

Trombone soloist: James Graham

Conductor: Oliver Rudland

A Road Map to My Concerto:

To overdo an already crass journey metaphor, I'm going to guide you through all of the scenery on display in the hope that knowing where you are and what you are observing will enhance your perception of this piece.

The start. The strings play a simple, descending motif with scurrying accompaniment from the cellos and viola. This motif repeats, now with a denser texture and occasional outbursts from the trombone. It repeats again at double the speed, getting increasingly frantic. The fourth repeat, now at four times the speed (*frantissimo*) leads into a huge cadence, which cuts out at its climactic point, yielding to the main theme of the first movement.

All instruments stop playing, and the soloist, unaccompanied, plays the main theme. Quiet strings start to creep in, occupying very high and very low registers, building into developments and variations on this theme. A second theme is introduced as a countermelody (stolen in part from Bruckner's third symphony), which then takes the stage as the trombone takes a rest.

This builds up to, and culminates in our first genuine climax, a restatement of the main theme with full accompaniment (the climax you were deprived of a few minutes earlier).

Still following?

This climax goes into another lush string-dominated section, in which I have shamelessly stolen a melody from one of Janaček's piano pieces.

From here we return to the original motif, which speeds up and 'progressively frantiscises' as it did before, albeit with some thematically relevant trombonal noodling.

To return to my ill-judged metaphor, the cadence at the end serves as the bridge between the first and second movements.

A soppy, romantic melody emerges in the strings. A brief trombone interlude takes us to a second statement of this melody, now with a trombone descant (not a phrase you hear often). Another lyrical trombone break leads us into the third restatement of this melody, this time with the trombone at the helm. The strings build in accompaniment as we cross our second bridge into the third movement.

I'll openly accept that my third movement is a bit ridiculous. It opens with some reasonably satanic circus music, slipping surprisingly seamlessly into a mock-medieval canon. Some abrupt Latin rhythms are thrown in your face, before Satan's circus returns. Our graceful motif from the first movement has presumably got drunk at the circus and stumbles its way back into the piece, slurring and hardly recognisable. At last, our soloist unleashes a motif-laced cadenza worthy of all of this chaos, bringing on the impending final flurry of strings that pulls the piece to an end.

Richard Woods Rogan is a composer studying music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. Previous works include a choral and orchestral Magnificat, performed at the famous Sheldonian theatre in Oxford, and incidental music to productions of Shakespeare's plays *Love's Labours Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Oxford Festival of the Arts. Having started composing at a young age (earliest choral works written at age nine) and winning the composing cup at the Oxford music festival twice in the following years (with piano works), Richard started studying Schillinger's compositional method with the gifted composer Dr. Jeremy Arden. On the back of this, he achieved his first ensemble performance with a Romance for wind sextet at age thirteen performed in the SJE, Oxford. Reaching the final three the following year in a national competition held by the European String Teachers Association



with a double bass duet saw a second chamber work performed in public concert. At age fifteen, Richard was fortunate enough to receive assistance and tuition for a choral work from the revered composer Cecilia McDowell (also performed at the SJE). This was followed by the Magnificat, the incidental music and an offer to pursue further study at the St Catharine's College. Drawn by the freedom to write in 'non-contemporary' styles or even use pre-existing compositional theory, this is Richard's third concert with the Phoenix Society where he acts as junior treasurer. He is currently composing under the dedicated tutelage of Oliver Rudland.

James Graham grew up in Oxfordshire playing a variety of instruments before focussing on the trombone. He is now in his third year at the Guildhall School in London and learns with Eric Crees, Simon Wills and Peter Moore. Students at the Guildhall have fantastic opportunities to play with international conducting stars; James has been fortunate enough to recently perform under Michael Tilson-Thomas, Marin Alsop, Vassily Sinaisky and alongside the LSO under Simon Rattle.

James has a passion for contemporary music, regularly playing chamber works by Guildhall School composers in their New Music Society. He has appeared a number of times in Simon Wills' *Ubu Ensemble* which plays exclusively avant-garde repertoire; they are currently working on a project of works from the Second Viennese School.

Aside from classical music James plays with number of the conservatoire's big band projects, as well as with the NYJO organisation. He also studies films and photography and has a monthly on-line radio show, which combines his interests in cooking and electronic music.

James has known Richard for many years; he is honoured and grateful for being invited to give this work its first performance!



The Sanctuary of Berobreo

by Ignacio Mañá Mesas

Clarinet soloist: Samuel Huston

Conductor: Ignacio Mañá Mesas

'Berobreo' is an epithet attributed to a pagan god venerated by the Gallaeci, a large Celtic tribal federation who inhabited Gallaecia, the north-western corner of Iberia, including parts of what is now Portugal and Spain. This god, associated with death and afterlife, received offerings in a sanctuary from around 300 AD built at the top of Mount Facho, in Donón (Cangas do Morrazo, Spain).

My piece tries to capture the magic atmosphere of this place from a present perspective, exploring the mysterious spirituality of this abandoned sanctuary, the sound of the surrounding waves and the ethereal landscape in the context of the heterogeneous musical traditions that can currently be encountered in this region of Spain, comprising contemporary classical music, folk music influences such as bagpipe playing, jazz and other popular idioms.

© Ignacio Mañá Mesas



Nacho Mañá Mesas is a Spanish saxophonist and composer who is currently based in the UK. He started his musical studies at Cristóbal Halffter Intermediate Level Coservatoire in Ponferrada (Spain) in 2006. He competed successfully in many competitions both as a saxophonist and a composer, winning the First Prize in the Fac Quod Agis Composition Competition in 2014, among others, and he was also selected to perform in the Spanish TV musical programme *Pizzicato* in 2013. At school, he also composed the soundtracks for several short films. In 2015, he finished his musical studies at Cristóbal Halffter Conservatoire with honours, obtaining the Extraordinary Prize in Castilla y León with the best mark in his region and receiving a nomination for the National Music Award. He then received an offer and a scholarship from Chetham's School of Music to complete his academic and musical studies, where he studied saxophone with Carl Raven and composition with Jeremy Pike during two years. At the school, he also became very interested in conducting his own orchestral pieces. Nacho



offered solo recitals, premiered and conducted his compositions at some prestigious venues, such as the Manchester Mid-day Concert at The Bridgewater Hall (Manchester), the Royal College of Music (London), The Arts Club (London) and The Stoller Hall (Manchester). He was highly commended at the BBC Proms Inspire Young Composers' Competition 2017. He received offers and scholarships to continue his musical studies at the University of Cambridge (St John's College), the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, among others. He is currently reading Music at the University of Cambridge (St John's College), where he takes composition lessons with Tim Watts.

Samuel Huston is currently studying music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge where he holds two academic scholarships, an instrumental award and has sung in the College Choir. Samuel grew up playing in the Ealing Youth Orchestra and National Youth Wind Orchestra. He is now a member of the University of Cambridge's prestigious Instrumental Award Scheme and has recently performed in the Fitzwilliam Museum and in West Road Concert Hall, amongst other venues. In August 2018 he worked with the East London Symphony Orchestra as the soloist in the premiere of Robin Haigh's *Lago* for clarinet and string orchestra. For the past two years he has studied with Angela Malsbury and Tim Lines at the Royal Academy of Music alongside his Cambridge degree as a member of the CAMRAM scheme.



Piano Concerto No.1

by Rajan Lal

Piano soloist: Rajan Lal

Conductor: Oliver Rudland

This concerto has been almost a year in the making and began musically with the idea of grafting sonata principles onto a contemporary marriage of the respectively virtuosic and pared-back sound worlds of composers Franz Liszt and Gerald Finzi. The choice to keep orchestration reduced down to a chamber string scale was a nod to Finzi's *Eclogue for Piano and Strings*, with a view to lending my concerto a greater feeling of intimacy in performance.

This work extends the formal ideas of the sonata common to many concertos into a vaster structure that also plays with the ideas of a double function multi-movement form, taking after the mould of Liszt's concertos in the vein of one continuous string of music that references three separate movements at various points.

Thematically, the music is dominated by a longing, harmonically mobile triplet melody that, whilst beginning with initial aching associations, quickly becomes an incessant driving force of the movement.

At approximately the mid-point of the concerto, this triplet theme is met by its binary: a 'Love Theme' in F major, initially presented by solo violin, which itself then ventures along a similar thematic journey to the triplet theme, though results in a final level of sublimation rather than ever-repetitive development.

The final orchestral tutti marries these two disparate themes together, affirming that the love theme and longing theme can coexist in a harmonious relationship.

© Rajan Lal

Rajan Lal is a music undergraduate currently studying in his final year at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Rajan hails from Rochester in Kent, where he began his musical education aged six in piano studies with Nissho Astridge and later David Sams. In his early years, Rajan also studied the violin with Julian Milone and composition with Karl Geitzmann at the Kent Academy of Music, two influences he credits as particularly valuable in nurturing his compositional voice and knowledge of orchestration. Rajan first became interested in composition at aged ten as a natural offshoot of improvisation and despite original aspirations to pursue a career as a concert pianist, he quickly realised that the most rewarding musical pathway for him personally would entail a place at Cambridge University.

This is his fifth concert with the Phoenix Society, for whom he is a founding member. Previous performances include his tone poem for Symphony orchestra: *The Transformation of Nebuchadnezzar*, a setting of Rumi's *Reality and Appearance* for The Ligeti String quartet, harp and tenor voice, *In Flanders Fields* (choir and string orchestra) for the 2018 WW1 Armistice Centenary Service in Great St. Mary's Church and *Hadean Rondo*, a chamber work written for violinist Leora Cohen. Rajan has played a number of roles in the society over the last three years including orchestral manager and secretary, and now holds the mantle of president. In his free time Rajan enjoys powerlifting and pool.

Oliver Rudland is a professional composer well known for his modern, yet accessible, style of composition. Recent commissions include works for the 'London Choral Sinfonia' (dir. Michael Waldron), the Eldon Wind Quintet and trombonist Matthew Gee. Oliver is also a librettist and director and has been closely involved with the staged production of all three of his operas: *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Carriageworks Theatre, Leeds 2008, producer), *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark* (The University Church, Cambridge, 2011, producer and director), and *Pincher Martin* (Royal College of Music, Britten Theatre, London 2014, director), all of which have been highly acclaimed by both critics and audience members:

'This is an eloquent, succinct opera...in music and design *Pincher Martin* pinched and gripped. This opera deserves to live.' (*The Times*: ★★☆☆)

More recently, Oliver was commissioned by Opera North to write a new work, *Flying Free*, for their orchestra, which will be premiered on the 1st March 2020 at the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall as a part of the Leeds International Concert Series.

As a conductor, Oliver specialises in new music. In this capacity he has conducted the RCM Symphony Orchestra, the Rodolfos Choir and the Phoenix Ensemble, amongst many performances of his own music. He is also a practiced community music director and has conducted many community choirs and brass bands across Cambridgeshire. Whilst director of music at St Dominic's Church, Downham Market, he founded the 'Ecumenical Choir' to build community links and foster good relations between the different faith communities in the town.

In 2017 Oliver founded *The Phoenix Music Society* with a group of his best and most enterprising composition students at the University of Cambridge, and acts as Artistic Director for the society.

For more information please visit: www.oliverrudland.com



