



Martin Read Foundation
presents...

Festival of Contemporary Music
2019

Sunday 28th April

Martin Read Hall

Alton College GU34 2HU



Artwork:
with grateful thanks to
Gill Robinson www.gill-robinson.co.uk

PROGRAMME

2.30pm Masterclass: composition-performance workshop

5.30pm Festival Concert

MRF is grateful to Alton College for its on-going support of this annual Festival.

The Martin Read Foundation

Trustees: Joseph Spooner, Beccy Read, Simon Speare & Alison Willis
Patrons, composers: Gwyneth Herbert, Howard Skempton and Judith Weir

www.martinreadfoundation.org ▪ www.facebook.com/martinreadfoundation

Welcome...to this 5th annual festival of contemporary music, the culmination of the Foundation's annual scheme supporting young composers.

The work of the MRF centres on the young composers its supports, providing specialist input at school age, helping to propel gifted young composers forward. This year MRF has given an award to 3 promising young composers: Pernille (16) and Scottie (17) - both from Hampshire, and Jack (15), from London. They have each received a commission to write a 5-minute piece for this year's ensemble in residence of percussion with flute or recorders. They have been working hard with their mentors to produce the finished works we hear premiered today. Domenico (18), from Milton Keynes, also greatly impressed MRF's selection panel, and will receive a performance today.

In February the young composers attended the first of 2 MRF masterclass-style workshops, on the Starting Points of their commissions. The second of these workshops is at 2.30pm today with Joseph Spooner, cellist and Howard Skempton, composer & Patron. This is a rare opportunity to observe composers and performers working together.

Also working hard are today's local ensembles. Instrumentalists have spent this morning workshopping new pieces by MRF alumni, Freddie Hodkin and Owen Russell. Meanwhile, the Festival choir has been joined by singers from Commotio - Oxford-based *leading performers of contemporary choral music*, assisting David Gibson - conductor.

Commotio will also perform a new work by Alex Ling, commissioned by MRF, on a poem written to mark this 5th MRF Festival: *Oh Sweet Music* by Philip Sealey, Martin's long-time librettist.

In addition, Alton College students have worked with other instrumentalists in Kurt Weill's *Kanon Song* from *Threepenny Opera*. Another local group will give Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint* a repeat by popular request from last year.

New music abounds, by established and emerging composers, in today's programme, as we **discover, explore and celebrate** contemporary music.

MRF is hugely grateful to its supporters.

More funds are needed to ensure the continuation of this rare yet much-valued support for young composers, which helps to fill the gap between local music service provision and undergraduate study. Please consider donating either a one-off amount, or preferably by direct debit. Instructions on the final page. *Thank you.*

2.30 **Masterclass-style composition-performance workshop** *ALL WELCOME!*

Howard Skempton, patron, with: Joe Parks - percussion, Joseph Spooner - cello, Daniel Swani - flute & recorders.

MRF awarded composers 2019:

Pernille Faye, Jack Robinson & Scottie Thompson, with Domenico Ragozzino

4.30 **PICNIC TIME!**

Please find a spot in the Forum Grounds or, if the weather is unfavourable, in the Martin Read Hall.

Drinks are available from the bar 4.30 - 5.30 & in the concert interval.

DONATIONS, please, by cash / cheque to Martin Read Foundation.

5.30pm Festival Concert

Commotio singers

Come, oh come, my life's delight (1924) - Rebecca Clarke (1886 -1979)

Rebecca Clarke's choral music was virtually unknown until OUP began publishing them in 1970s. She wrote for vocal ensembles from her earliest attempts at composition around 1906 to her final flowering in the 1940s, revising and recomposing until as late as 1976. The words are based on text by the seventh-century Thomas Campion.

A Perfect Friend - Richard Allain (b. 1965)

This setting of text by Robert Louis Stephenson was written for Commotio Director's Matthew Berry's wedding, Commotio performing its concert premiere in 2017. It has been recently recorded by Merton College Chapel Choir. Commotio will be premiering a further commission by Richard Allain as part of their 20th anniversary celebrations in September this year.

Heyr þú oss himnum á - Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b. 1977):

This evocative piece sets selected verses from an old Icelandic psalm by Olafur á Söndum (1560-1627). Deceptively simple, the setting evokes the landscape of the composer's homeland.

Oh Sweet Music - Alex Ling (2019) Words: Philip Sealey

This choral setting of Philip Sealey's poem seeks simply to magnify and intensify the text, already full of jubilation and celebration.

Oh Sweet Music

(for the Martin Read Foundation)

This place is full of noises,
sounds and airs that give delight
music, oh sweet music
and voices,
voices singing from the dome.

Sometimes a thousand instruments
will hum around my ears
and then I hear
music, oh sweet music
a piano's rippling keys
a saxophone's wail
the shout of the trumpet
and the thud of the drum

music, oh sweet music
the cymbal's fizz
the boom, boom, boom of the bass
and

all
that
jazz.

Music, oh sweet music,
where would I be,
where would we be without you?

Philip Sealey
(with stuff stolen from Shakespeare)

Flexible Ensemble - assisted by Pande Shahov

Already - Freddie Hodkin

This piece can exist in many different ways- the flexible nature of both the instrumentation and the structure means that no two performances are likely to be the same. Narrowing the gap between composer and performers in this way is exciting and can help create interesting and unique musical experiences. It started out as a piece for piano alone, before evolving (with assistance from guitarist and composer Chris Roberts) into the version you hear today. First performed as part of the Cardiff Contemporary Arts Festival 2016.

MRF young composers' commissions 2019

Joe Parks - Percussion, Daniel Swani - recorders / flute

Oscillate - Pernille Faye

Written during a visit to Geilo, *Oscillate* explores the vivid landscape of rural Norway in winter. The opening sequence, played on vibraphone, reflects the continuing presence of the rounded mountains that undulate around the valleys. The flute and vibraphone illustrate the nature of snow in all its forms from a slower brooding section that represents a thick blizzard to reflective passages of new snowfall and in the middle of the piece, a vibraphone solo signifies a break in the weather before the music returns to the darker sound of the blizzard.

Freely - Scottie Thompson

'Freely' is the tempo marking of my piece, and conveys its overall character. There is a contrast between being together and being separate, with the instruments ultimately coming together, but this is done in a somewhat unconventional and 'free' manner.

Murmuration - Jack Robinson

This piece started out with the simple idea of a locrian scale rising and falling. Inspired by studying a specific passage of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, I developed a polytonal harmonic system for the piece, and started sketching rhythmic ideas. The final piece takes inspiration from many composers, such as Scriabin, Bartok, Berg and Magnus Lindberg. The title was created after the piece was written, the word referring to the giant formations of starlings moving in unison that resemble some parts of the motion in this piece.

Local 'electric' ensemble

Electric Counterpoint (1987) - Steve Reich

Performed by local musicians, this piece is a minimalist composition consisting of three movements, "Fast," "Slow", and "Fast". The composer has offered two versions of the piece: one for electric guitar and tape (the tape part featuring two electric bass guitars and 7 electric guitars), and the other for an ensemble of guitars -as played here. It was first recorded by guitarist Pat Metheny in 1987 and released with Reich's *Different Trains*, performed by the Kronos Quartet.

INTERVAL - drinks available at the bar- for donations, please

20 minutes

Alton College Ensemble & friends - directed by Pande Shahov

The Kanonen Song, from *Threepenny Opera* - Kurt Weill

Threepenny Opera (*Die Dreigroschenoper*) is a play with music by Bertolt Brecht, adapted from a translation by Elisabeth Hauptmann of John Gay's 18th-century English ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera*, and four ballads by François Villon, with music by Kurt Weill. Martin was drawn to this opera time & again, particularly evident in his writing of his community opera *Roundabout Basingstoke*.

Flexible Ensemble - assisted by Simon Speare

Migration II, after Sheppard - Owen Russell (2019)

The stunning polyphonic writing found in Sheppard's *Libera Nos, Salva Nos* inspires me a great deal. The few minutes of bliss that can come from a single mode (with the exception of a few extra flats here and there) pronounces a clear message to me, along with much of early polyphony: less is more. I wanted to try and create a new viewpoint involving a free technique of different massed lines, which I used before in *Migration* (2018). *Migration II* (2019) simplifies

and explodes that idea from a single-part-canon into a five-minute peek at a static soundscape, with some added colour on top.

Joe Parks & Daniel Swani duo - percussion & recorders / flute

Parade - Alex Ling (2019)

I began writing *Parade* early in 2019 - an indefinite number of short, self-contained pieces for solo instruments or small ensembles that can be performed in any order. Parts 1-3 were composed to celebrate the 5th year of the MRF. Part 2 for vibraphone and alto recorder is based on the long melodic cell in Terry Riley's *In C*, of which I have many fond memories, performing it with Martin and my peers during my time at Alton College.

Star Rising (revised 2019) - Simon Speare

This piece was written in memory of my student Toby Davies who died suddenly in November 2015. It was first performed by Laura Davies (flute) and Hyungi Lee (vibraphone) in a memorial concert for Toby the following April. The motif of three rising tones is used because Toby was writing a piece around the time of his death using the same idea. I also use it because in many musical traditions the three steps symbolise spiritual ascent. The three upward rising steps also remind me of Toby's optimism, positivity and winning personality. There's a section in the middle of the piece which reflects my anger, frustration and grief at the time. But good memories win out in the end. It was a life well lived.

Joseph Spooner - solo cello

MRF young composer performance 2019

Continued by Domenico Ragozzino

Joseph will also perform a piece for solo cello by Alastair Rook

Presentations: to MRF selected composers 2019

Howard Skempton with MRF Trustees & alumni

Festival Chorus with Commotio Singers - Directed by David Gibson

There was a Tree - Gustav Holst (1874 - 1934) Words: traditional

Holst's setting, published 1917, is based on a folk melody collected in Hampshire by G.B. Gardiner.

A movement from *Rosarium* - Alison Willis (2017), words: anon medieval

A Rosarium is a garland of roses and the medieval texts for Alison's five short pieces each reflect on the notion of Mary as the Rose without thorn. They also reflect the macaronic (dual language) fashion of the medieval era combining English and Latin words. Inspired by Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* - largely modal with a contemporary twist in the harmony, the 5 pieces can be sung individually or as a collection.

The New Year Now Away has Fled - Martin Read, words: traditional

Martin set these words to mark the retirement of his friend and colleague, Julian Macey, from Alton College where he taught psychology. In typical Martin style, for the premiere, Martin secretly worked with Ashton Singers the chamber choir formed by Julian many years previously. Julian recalls: *I remember it well, of course. It was a total surprise to me when Ashton Singers walked in as I began my farewell speech - a surreal mixing of two parts of my life!*

8pm

approximate concert end

BIOGRAPHIES

Commotio

Founded in 1999 and based in Oxford, the choir Commotio performs contemporary choral music primarily from the 20th and 21st centuries showcasing works by younger or lesser-known composers, and rediscovering lost or neglected work by more established composers. Recent highlights have included the first UK performance of 'At First Light' by Francis Pott (recording to be released on the Naxos label in 2020). The choir is particularly recognised for its fine tuning, attention to detail and challenging repertoire. The name Commotio derives from the Latin for movement/excitement. It was founded by its director, Matthew Berry (ARAM).

Pernille Faye (b. 2002)

MRF composer '19

Pernille is a Norwegian/Irish composer who attends school in Winchester, Hampshire. She plays the clarinet and the bass clarinet and draws upon her knowledge of these instruments as inspiration for her work. Her clarinet quartet has been performed in concert and she has recorded a looped piece for Bass, Bb and Eb clarinets.

David Gibson began his musical training as a chorister and Lay Clerk in Chichester Cathedral Choir. As an Organ Scholar, he later studied music at the universities of London and Sussex. He has worked extensively as a pianist and organist and as a freelance conductor for many years, working with many of the top orchestras in the country, including the Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, London Mozart Players, The Hanover Band and the New London Sinfonia, which he founded in 1987. He is currently Musical Director of the Basingstoke Choral Society, the Occam Singers the Croydon Philharmonic Choir and the Southampton Philharmonic Society - their 2019 performance of Monteverdi Vespers of 1610, Winchester Cathedral, receiving high acclaim.

Freddie Hodkin

MRF alumnus '15

As well as the MRF award, Freddie was also awarded an Alton College Foundation Scholarship for Excellence, and Hampshire Music Service Composition Award. Recent performances of my work include Cardiff University Composition Showcase, Cardiff New Music Festival, Borough New Music in London and Cardiff University Brass Band. His music has been performed by ensembles and individuals including cello and piano duo Kathryn Mosley and Joseph Spooner, pianist Roy Howat, violin duo Retorica, Fine Arts Brass and the Robin Green Quartet. I'm currently studying an MA Music (Composition) at Cardiff University School of Music. His work reflects artistic, academic and personal experiences.

Alexander Ling (b. 1994)

Alexander is a composer and pianist. Upcoming work and performances include the second concert in a series dedicated to contemporary organ and piano music with organist Jack Stone; and piano arrangements of Alexandre-Pierre Monsigny's opera *Le Roi et le Fermier* at the Wallace Collection for *No Pastoral/No Shepherdess* by artist Estella Castle. Alexander and Estella are also collaborating on the National Trust's People's Landscape Commission — a new work celebrating the history of the Magna Carta. Alexander is also the Associate Orchestrator for the new Matthew Bourne production of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Joe Parks - percussionist

Joe attended the Purcell School and the Royal College of Music Junior Department. He is currently an undergraduate student at the Royal College of Music where his studies particularly focus on marimba, vibraphone, piano and he is keen composer. Joe was a BBC Young Musician finalist 2016.

Domenico Ragozzino (b. 2000)

MRF scheme '19 application submission

Domenico Ragozzino is a young composer from the North of Buckinghamshire who will begin studying an undergraduate course in composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in September 2019. He has so far written for and worked with a brass band, chamber ensembles of various instrumentations as well as with several solo instrumentalists.

Domenico is very grateful and excited for the opportunity to be a part of this year's MRF festival.

Martin Read (1959 - 2012) was born in Birmingham, attended Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, studied music at Colchester Institute and at Goldsmiths, London University, where he gained a masters in composition. In 1988 he was admitted as a Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London (FTCL) and from '96 to '02 was a shortlisted composer with the Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM). He was Head of Music at Alton College ('89 - '12) www.martinreadfoundation.org

Jack Robinson (b. 2003)

MRF alumnus '18 & composer '19

Jack first started writing music when he was seven. His first major success was in becoming a winner of the BBC Inspire Competition 2016. Since then, he has produced a consistent output of works through the Centre for Young Musicians in London, who opened their composition department in 2017. This gave him the opportunity to work with musicians at CYM to record pieces and send them in to various competitions, such as one run by Music For Youth, which resulted in a performance of his string quartet at the Royal Albert Hall. He also studies piano and violin, which he plays in the London School Symphony Orchestra.

Owen Russell

MRF alumnus '17

Owen Russell is a composer and brass player from Horndean, Hampshire, and is currently in his second year of study for his Bachelor's Degree in Music at the University of York. He has previously been under the mentorship of Simon Speare (a mentor for the Martin Read Foundation), Daniel Mar-Molinero and Ian Schofield. His compositions and arrangements have been performed by a wide range of ensembles, including the Southampton Youth Jazz Orchestra, The 24, the University of York Cello Ensemble, the University of York Brass Band, and by performers in Borough New Music's 11th series.

Howard Skempton was born in Chester in 1947. From 1967 he studied in London with Cornelius Cardew, which helped Skempton to discover a musical language of great simplicity. Since then he has continued to write undeflected by compositional trends, producing a corpus of more than 300 works - many pieces being miniatures for solo piano or accordion. Skempton calls these pieces "the central nervous system" of his work. In the early 1990's, Howard took Martin Read under his wing as a burgeoning composer, in his role as President of the then Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM). Howard teaches composition at Birmingham Conservatoire. He is a highly supportive MRF patron, and in 2018 stated that MRF is *Unique within the UK*.

Simon Speare

MRF trustee and composer mentor

MRF composer mentor Simon Speare is the Head of Composition and Contemporary Music at the RCM Junior Department. He was born and brought up in Cornwall. He studied composition with Simon Holt at City University, London. His music has been widely performed by professional and amateur groups in the UK and abroad and broadcast on national radio and television. He teaches composition at The Purcell School and has lectured and examined at universities and conservatoires. He is an experienced leader of workshops in schools and colleges and recently developed the *Go Compose* project for Sound and Music. He is an experienced adjudicator and has been a judge for the British Composer Awards. He writes for, and fronts the rock band Simon and The Spears.

Joseph Spooner MRF trustee

Joseph is well-known to MRF audiences and a driving force of the Foundation's operations. He came to the cello indirectly, via a degree in Classics at Cambridge and a doctorate in Greek papyrology at London and Florence universities. During subsequent study at the Royal Academy of Music, he developed a taste for non-standard and unjustly neglected works. Audiences greatly appreciate hearing this music, and critics offer high praise for Joseph's recordings, noting the initiative entailed and agreeing that these works are indeed worth rehabilitating. 'Other cellists, please copy!' (*International Record Review*). Joseph was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2012. He is proud to be the dedicatee of several new works including Martin Read's *Troper Fragment*.

Daniel Swani - recorders & flute

Daniel attended the Purcell School of Music and the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music. He was Junior artist at London Philharmonic Orchestra and flautist for the National Youth Orchestra of GB. He played at the Olympics 2012 opening ceremony. A highly versatile player, he played flute, panpipes, alto flute and piccolo at National Youth Music Theatre. He currently studies at Royal Academy of Music.

Scottie Thompson (b. 2002) MRF composer '19

Scottie Thompson is a 16 year old composer from Havant. Although having only been composing for a year and a half, he has written a variety of pieces and is keen to continue experimenting. He plays classical and jazz piano and enjoys listening to and playing a wide range of music. Scottie is currently studying music at Alton College.

Alison Willis MRF trustee and composer mentor

Alison is an award winning composer whose works have been performed and broadcast internationally. She studied composition with Alan Bullard (Colchester) and George Benjamin (RCM). Her works are made available by Composers Edition. Her music has been described as, "Intensely moving", "Beautiful yet pragmatic" and "Saying what you have to say and then stopping". She finds particular inspiration in historical sources and events, social issues and enjoys working collaboratively with both young people and adults. Alison is also an experienced pianist, organist, folk musician and Musical Director enjoying composing music for theatre.

NEWS, NEWS!!

Joseph Spooner & David Owen Norris, pianist, give a recital at Chichester's Oxmarket, Thurs July 10th, including **Troper Fragment - Martin Read** www.festivalofchichester.co.uk

MRF Appeal: as with most arts and education programmes, MRF runs on a shoe-string. Every contribution make a real difference to the support the Foundation can provide young composers. Acclaimed as: '*...always massively inspiring, educational and life-affirming*', Howard Skempton says simply: '*MRF is unique within the UK*'. Please consider making a regular or one-off donation to MRF funds. Paypal donations can be placed via: www.martinreadfoundation.org. To donate direct, please use these account details:

Martin Read Foundation, account no.: 40396137 sort code: 09-01-28.

Thank you.

Martin Read recording - exciting plans are underway for a commercially available recording of selected choral and chamber works by Martin. This is long overdue and very exciting. Grateful thanks to all who are involved (you know who you are...!). More details to follow.

For your diary MRF Festival date 2020 is likely to be Sunday 26th April.