

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jepsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis **Conductor Emeritus** Vladimir Jurowski

Patron HRH The Duke of Kent KG **Artistic Director** Elena Dubinets **Chief Executive** David Burke

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2024, 6.30PM
ST JOHN'S CHURCH, WATERLOO

JAZZ ROOTS, SOUL BRANCHES



DAVID SCHIFF

DUCAL SUITE (AFTER DUKE ELLINGTON)

SIMON BAINBRIDGE

FOR MILES

GEORGE GERSHWIN

SELECTIONS FROM PORGY & BESS, FOR
CLARINET & STRINGS (ARR. CARL DAVIS)

CHAKA KHAN

AIN'T NOBODY, FOR BASSOON QUARTET
(ARR. AMY CASEY)

STEVIE WONDER

SUPERSTITION, FOR BASSOON QUARTET
(ARR. AMY CASEY)

There will be a retiring collection at the end of the performance, in aid of two charities with which St John's works to serve the homeless: the winter night shelter **Robes**, and the community programme at St John's, **Room for You**.

ST JOHN'S
+ ST ANDREW'S
at Waterloo

DAVID SCHIFF BORN 1945
DUCAL SUITE (AFTER DUKE ELLINGTON) 2017

- 1 CLARINET LAMENT
- 2 AIR-CONDITIONED JUNGLE
- 3 HEAVEN
- 4 KINDA DUKISH/ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM

Benjamin Mellefont clarinet

Pieter Schoeman violin

LPO chair supported by Neil Westreich

Tania Mazzetti violin

Lucia Ortiz Saucó viola

Kristina Blaumane cello

LPO chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden

Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington (1899–1974) was one of the greatest composers of the 20th century. His vast oeuvre includes a long list of jazz standards, popular songs, symphonic works, movie scores, sacred music and a ballet. In autumn 2015 Reed College hosted the 23rd International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference, attracting scholars and experts from around the globe to a celebration of the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. A high point of the conference was a concert featuring clarinetist David Shifrin and pianists Darrell Grant and Matt Cooper. For this event I arranged four Ellington pieces for clarinet and piano. The concert attracted an overflow audience to Kaul Auditorium; afterwards David Shifrin asked me to re-score the work so he could perform it with the Dover String Quartet, and so my *Ducal Duo* was reborn as the *Ducal Suite*.

The first two movements of the suite, 'Clarinet Lament' (1936) and 'Air-Conditioned Jungle'

(1946) are tributes to Ellington's two great clarinetists, Barney Bigard and Jimmy Hamilton. Ellington composed these two pieces as one-movement concertos, and they display the very different styles of the clarinetists. Barney Bigard was from New Orleans and was a follower of Sidney Bechet. Like Bechet, he played with considerable vibrato and could bend pitches up and down to give the music emotional intensity. Ellington subtly hinted at the New Orleans setting of 'Barney's Concerto' (his alternative title) by basing the middle section on the harmonic changes of 'Basin Street Blues'.

Jimmy Hamilton replaced Bigard in the Ellington Orchestra in 1943 (when Bigard joined Louis Armstrong's All-Stars). He brought a more modern approach to the instrument, strongly influenced by Benny Goodman. 'Air-Conditioned Jungle' is modern with a vengeance, updating the 'jungle' style that Ellington deployed at the Cotton Club in the 1920s, to

the more dissonant idiom of bebop, and beyond. Some sections dispense with harmonic 'changes' altogether, forecasting the free jazz and modal jazz styles of the 1960s.

Ellington composed the song 'Heaven' for his Second Concert of Sacred Music, which premiered at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York in 1968. The original soloists were the Swedish soprano Alice Babs and alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges; the latter's sound defined the Ellington Orchestra from 1928 right up to his death in 1970. In this arrangement, I have tried to translate the extraordinary styles of both of these performers to the language of the clarinet.

Ducal Suite concludes with one of Ellington's earliest hits, 'Rockin' in Rhythm', first recorded in 1931. Ellington often prefaced performances of this song with a later piece, 'Kinda Dukish', and I have followed this precedent in this arrangement, which might be termed a jazz rondo.

© David Schiff

SIMON BAINBRIDGE 1952–2021 FOR MILES 1994

Paul Beniston trumpet Alice Munday oboe/cor anglais Benjamin Mellefont clarinet
Thomas Watmough clarinet LPO chair supported by Roger Greenwood Lucia Ortiz Sauco viola
Kristina Blaumane cello LPO chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden Sebastian Pennar double bass

Simon Bainbridge was born in London and studied composition at the Royal College of Music. His first major break came with *Spirogyra* for chamber ensemble, written in 1970 while he was still a student. This work displays a passion for intricate and sensuous textures that would remain the hallmark of his compositional style.

After graduating from the RCM, Bainbridge studied with Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood; his fondness for American culture

is occasionally betrayed in works such as *Concerto in Moto Perpetuo* (1983), which contains echoes of American minimalism, and tonight's work, the be-bop inspired *For Miles* (1994).

Dedicated to Miles Davis, *For Miles* is a tribute to Davis and to his collaboration with the arranger Gil Evans. Bainbridge recalled: 'My first encounter with Miles Davis was through listening to his wonderful and innovative *Porgy and Bess* album, which he recorded in collaboration with Gil

Evans in 1958. For me his playing had a unique lyricism, musicality and sensitivity to line that few players have ever equalled. This piece is my tribute to a great musician.'

The first half of the piece is solemn and monumental; a series of variations in which the slow, brief chant of a trumpet unfolds against a solid field of harmonies, fusing with them so that they evolve as one in the second half of the piece.

Adapted from a programme note
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GEORGE GERSHWIN 1898–1937 SELECTIONS FROM PORGY AND BESS 1935 ARR. FOR CLARINET AND STRINGS BY CARL DAVIS (1936–2023)

- 1 SUMMERTIME
- 2 A WOMAN IS A SOMETIME THING
- 3 BESS, YOU IS MY WOMAN NOW
- 4 IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO

Benjamin Mellefont clarinet
Pieter Schoeman violin
LPO chair supported by Neil Westreich
Tania Mazzetti violin
Lucia Ortiz Sauco viola
Kristina Blaumane cello
LPO chair supported by Bianca & Stuart Roden

In 2008 the American composer and conductor Carl Davis conducted several concerts with Spanish clarinetist Joan Enric Lluna as soloist. Davis explains what happened next:

'Joan confessed to me, after two inspired performances of the Copland Clarinet Concerto in

Pamplona, that he loved playing Gershwin songs more than anything else. I immediately thought of an orchestration I had commissioned from the distinguished British composer David Matthews of the transcriptions by Jascha Heifetz of four important numbers from *Porgy and Bess* for orchestra. But

Joan had an even more complex proposal: could I re-arrange these myself for clarinet and string quartet? Definitely a challenge, but a practical one. I returned to the original Heifetz piano version and rapidly arranged the violin part for clarinet, but with an added twist. I thought of joining the movements with brief solo cadenzas which

would take the listener from one movement to the next.'

The four songs hardly need introduction, but it may be useful to recall their place in *Porgy and Bess*. Clara sings 'Summertime' at the very beginning of Act I as she tries to lull her infant son to sleep. This is followed almost immediately by 'A Woman Is a Sometime Thing', sung by Jake, Clara's husband, as he tries to get

the baby to go to sleep. In Act II, Porgy sings 'Bess, You Is My Woman Now' after chasing off Sportin' Life, who had tried to lure Bess to go with him to New York. 'It Ain't Necessarily So' also comes from Act II – Sportin' Life sings this mock sermon at the picnic at Kittiwah Island just before the terrifying reappearance of the murderous Crown.

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CHAKA KHAN BORN 1953

AIN'T NOBODY 1983

WRITTEN BY DAVID 'HAWK' WOLINSKI; ARR. FOR BASSOON QUARTET BY AMY CASEY

STEVIE WONDER BORN 1950

SUPERSTITION 1972

ARR. FOR BASSOON QUARTET BY AMY CASEY

Jonathan Davies bassoon

LPO chair supported by Sir Simon Robey

Dominic Tyler bassoon

Emma Harding bassoon

Simon Estell contrabassoon

Bassoons may not be the first instrument that one would associate with funk, but when I began writing my arrangement of Stevie Wonder's 'Superstition' 12 years ago in my first term of music college, it soon became apparent to me how well the bassoon lends itself to the genre. The instrument's range, versatility and palette of tone colours allow it to mimic other instruments more commonly heard in the genre, from the brash low clarinet parts in Wonder's hit, as well as the buzzing, distorted guitars in

Chaka Khan's 'Ain't Nobody', right through to wailing soulful vocals and synthesisers in its higher register. The crisp attack of the bassoon is perfect for articulating the clean syncopated rhythms of funk music.

Although they were only intended to be a bit of fun and a means to practise arranging for these forces, I am happy to say that the two arrangements featured here have been played further afield in South Africa, Germany and the USA by

ensembles such as the brilliant all-Black Negus Bassoon Ensemble led by Dr Maya Stone, and the Houston-based chamber orchestra ROCO.

© Amy Casey

Amy Casey graduated with a First Class degree in Contemporary Classical Composition from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in 2015. She is now based in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.

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