

BEDALES

MEMORIAL CONCERT



William David Lithgow

15th April 1971 - 24th March 2024

Sunday 8th September 2024

4 p.m.

Will was the first of three children born to Anne and Bob Lithgow. In his mother's words, "he was an April baby, with a sun and showers artistic personality." Half a century later, Will's friends, colleagues and students will surely recognise in Anne's comments the man they knew and loved so much. His exemplary skills as a musician communicated not only a sun-filled delight in performance, but also another *enlightenment*, in which those infant "showers" had become transformed into a profound understanding of the human condition and its manifold representations in Art.

Having initially focused his musical studies on the piano, Will became captivated by the beautiful sonority and lyrical charms of the cello and asked for tuition on that instrument. His outstanding gifts were soon recognised and, a year early, he successfully auditioned for a place in the Edinburgh Youth Orchestra before moving on to the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. During these teenage years, Will picked up many awards for his performances in prestigious national competitions.

Family life with his two younger siblings, Rebecca and Ed (also musicians), was a very happy and educationally creative experience. Despite "a few thrown-down bows during ensemble sessions", all three children formed a mutual respect and friendship which would see them supporting each other throughout the years which lay ahead.

As the day approached when the 18-year-old Will would leave Edinburgh to continue his studies at the Royal Academy of Music, Anne recalls him saying, "This is what I want to do more than anything in the world." On a subsequent visit to stay with his brother in London, Ed saw for himself how completely Will had embraced this new life, "rubbing shoulders with an array of like-minded, talented young musicians."

After the Royal Academy, Will's innate *wanderlust* prompted a decision to move to Germany, not only to expand his musical studies, but also satisfy his desire to become fluent in other languages. He successfully auditioned to join the Cologne New Philharmonic Orchestra and was soon performing as principal cellist and one of the orchestra's regularly featured concerto soloists on the concert platform and in recordings. The orchestra's conductor, Volker Hartung, recently wrote,

"Billy Lithgow was our beloved solo cellist who toured with us for many years, giving numerous most successful concerts throughout the world. He was one of the greatest musicians within our ranks and a lovely, sensitive, fun-loving person".

And then, one morning, Will woke up and came to the conclusion that his future work as a musician should be as a teacher. He returned to London and embarked on a PGCE course at Goldsmiths College. Perhaps no surprise - that *wanderlust* again - his first teaching post was not in the UK but at Aiglon College in Switzerland. The job happened to come with a ski pass thrown in, a situation which enabled Will to become a proficient skier and indulge his daredevil approach to life through zooming down snowy mountains.

Will's appointment as Assistant Director of Music at Bedales in 2008 was an auspicious moment, not only in his own life, but also in the life of the school. His brilliant didactic skills, emotional intelligence and superb performing ability made Will a perfect fit for the job. He excelled in his role, delighting in the company of colleagues and students. A conversation with Will was always a glorious mixture of fun and seriousness, a journey of

exploration and revelation. He believed both teaching and the compositional process were similarly concerned with the setting of expectations, subsequently subverting those expectations and then creating a constructive balance between all elements. It is clear from what Bedalians have said about Will that they learned from him in a joyful, apparently effortless way ...

“A wonderful, inspiring and caring person who I'm so glad to have had in that crucial period of life at Bedales. Playing the Vivaldi Concerto for Two Cellos together, and dancing around a club in Venice during a sixth-form trip are two of many, many brilliant memories.”

“A lovely, lovely man, and a teacher unlike any other. BAC and Pre-U lessons with him were ... unpredictable but always outrageously fun. Often we'd leave wondering if we had actually done any work. Of course we had, because he'd sneak it in under our noses. Even arguing with Will was fun! A twinkle in his eye said – we're all friends and we're all in this together.”

“He had a way of talking which made you feel his equal, mixed with such fantastic wit and insight.”

Anne Lithgow said that Will “took a long time to settle down and find the right person to marry, but he was in no doubt that Lindsey was worth waiting for. She was the most wonderful support to him in every way, and he adored her.”

Lindsey and Will first met at Bedales and, having soon realised they wished to spend the rest of their lives together, eloped to a remote island in the Outer Hebrides and got married in an intimate, barefoot ceremony on a beach with golden eagles flying overhead.

Three years later, Pip was born, and then, after two years, Phin arrived to complete the young Lithgow family.

With Lindsey's steadfast love Will was able to fight his illness to the last breath in his body and continue to focus so positively on the future.

Having a concert to celebrate the life of the indomitable Will Lithgow feels a wholly befitting way to commemorate his musicality, the joy he brought and his remarkable impact on so many, both at Bedales and beyond.

We are proud to count Will as a colleague, friend and member of our community. Thank you to all of you for coming and, in particular, to those contributing to this beautiful and moving event.

Will Goldsmith
Head of Bedales School

PROGRAMME

Organ Concerto in d-minor Op.7 No. 4

- *Adagio* -

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Chamber Orchestra

Nicholas Gleed *organist* . Douglas McIlwraith *conductor*

Handel was born in Halle, Germany. He most probably received his early music education close to home before embarking on a career which would take him initially to Hamburg and Italy, where the eclectic nature of his creative imagination was further fuelled and informed.

By 1721 Handel was in London, a city which at that time had become almost centre stage for many things operatic, dramatic and financially rewarding in European music. He stayed in England for the rest of his life, becoming a naturalized citizen of this country in 1727.

The organ concerto was a genre which Handel enjoyed and promoted. He composed and performed many new works for this ensemble.

The *adagio* of Op. 7 No. 4 is a beautifully elegiac movement in which a heart-felt dialogue between upper and lower strings is set against a solo organ part of profound grandeur and dignity.

A Downland Suite

- *Minuet* -

John IRELAND (1879-1962)

Chamber Orchestra

Nicholas Gleed *conductor*

John Ireland's ancestry, like that of Will himself, is Scottish and English. Looking retrospectively at both these musicians, there are a few other interesting existential similarities.

The “downland” referenced in the title of the Suite, concerns the Sussex-Hampshire countryside. Although neither Ireland nor Will grew up in this part of England, it is a landscape with which both men would come to identify. A place of undulating beauty, where hills soon fold into dales, and where dissonance invariably finds resolution in consonance. In other words; the contours of classical music, etched into the earth itself.

This entrancingly lyrical *Minuet*, forever associated in our minds with Will through his exemplary interpretation of the work with Bedalian musicians, is a perfect “romantic” miniature, full of pictorial imagery condensed into musical form.

Unlike many of his mid-twentieth-century contemporaries, Ireland chose not to focus re-creative attention around a country's indigenous folk songs. His “Englishness” is more pan-European; essentially an eclectic mix of both Germanic (“classical”) and French (“impressionist”) traditions. That said, it's not hard to hear a distinctly rural and *English* songfulness behind the melody which dominates the Downland *Minuet*.

A live recording of this music, conducted by Will and made during a Bedales concert tour of Italy, was played at his funeral last March.

Cantique de Jean Racine

Gabriel FAURÉ (1845-1924)

Choir and Chamber Orchestra

Douglas McIlwraith *conductor*

Verbe égal au Très-Haut, notre unique espérance
Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux
De la paisible nuit nous rompons le silence:
Divin sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux
Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce puissante;
Que tout l'enfer fuie au son de ta voix;
Dissipe ce sommeil d'une âme languissante
Qui la conduit à l'oubli de tes lois!
O Christ! sois favorable à ce peuple fidèle
Pour te bénir maintenant assemblé;
Reçois les chants qu'il offre à ta gloire immortelle
Et de tes dons qu'il retourne comblé.

A helpful, albeit unstructured, translation of the text into English ...

Word equal to the Most High, our only hope, eternal day of earth and sky. Of peaceful night, we break the silence. Divine Saviour, cast Thine eyes on us! Cast on us the fire of Thy mighty grace, that all hell may flee at the sound of Thy voice. Cast sleep from a languishing soul, Thou who bears it to the limit of Thy laws. O Christ, look favourably on this faithful people, who gather now to bless Thee. Receive the songs they offer to Thy immortal glory and Thy gifts which they return manifold.

Fauré was just nineteen years old, and approaching the end of his years of study at the École Niedermeyer de Paris, when he composed what would become one of his most enduringly popular choral works. He submitted it for the school's 1865 composition prize, and won. The style already displays a love of romantic melody, encased in an “impressionist” – some might say, rather austere – harmonic language, which would characterise his music for the next sixty years. The *Cantique* is a setting of words by the seventeenth century French poet and dramatist, Jean Racine.

Ihr habt nun traurigkeit

from A German Requiem

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Olivia Brett *soprano soloist*

Choir

Nicholas Gleed *pianist*

Douglas McIlwraith *conductor*

For many years Brahms had considered writing a Requiem, but only in 1866, when he was 33, did he compose one. The absence of any text associated with the conventional Requiem Mass enforces Brahms' stated intention that this is a work “to comfort the living”.

Ihr habt nun traurigkeit is the fifth movement and the last to have been composed. A sublime soprano solo with a message of maternal consolation is accompanied by choral and instrumental textures.

In recognition of Will's love for Germany and his fluency in its language, we have chosen - again unconventionally - to perform this movement in both German (soprano solo) and English (chorus).

Soprano Solo

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit; aber ich euch wieder sehen und euer Herz soll sich freuen,
und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.
Sehet mich an: ich habe eine kleine Zeit Mühe und Arbeit gehabt und habe großen Trost funden;

Chorus

Thee will I comfort, as one whom his mother comforts.

Goldberg Variations

Aria – Variation I – Variation XXI – Aria

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Joel Edgeworth *pianist*

The music which is now known as Goldberg Variations was first published in 1741 under the title “Keyboard Practice, consisting of an aria with diverse variations for the two-manual harpsichord.”

The writing of large sets of variations for keyboard was already a long-standing tradition, serving not only as exercises in performance but also as demonstrations of compositional technique. The Goldberg set is built around a harmonic progression (the “realisation” of a figured bass line) initially formed into an *aria*, a not uncommon name for such a binary structure, especially when used as the basis for variations.

- Requiem -

for Cellos and Piano

David POPPER (1843-1913)

Alfie Johnson Caleb Curtis

Antonia Richards Tommy Hornsby *cellists*

Nicholas Glead *pianist*

No concert dedicated to the memory of Will would be quite complete without this deeply moving, highly expressive work. Composed in 1892, it explores the rich lyricism innate to the very soul and “voice” of the cello; the instrument Will made his own and through which he not only demonstrated a prodigious technique but also communicated his hugely insightful understanding of music.

Popper studied at the conservatoire in his native Prague and toured as a soloist throughout Europe for almost 30 years. He knew very many of the great composers alive at that time, including Wagner, Bruckner, Liszt, Raff and Brahms. When Liszt founded the Budapest Conservatoire in 1886, he asked Popper to join the chamber music department. In the same year, and with the composer playing piano, Popper premièred Brahms' Piano Trio No. 3.

Piano Trio in d-minor

- *Andante con moto tranquillo* -

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Sara Timossi *violinist* **Verity Simmons** *cellist* **Hiroko Banks** *pianist*

The piano introduces this movement with a melody and texture sounding as if they have strayed from the pages of the composer's *Songs Without Words*.

When writing this trio, Mendelssohn expressed in a letter to his sister (the composer Fanny Mendelssohn) that his intention was to create a work in which the piano played a dominant role. After some re-writing of the part, the final version became both larger and more romantic. Robert Schumann wrote, "The master-trio of our time!"

At the first performance - one has always hoped this story might be true - only the violinist and cellist had scores. Mendelssohn, seated at the piano and initially appearing without any music, directed that a book - *any* book - should be placed on the piano and someone occasionally turn its pages so it didn't look as if he was upstaging his colleagues by playing from memory.

Fantasiestücke Op. 73

- *Zart und mit Ausdruck* -

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Keir Rowe *clarinetist* **Nicholas Gleed** *pianist*

Schumann composed his "fantasy pieces" in 1849 over a period of just a couple of days. He initially called them *Soirée Pieces* but later decided on the title *Fantasiestücke* to reflect the Romantic idea that creative expression is essentially the product of an artist's unrestricted imagination. This movement - first in the set - is a captivatingly beautiful representation of human introspection.

My soul, there is a country

Sir Hubert PARRY (1848-1918)

Parry composed *My Soul, there is a country* as one of six "Songs of Farewell" during the First World War. A life-long Germanophile, the cycle of motets references not only Parry's learning from and subsequent absorption of Germanic compositional procedures, but also something of his despair at the breakdown of a relationship between two European countries which had previously been amicable.

The text is by the Welsh metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands the wingèd sentry,
A sentry all skilful in the wars:
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One, born in a manger,
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious Friend,
And, O my soul awake!
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.
Leave then thy fooloish ranges,
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes,
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.



CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin and Viola

Sara Timossi
Catherine Lett
Charlotte Gulliver
Georgina Gulliver
Eric Tse
Martin Jones
Louisa Denby

Flute and Clarinet

Imogen Welch
Serena Brett
Keir Rowe

Violoncello and Double Bass

Alfie Johnson
Caleb Curtis
Antonia Richards
Verity Simmons
Tommy Hornsby
Tabatha Curry
Issie Rogers
Ellie Evans
Dan Rogers
Monty Bland

CHOIR

Upper Voices

Evie Cullingworth
Serena Brett
Olivia Brett
Imogen Welch
Charlotte Gulliver
Georgina Gulliver
Ellie Yeo
Olivia Kent
Christy Callaway-Gale
Louisa Denby
Eleanor Soper
Sheila Rowe
Clare Jarmy
Alison Raines
Maggie Hughes
Antonia Richards
Hiroko Banks
Chihiro Ike
Tabatha Curry
Georgia Braun-White
Gill Harris
Lesley Boarse
Lucy McIlwraith
Sara Timossi
Catherine Lett
Verity Simmons
Ellie Thackrey
Sarah Heath
Miranda Robertson

Lower Voices

Ben Dale
Adam Kent
Alfie Johnson
Hugo Francis
Matt Yeo
Maurice Snell
Nick Tier
Toby Matimong
Oscar Braun-White
Caleb Curtis
Doug McIlwraith
Phillip Guy Bromley
James Thomas
David Thomas
George Butler
Alex Yetman
Joel Edgeworth
Jamie Bland
Monty Bland
Martin Jones
Jonny Greenfield
Cass Kay

To read what people have written about Will and to leave your own tribute, visit:

<https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/VZEfLBxF>



If you would like to make a donation to the three charities we are supporting,

Macmillan Cancer Support - Rosemary Foundation - Rowans Hospice

visit:

<https://www.funeralguide.co.uk/obituaries/121851>



