

Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

14 April 2024 – 4pm

MEERA MAHARAJ

Flute

LUCY NOLAN

Harp

PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

Sonata in G minor - J.S Bach, BWV 1020

The flute sonata in G minor BWV 1020, one of the gems of 18th century flute literature, has been passed down to us over the years as a work of Johann Sebastian Bach but its

authenticity is disputed. Recent research suggests that the composition most probably came from the pen of Bach's oldest son Carl Philipp Emanuel.

Dance of the Blessed Spirits - Christoph Willibald Gluck

"Dance of the Blessed Spirits" is a ballet excerpt from Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera Orfeo ed Euridice, which is based on the story of Orpheus from Greek mythology.

The opera was first performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 5 October 1762. Orfeo ed Euridice was the first of Gluck's operas in which he broke with the prevailing opera conventions where the complex music and plot from the traditional 'opera seria' made place for clean and simpler designs.

Given the performance happened for the birthday of Emperor Franz of Austria, Gluck was forced to reform the bloodthirsty end.

The work contains a famous flute solo. There is, of course, danced and then Euridice (one of the Blissful Spirits) sings a solo.

This is one of the most famous mythical love stories in world literature. The story is told by both Ovid and Virgil.

Nocturne - Jean Sibelius

Originally written for orchestra the Nocturne formed the Prelude to Act 2 of incidental music to, Belshazzar's Feast a play of the same name by the journalist, poet and playwright Hjalmar Fredrik Eugen Procopé.

It now has a life of its own and has been re-scored as a duet for different combinations. David Oistrakh used a version for violin and piano as an encore.

Romance - Amy Beach (arr. Hather Duo)

Amy Beach was born in New England in 1867, and soon demonstrated prodigious musical talent as a child. The family struggled to keep up with her musical interests and demands. Her mother sang and played for her, but attempted to prevent the child from playing the family piano herself, believing that to indulge the child's wishes in this respect would damage parental authority. She nevertheless studied both piano and composition until in 1885 she married to Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, a Boston surgeon, Harvard lecturer, and amateur singer twenty-four years her senior (she was eighteen at the time). Her name would subsequently be listed on concert programs and published compositions as "Mrs. H. H. A. Beach."

activity widely associated with women" and regarded as an activity providing "pin money." She further agreed to limit performances to two public recitals per year, with profits donated to charity, and to devote herself more to composition than to performance (although, as she wrote, "I thought I was a pianist first and foremost.") Her self-guided education in composition was also necessitated by Dr. Beach, who disapproved of his wife studying with a tutor. Restrictions like these were typical for middle- and upper-class women of the time: as it was explained to a European counterpart, Fanny Mendelssohn, "Music will perhaps become his [Fanny's brother Felix Mendelssohn's] profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament."

The marriage was conditioned upon her willingness "to live according to his status, that is, function as a society matron and patron of the arts. She agreed never to teach piano, an

Today's work has been adapted by the Duo from a work originally scored for violin and piano.

Malaika - Trad. A traditional Kenyan folk song

Lughnasa - Rhonda Larson

Rhonda Larson is a Grammy Award-winning player of the flute, born and raised in the mountains of Montana. This Big Sky Country in the Wild West helped form her into a nature-loving, free spirited trail blazing artist. She entered the national music scene by winning first prize in the

National Flute Association's Young Artist Competition at the age of 22, including a Carnegie Hall debut.

~~~~~ Interval ~~~~~

For more information on the artists and on future concerts, please visit [www.wethersfieldchamberconcerts.org.uk](http://www.wethersfieldchamberconcerts.org.uk)

# Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

## Fantaisie, Op.124 - Saint Saëns

At the age of 72, Saint-Saëns composed the Fantaisie for harp and violin in 1907 while enjoying some leisure time in the city of Bridger, on the Italian Riviera. He dedicated the duo to a pair of sisters, harpist Clara Eissler and violinist Marianne Eissler. It would become the second of three major pieces Saint-Saëns composed for harp. The

Fantaisie, is a virtuoso piece for both players, and the use of harp rather than the more typical piano lends a special, delicate if not magical sonority to this duo, which today is played in an arrangement which replaces the violin with the flute.

## Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte - Maurice Ravel

Pavane pour une infante défunte (Pavane for a Dead Princess) is a work for solo piano by Maurice Ravel, written in 1899 while the French composer was studying at the Conservatoire de Paris under Gabriel Fauré. Ravel published an orchestral version in 1910 and this version is for harp and flute.

Ravel described the piece as "an evocation of a pavane that a little princess [Infanta] might, in former times, have danced at the Spanish court". The pavane was a slow processional dance that enjoyed great popularity in the

courts of Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This antique miniature is not meant to pay tribute to any particular princess from history, but rather expresses a nostalgic enthusiasm for Spanish customs and sensibilities, which Ravel shared with many of his contemporaries (most notably Debussy and Albéniz) and which is evident in some of his other works such as the Rapsodie espagnole and the Boléro.

## Chrissie's – Donald Grant

### Naiades - William Alwyn

All creative work is in a sense autobiographical, and Naiades is no exception, for it recaptures both Alwyn's past experience as a professional flautist and his home in the Suffolk countryside.

"It is a virtuoso work and exploits to the full the technical resonances of both instruments. My studio overlooks the River Blyth - tidal waters flanked by a broad expanse of reedy marshes, haunt of shrill seabirds. To wander there on

a Summer evening, when the reeds are a rustling sheet of gold and the water the colour of the "wine-dark" sea, is to believe again in Pan and Syrinx, sense the presence of Undine, and hear the Naiads sporting in the shallows, hidden from mortal sight by the shrouding reeds.

But all music, however descriptive, is in essence "absolute" music; and this piece, a sonata in one movement, is no exception.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Flautist **Meera Maharaj** enjoys a diverse performing career. Her duo with pianist Dominic Degavino has enjoyed much success, featuring as Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, Tunnell Trust and Park Lane Group artists. Since 2013, she has frequently performed with guitarist James Girling, as the Meraki Duo. They recently won the II Concours Internacional de Música Cambra Flauta & Guitarra and they were finalists in the 2019 Royal Overseas League competition (mixed ensembles category), as well as International Guitar Foundation Young Artists. She also plays with harpist, Lucy Nolan as Hathor Duo and formed her own flexi-ensemble – Meliora Collective.

Meera strongly believes that outreach work is an important element of her musical life and all her duos are Live Music Now ensembles. Competition successes include first prize in the Royal Academy of Music Flute Competition and Dutch International Flute Competition and 3rd prize in the British Flute Society Competition. She recently won the Sussex Prize for Woodwind in the 2023 Royal Overseas League competition.

She graduated with Distinction in her Masters, studying with Michael Cox at the Royal Academy of Music, receiving generous scholarships supported by Sir Elton John, Countess of Munster Musical Trust and Help Musicians. In 2017, she graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with first class honours, having studied with Wissam Boustany and Laura Jellicoe. Previously, she spent six years at the Junior RNCM. Meera has played at the Southbank Centre, Elbphilharmonie, Bridgewater Hall, Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, and Royal Albert Hall at the BBC Proms. She is Co-principal flute of the Chineke! Orchestra.

Harpist **Lucy Nolan** graduated from Oxford University and the Royal Northern College of music with Distinctions in postgraduate degrees. Lucy was the recipient of a number of prizes and a finalist in the RNCM's Gold Medal weekend, the highest accolade awarded for performance. As well as featuring in performances for BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4, she regularly works with orchestras such as the Hallé, Manchester Concert Orchestra and the Royal Northern Sinfonia and has been invited to perform in renowned music venues such as the The Royal Albert Hall, Cadogan Hall, The Sage and Bridgewater Hall.

Lucy is particularly passionate about developing new music for the harp and was recently awarded a Developing Your Creative Practise Grant from the Arts Council and a Do It Differently Award from Help Musicians to fund composing her own and commissioning new works for harp. She was a guest artist at the World Harp Congress in Hong Kong, performing a new work by Paul Patterson and is a founding member of the contemporary music group, SHOAL, who recently composed music for a short film for Channel 4 and premiered works at New Music North West Festival, Bury Light Festival and Hull City of Culture. Lucy's collaboration with Carnatic singer, Supriya Nagarajan, has led to performances at The Royal Albert Hall, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Lambeth Palace and Jaipur Literature Festival.

**We hope that you will join us for our next concerts - on 28 April & 8 May 2024**