

The Carice Singers: Pärt @ 90

Saturday 22 November , 1pm
St Paul's Hall

The Carice Singers:

Clover Willis soprano

Alice Beverley soprano

Elsbeth Piggott soprano

Olivia Hugh-Jones soprano

Anna Semple alto

Joy Sutcliffe alto

Eleriin Müüripeal alto

Nathan Mercieca alto

Edward Woodhouse tenor

Matthew Howard tenor

Hugh Beckwith tenor

Jacob Ewens tenor

David Le Prevost bass

Jonty Ward bass

Stuart O'Hara bass

Thomas Lowen bass

George Parris conductor

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent organ

Sam Milton percussion

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė (Lithuania, 1973)

Aletheia (2022) 15' UK Premiere

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė is a New York-based Lithuanian composer whose work has previously been featured at **hcmf//** in 2023. *Aletheia* was commissioned by the Lithuanian National Radio for the Latvian Radio Choir and Baltic Music Days in 2022. The title is variously translated from Greek as "unconcealedness", "revealing" or "unclosedness"; it can also be translated as "truth", being something that is uncovered or taken out of hiding. Martinaitytė's most potent influence, however, was the invasion of Ukraine which occurred shortly after she received the commission for this piece.

The heightened threat to freedom felt across the Baltic region since 2022 has brought back memories of Soviet occupation, when the "Singing Revolution" allowed Baltic peoples to express their determination for independence. "Voice is our first and the very last instrument we have in our lifetime," writes Martinaitytė. "Thinking in these terms brings an almost sacred dimension to the voice as an expression of life itself – from the very first baby's scream until the last breath and whisper." *Aletheia* therefore has no verbal text, but instead uses various combinations of vowels and consonants, incorporating effects such as hand tremolo, overtone singing and *glissandi*. "I was imagining that the only instrument people have even in situations of destruction, in the midst of war, is their VOICE." © George Parris

Lotta Wennäkoski (Finland, 1970)

Valossa (2013) 4'

Lotta Wennäkoski is one of Finland's most distinguished composers of the last two decades. In *Valossa* (Towards the light), she has extracted personal and intimate phrases from various letters of the New Testament to create an unsettled text. Individual voices express messages of anxiety, hope, and revelation in a variety of ways, from whispers through to full-bodied singing. The restless, chromatic melodies that are woven around each other further create a sense of interface between the private and the public. The piece was commissioned by the Helsinki Chamber Choir in 2014 to accompany the larger work *Ommel*, which sets four translations of a poem by the Japanese author Abe no Iratsume. © George Parris

Perttu Haapanen (Finland, 1972)

Readymade Alice (2012) 3'

Finnish composer Perttu Haapanen's works frequently involve an exciting complexity that dances between freedom and chaos, but what else would you expect from music originating in cyberspace? In *Readymade Alice* we enter an action-packed safari featuring thirty-four definitions of Alice, who it turns out has achieved rather a lot in her cyborg life. Bearing the performance direction 'not too beautifully', the work was written to be a test piece at the Fourth International Harald Andersén Chamber Choir Competition, held in Helsinki in 2012. Since then, it has become a popular piece for adventurous choirs across the world. © George Parris

Arvo Pärt (Estonia, 1935)

Sarah was Ninety Years Old (1976/1989) 25'

The 90th birthday year of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt provides the perfect opportunity to explore his entire output. *Sarah was Ninety Years*

Old dates from 1976, the year that Pärt began composing using his own 'tintinnabuli' style after a period of silence. *Sarah...* however is not a work composed in the tintinnabuli style, but serves as an important stepping stone on the way to the new technique. The piece is based on the story of Sarah, the infertile wife of Abraham in the Book of Genesis, who delivers a son at an old age, thus fulfilling God's prophecy and promise to Abraham.

Pärt has described *Sarah...* as "probably my simplest and most abstract work. It is born from the relations between numbers and is only based on four notes. The 48 possible combinations of these four sounds are complemented by different derivations of a simple rhythm, achieved by means of shifts in the scale. At the end of the various combinations one can indeed do nothing other than begin all over again and follow exactly the same path as before: the path to Sarah's infertility. The result is always zero, and arid desert, until the angels sent by God appear and everything comes to a close."

Since it was not possible to reveal *Sarah...*'s actual message during the Soviet era, Pärt gave the work the title *Modus* (Latin for "way, method"). It was premiered at a semi-secret event at the Student Club of the Riga Polytechnic Institute in April 1976, performed in its original instrumentation by the early music ensemble Hortus Musicus: soprano, percussion, harpsichord, double bass, violin, and piano. Once Pärt had emigrated to Germany in the 1980s, he repeatedly reworked the composition by changing its instrumentation and reinstating its original title. © George Parris

Joel Järventausta (Finland, 1995)

There will come soft rains (2022) 8' **UK Premiere**

Finnish composer Joel Järventausta spent his childhood in Luxembourg and Germany, which was followed by studies at the University of York,

Royal College of Music, and Kings College London. His works have been performed by the London Symphony Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and his chamber opera *Ihminen parhaan kykynsä mukaan* is being staged at the Finnish National Opera this month. *There will come soft rains* sets a poem by Sara Teasdale which sends a powerful message: that of nature prevailing, with or without humanity. In the work's final section, representing the poem's spring awakening, the sopranos sing in canon an excerpt of Hildegard von Bingen's *O nobilissima viriditas* – a beautiful composition about the divinity of nature and greenness. The piece was commissioned by the Helsinki Chamber Choir, who gave its premiere in 2022. © George Parris

Arvo Pärt (Estonia, 1935)

The Beatitudes (1990/91) 7'

The Beatitudes, Arvo Pärt's first composition in the English language, was written in 1990 alongside his *Berliner Messe*. Indeed this piece was also first performed in Berlin, at the Nathanielkirche, by the vocal ensemble Theatre of Voices and organist Christopher Bowers-Broadbent, conducted by Paul Hillier. The composition is based on the text from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew – a passage of blessings from which godly virtues are highlighted line by line. Pärt gives a new harmony to each clause, and each time the recitation pitch rises, increasing the tension. Having reached its peak, the process reverses after the organ cadenza, and all performed harmonic combinations are repeated, this time in reverse order, returning back to the starting point. © George Parris

Produced by hcmf// as part of The Current Climate; supported by Estonian Centre of Contemporary Music, Music Finland, Lithuanian Culture Institute and Music Information Centre Lithuania; also

**supported by Hinrichsen Foundation, Vaughan Williams Foundation and
hcmf// Benefactor Karen Dawe, in loving memory of Mervyn Dawe**

**The Carice Singers' *Arvo Pärt at 90* season is generously supported by
The Radcliffe Trust**

Libretti:

Lotta Wennäkoski (Finland, 1970)

Valossa (2013) 4'

Minulla olisi sinulle paljonkin kirjoitettavaa, mutta en tahdo esittää sitä näin kynällä ja musteella. Sano terveisiä Priscalle ja Aquilalle sekä Onesiforoksen perheelle. Erastos jäi Korinttiin. Trofimoksen, joka oli sairaana, jätin Miletokseen. Yritä päästä tulemaan ennen talvea!

Tehän tiedätte mikä hetki on käsillä. Kaikki mikä on paljastettu on valossa. Sana on lähellä sinua, sinun suussasi ja sinun sydämessäsi. Armo teille. Rauha teille kaikille. Älkää sammuttako henkeä.

Näin minä kirjoitan, ja tämä on tuntomerkkinä jokaisessa kirjeessäni.

3. John 13, 2. Timothy 4:19-21, Romans 13:11, Ephesians 5:14, Romans 10:8, 2. Corinthians 1:2, 1. Peter 5:14, 1. Thessalonians 5:19, 1 Timothy 3:17

I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter.

You all know what moment is at hand. All that is revealed is in the light. The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. Grace to you. Peace to you all. Do not quench the Spirit.

This is what I write, and this is a hallmark of every letter.

Translations taken from the King James Bible.

Perttu Haapanen (Finland, 1972)

Readymade Alice (2012) 3' **UK Premiere**

Alice is an angel

Alice is an engine

Alice is evolution

Alice is under construction

Alice is a bit sleepy

Alice is about fifteen years old

Alice is a book

Alice is bored

Alice is beserk

Alice is a clerk in the Wonderville Police Department

Alice is a very old vampire

Alice is a punter of the Loud Online

Alice is on the ball

Alice is my kinda girl

Alice is good

Alice is gold

Alice is fun

Alice is fast

Alice is fab

Alice is dead

Alice is designed to run

Alice is stunning

Alice is trying

Alice is tall

Alice is true

Alice is active in the hospitality industry

Alice is a gigantic pattern

Alice is looking for a way out of her uncle's household

Alice is having a fab vacation of shock treatment

Alice is a comedy

Alice is camera shy

Alice is institutionalized

Alice is changing all the time

Alice is not

Joel Järventausta (Finland, 1995)

There will come soft rains (2022) 8' **UK Premiere**

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,

And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,

And wild plum trees in tremulous white,

Robins will wear their feathery fire

Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one

Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree

If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,

Would scarcely know that we were gone.

Sara Tesdale

Arvo Pärt (Estonia, 1935)

The Beatitudes (1990/91) 7'

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.