

Fri 1 Mar

7.30pm // RNCM Concert Hall

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**Symphony
Orchestra**

Programme

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Fri 1 Mar 2024 // 7.30pm
RNCM Concert Hall
RNCM Symphony Orchestra

Programme

Benjamin Britten

Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* Op 33a (17')

Julia Perry

A Short Piece for Orchestra * (7')

Keiko Abe

Prism Rhapsody for marimba and orchestra (17')

Interval

William Walton

Symphony No 1 in B flat minor (45')

Baldur Brönnimann, Jakub Przybycień * *conductors*

Ho Yin Wong *marimba*

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

Michelle Phillips *host*

Programme Notes

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* Op 33a

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Known for titans such as *War Requiem* and *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) is a central figure of 20th century British music. His music is fresh and sophisticated, and continues to fascinate casual concert-goers, music-makers and scholars alike.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The *Four Sea Interludes* are a selection of scene changes from Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. This opera was composed in 1945 after the Second World War and catapulted Britten to international renown. Set in coastal Suffolk in the early 19th century, the morally grey outcast Peter Grimes is an unusual and unlikeable main character. The *Four Sea Interludes'* nautical flavourings reflect the opera's setting; it is almost as if the orchestra embodies the sea itself.

Shimmering violin and flute melodies float over limpid semiquaver ripples in 'Dawn', with the occasional choir of bass instruments punctuating the soundscape. 'Sunday Morning' is perky, featuring chirping woodwind birdsong and tolling bells. A playfully syncopated motif is passed around the orchestra, followed by a lush soaring tune. Solemn yet unsettled, the third interlude, 'Moonlight', feels ceremonial and processional. The sparse texture builds as pulsing chords bring the music to a vast yet rootless horizon. The last movement, 'Storm', brings previous nervous undercurrents to the foreground. Thunder and lightning resound amidst frantic whirlpools and waves. An orchestral rendition of Peter Grimes' aria 'What harbour shelters peace?' in the middle of this movement reflects the inner turmoil of our main character.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are six interludes in *Peter Grimes*, but only the first, third, fifth, and second interludes were published in the *Four Sea Interludes* in that order.



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Programme Notes

JULIA PERRY

A Short Piece for Orchestra

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

In celebration of the centenary of Julia Perry's birth, the world unites to champion her music. Julia Perry (1924-1979) was at the forefront of the zeitgeist of black American composers in the 20th century. Born in Lexington, Kentucky, Perry was brought up in a house full of music. Perry studied composition with Luigi Dallapiccola and Nadia Boulanger and was awarded the Boulanger Prize for her Viola Sonata in 1952. As Michael Harper writes, Perry was extremely successful in a music world that was 'not moulded in her image'.

Certainly, although Perry's compositions contain African influences, her more contemporary idiom shines through. Her compositional style ranges from being primarily inspired by African American spirituals at the start, to neoclassicism and serialism, and finally to a more experimental sound in her later years.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

A Short Piece for Orchestra was written during her neoclassical period and premièred in 1952 with Dean Dixon conducting the Turin Orchestra. The piece is a marvel of form and its compactness showcases a newfound economy of means in Perry's style. An introductory fanfare opens the piece, which is followed by a series of subjects in a myriad of moods.

Imagine the noise of city traffic at night, contrasted against vibrant glimpses of intimate domestic and street scenes. Serialist influences and unorthodox harmonies are heard aplenty in this exciting work.

DID YOU KNOW?

Perry was a great singer. Her innate understanding of the voice is showcased in works such as *Stabat Mater* and *Symphony U.S.A. No. 7*.

With great thanks to Michael Harper for an interview and research materials.

In 2021, RNCM Professor in Singing Michael Harper was one of seven researchers awarded a grant by BBC Radio 3 and the Arts and Humanities Research Council to celebrate work of ethnically diverse composers from history. The RNCM has been showcasing Michael's research on Julia Perry as part of Julia Perry In Focus where he has been joined by an international team of performance scholars to celebrate Perry's musical legacy through a series lectures, classes, and public performances of her works.

Programme Notes

KEIKO ABE

Prism Rhapsody for marimba and orchestra

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Keiko Abe (1937) is one of the world's most acclaimed marimba virtuosos. She has contributed massively to the development of marimba music, championing new works for the instrument and writing them herself. Abe also facilitated the evolution of the marimba itself by working closely with manufacturers to refine the instrument. Her compositional language is characterised by ambiguous tonalities, contrasts between stasis and fluid movement, and influences from traditional Japanese genres.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Prism Rhapsody was written in 1995, based on Abe's earlier work *Prism* (1986). The version for marimba and wind ensemble was premièred by Abe and the RNCM Wind Orchestra under the baton of Timothy Reynish, with the orchestral version being premièred in 1996. Featuring six-mallet playing and multiple cadenzas, Abe draws attention to the marimba's dramatic capabilities.

True to its name, *Prism Rhapsody* does not fit any specific formal structure; instead, it is unified by recurring motifs and gestures. Fire and exuberance open the rhapsody, which features dream sequences of hauntingly beautiful marimba improvisation, an orchestral percussion interlude, and some fiendishly elaborate two and four-mallet playing. Punchy orchestral chords and *moto perpetuo* marimba figurations lead to the piece's conclusion in a firework of verve. Abe masterfully juxtaposes weighted silences with bursts of energy, and thus *Prism Rhapsody* shines with flair and character.

DID YOU KNOW?

Abe started playing on the xylophone but later committed to the marimba.

Programme Notes

WILLIAM WALTON

Symphony No 1 in B flat minor

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

William Walton (1902-1983) was a 20th century British composer whose fame rests on works such as *Façade*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, and the *Viola Concerto*. His initial fame and popularity as a 'modernist' was soon overshadowed by British composers such as Britten and international vagues such as Schoenberg and his serialism.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Walton wrote this symphony in fits and starts. The finished version of Symphony No 1 was premièred in 1935, three years after Walton had started working on it. Heavily inspired by Sibelius and Beethoven, this symphony is one of the most renowned British symphonies of the 20th century. Revered by critics, his Symphony No 1 is a powerhouse of lush Romantic orchestration and groovy metric modulation.

The first movement creeps in with *pianissimo* timpani. Restless power and immense grandeur are created by lush harmonies, menacing low brass chords, and ostinato strings. As woodwinds call, the music surges forward with urgency and passion. Marked *Presto con malizia* and set in E minor, the second movement is jittery and mocking in tone. Angular and biting, the music arrives at seemingly random and aimless peaks and silences. It can be argued that the slow third movement is the emotional core of the symphony. Flute melody and string chorales are yearning yet desolate. A contrapuntal development section culminates in an

outspoken lament, and the movement ends in a whisper. The last movement opens with a flourish and is a surprisingly upbeat ending for this rather dark symphony. Featuring a lively *fugato* section and swaggering fanfares, this movement also plays with metric modulation and syncopation. The symphony finishes with triumph.

DID YOU KNOW?

The symphony was premièred multiple times as an incomplete work with the first three movements being premiered in 1934 and the finale being added on a year later.

Programme notes by Ed Chua
(BMus (Hons), cello).

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BIOGRAPHIES

BALDUR BRÖNNIMANN (CONDUCTOR)

Baldur Brönnimann is a conductor of great flexibility with a broad-minded approach to programme-building and music-making. He is deeply committed to making classical music relevant in the 21st century and as such is active as both a commissioner of new works and as a curator of festivals and series. He has a strong commitment to outreach and educational work, working whenever possible with youth orchestras. He is the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Real Filharmonia de Galicia and Escola de Altos Estudos Musicais, the founder of the Desclasificados project in Madrid, a concert series that gives opportunities to young up-and-coming artists, and the course director of the Contemporary-Conducting Program at the Lucerne Festival Academy.

Brönnimann has conducted significant performances of major works by composers such as Saariaho, Romitelli, Boulez, Vivier, Schnebel, Birtwistle and Zimmerman at festivals such as Lucerne, Wien Modern, Darmstadt, Donaueschingen, Grafenegg, Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center and the BBC Proms, and is held in the highest regard by many of today's living composers including Chin, Lachenmann and Neuwirth. Brönnimann conducts widely at the highest level across Europe, and in 23/24 his guest conducting highlights include return engagements with the WDR and SWR Symphony orchestras, Orquesta de Valencia and his debut with the Euskadi Symphony Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid.

In the opera house, Brönnimann has conducted Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* at English National Opera, Komische Oper Berlin and Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires) in both the La Fura dels Baus and Barrie Kosky productions, John Adams' *Death of Klinghoffer* at English National Opera,

Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* at the Bergen Festival and Norwegian Opera, and Romitelli's *Index of Metals* with Barbara Hannigan at the Theater an der Wien. At Argentina's Teatro Colón he has also conducted Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Szymanowski's *Hagith*, and Helmut Lachenmann's *The Little Match Girl* with the composer as narrator and Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*.

As Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Real Filharmonia de Galicia Brönnimann presented his first season titled *Migrations*, focussing on music by composers in exile, the works of Kaija Saariaho and Roberto Gerhard plus new concert formats, reading sessions for young composers, a new historic music series, community projects, works from a large diversity of cultural backgrounds and gender-sensitive programming. He was Principal Conductor of the Basel Sinfonietta between 2016-2023, Principal Conductor of the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música between 2014-2020, Artistic Director of Norway's leading contemporary music ensemble BIT20 from 2011-2015 and from 2008-2012 Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia in Bogotá.

Born in Switzerland, Brönnimann trained at the City of Basel Music Academy and at the RNCM where he was subsequently appointed Visiting Tutor in Conducting, and he now lives in Madrid.

BIOGRAPHIES

JAKUB PRZYBYCIEŃ (CONDUCTOR)

Jakub Przybycień is a Polish conductor and violinist. Having grown up in the orchestra, he stands out for his excellent understanding of the orchestral perspective. He has dedicated himself to conducting as a way of using his voice and standing up for his beliefs. Musicians from orchestras from all over the world appreciate his energetic and charismatic manner. His clear character and musical ideas inspire musicians and audiences wherever he goes and leave a lasting impression.

For the season 2023/24 Jakub Przybycień has been appointed as conducting assistant of Maestro Ludovic Morlot by the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra of Catalonia as well as Mills Williams Junior Fellow in Conducting at the RNCM.

To further develop his musical and technical skills as a conductor, Jakub Przybycień has already participated in several master classes led by eminent conductors such as Neeme, Paavo and Kristjan Järvi, Marin Alsop, Jaap van Zweden, Peter Eötvös, Jorma Panula and Michael Sanderling. He has collaborated with orchestras such as London Symphony Orchestra, Baltic Sea Philharmonic, Ensemble Ars Nova, Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen, Philharmonie Baden-Baden, Philharmonie Südwestfalen, Kritisches Orchester Berlin, Göttinger Symphonie Orchester, Philharmonie Hradec Králové, Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier Occitanie as well as with the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra. This season Jakub Przybycień will be working with the Balthasar Neumann Ensembles and the Zielona Góra Philharmonic Orchestra.

His musical education started at the age of six with playing the violin. During his career as a violinist, he received laureates in many national and international violin competitions. Some of his many achievements include qualifying for the prestigious European Union Youth Orchestra, where he worked with and learned from outstanding musicians such as maestro Bernard Haitink, Manfred Honeck, Noah Bendix-Balgley, and Lorenza Borrani. Between 2014-2019 he studied violin with Professor Monika Urbaniak Lisik at the Academy of the Arts in Bern (CH). He graduated from his Bachelor as well as his Master studies with distinction. While studying violin he started pursuing his career as a conductor. He obtained his Bachelor degree in orchestral conducting with honors at the Academy of Music in Wrocław (PL) with Professor Marek Pijarowski. During his studies in Wrocław, he had multiple chances of working with the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic and the Lower Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra in Jelenia Góra. For his Masters Jakub Przybycień studied in the world-renowned conducting class of Professor Johannes Schlaefli at the Zurich University of the Arts (CH).

BIOGRAPHIES

HO YIN WONG (MARIMBA)

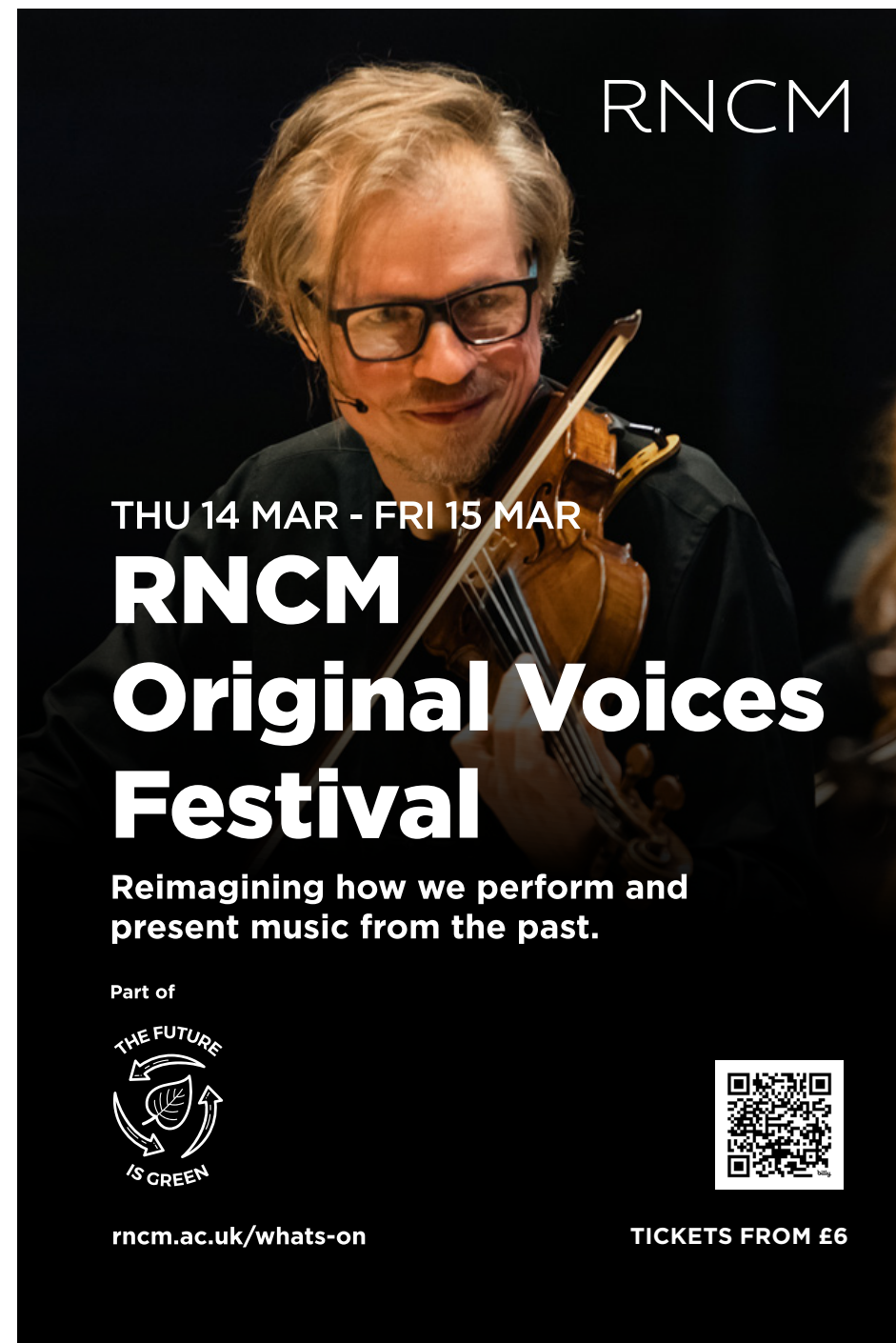
Ho Yin (Jason) Wong is currently a fourth year percussionist studying at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) under Simone Rebello, Le Yu, Paul Turner, Liz Gilliver, Emil Kuyumcuyan, and Kai Strobel.

Born in Hong Kong, Jason is keen on solo playing and has rapidly established his name in the international music scene. He recently won the RNCM 2023 Gold Medal Competition and Concerto Competition. He was also awarded the first prize in the Croatian International Percussion Competition Rhythm-O-Phonia in 2022, where he had the privilege to perform a brand-new concerto with the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra. He also had masterclasses and had collaborated with a lot of international renowned soloists such as Momoko Kamiya, Colin Currie, Eric Sammut, the Ju Percussion Group and the Percussions Claviers de Lyon.

Jason is also the co-founder of the percussion duo Mallet Squared in which they were the winner and awarded the Audience Prize in the RNCM Christopher Rowland Chamber Ensemble of the Year 2023. He is enthusiastic about chamber music where he also formed Impropercussion Duo to explore new percussion repertoire and genres.

Jason is an active musician who performed his debut solo recitals in Manchester and Hong Kong in 2023. He performs regularly with the RNCM Symphony Orchestra, Percussion Ensemble and Wind Orchestra. He had also made appearances with the Brighthouse and Rastrick Band, Blackburn Symphony Orchestra, Nottingham Philharmonic Orchestra and Hong Kong Children's Symphony Orchestra.

He is currently exploring new percussion genres and repertoire with the aid of electronic music and visual effects.




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Jack Callaghan
Audrey Doyle
Archie Freeman
Yiyang Sun
Emily Harpley Gebbels
Nadia Wilson
Nina Doig
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Sam Lawson
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Xin Ju

VIOLAS

Abi Hammett
Estelle Gonzalez
Michaela Jones
Emily O'Dell
Kirin Howat
David Mullooly
Eden Saunders
Alexandra Harrison
Ben Norris
Paula Bowes

CELLOS

Nathan Jackson-Turner
(principal in 1st half)
Elliott Bailey
(principal in 2nd half)
Hongze Zhao
Susannah Roman
Chuchu Chi
Ed Chua
Cillian Hennessy
Aoife Anson-O'Connell
Congyuan Xiao

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He Dong

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Rebecca Corcoran

COR ANGLAIS

Mariam Jackson

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Julie Beech

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Toby Johnson-Jones
Fran Penny
Liaocheng Cai
Finnian Smith

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Erin McLellan
Seb Williman
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