



KINGS PLACE LONDON UNWRAPPED

Opening concert

Fri 26 Feb | 7pm

Live from Kings Place Hall One

The Lark Ascending

Elena Urioste with Principal Players
of Aurora Orchestra

Programme

Thea Musgrave

Light at the End of the Tunnel

Maurice Ravel

Introduction and Allegro

Anna Meredith

Music for Ravens

Ralph Vaughan Williams (arr. Farrington)

The Lark Ascending

Felix Mendelssohn

Octet in E-flat, Op. 20

I. Allegro moderato ma con fuoco

II. Andante

III. Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo

IV. Presto

This performance will last approx. 75 minutes with no interval.



**Aurora
Orchestra**

Fiona Kelly flute

Benjamin Mellefont clarinet

Benjamin Gilmore violin*

Jamie Campbell violin †

Katie Stillman violin

Alessandro Ruisi violin ‡

Ruth Gibson viola §

Hélène Clément viola ¶

Sébastien van Kuijk cello

Reinoud Ford cello

with

Elena Urioste violin

Sally Pryce harp

Tom Service presenter

* violin I, Mendelssohn

† violin I, Ravel, Meredith & Vaughan Williams

‡ violin II, Ravel & Meredith

§ Musgrave soloist & viola I, Meredith & Mendelssohn

¶ viola I, Ravel & Vaughan Williams



A very warm virtual welcome to a concert that marks both Aurora's first live performance of 2021 and the opening of Kings Place's year-long *London Unwrapped* season.

Although this series was conceived well before the advent of the pandemic last year, its underlying theme – 'sounds of a migrant city' – feels more relevant than ever. London's vibrant musical history is inextricably bound up with its status as a melting-pot metropolis in which an almost limitless variety of influences co-exist and cross-fertilise. Over the course of 2021, Kings Place will be exploring 400 years' worth of musical diversity rooted in the city, a timely reminder that despite the many shocks and barriers that history throws up along the way, the capital's creative radiance persists. Aurora's orchestral contribution to the series spans five concerts, including collaborations along the way with Cassie Kinoshi, Iestyn Davies and Allan Clayton. We close *London Unwrapped* with a very special New Year's Eve concert – featuring Handel's radiant *Water Music* – that also marks the end of our 6-year journey through a complete cycle of Mozart's piano concertos. Do visit the Aurora website for full programme details and booking information.

For tonight's opening concert we look towards the end of a long, dark winter with birdsong, light and new beginnings. At the heart of our programme is one of the most enduringly popular works of English orchestral music – Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* (1921), premiered in its orchestral version in London a century ago and heard tonight in a new arrangement created especially by Iain Farrington. As Iain's programme note explains, Vaughan Williams was a consummate pragmatist, and we feel sure he would have approved of this lovingly-crafted reduction which allows the piece to fit onto the Kings Place stage despite the current challenges of social distancing. Although often held up as the quintessential English composer, Vaughan Williams was deeply influenced by continental music-making, and his particularly close relationship with Maurice Ravel prompted us to include one of the latter's chamber masterpieces in tonight's programme. *The Introduction and Allegro* (1906) received its UK premiere in 1907 at the BBC Proms, just before Vaughan Williams travelled to Paris for a period of intensive study with the French composer. The three months they spent together had a profound impact on Vaughan Williams' music-making, and began a regular correspondence between the two men that would continue throughout the First World War.

Anna Meredith's *Music for Ravens* (2005) conjures a distinctly different kind of bird to Vaughan Williams' Lark – scratchy, angular ravens of the imagination that seem to speak to contemporary anxieties.

And whilst not strictly a London work, we couldn't resist including the live performance premiere of Thea Musgrave's limpid lockdown miniature *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2020), which over its two-minute span charts a much-needed course from uncertainty to resolution. We conclude with Mendelssohn's mighty string Octet, the scherzo from which he used as a musical calling card during his first visit to London in 1829. It was an instant hit, and began a 15-year love affair between the city and the young composer, yielding not only his *Italian Symphony* (commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society), but also his introduction to the London concert scene of other legendary artists and works, including previously unheard masterpieces by Schubert, Mozart, Bach, Bellini and Schumann.

John Harte | Chief Executive, Aurora Orchestra

Programme Notes

Thea Musgrave's *Light at the End of the Tunnel* was commissioned in the summer of 2020 by BBC Radio 3 as part of the 'Postcards from Composers' series. Written for solo viola, the work is a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and charts a journey from despair to hope. The piece opens with abrupt outbursts interrupted by a quiet long-held E natural, which Musgrave describes as glimpses of 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Gradually the work's sense of agitation stills and the key shifts to a bright A major, depicting the future as a place of light that 'one day will be reachable'.

Scored in 1906, Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* was commissioned to showcase the harmonic possibilities of the newly-manufactured Érard pedal harp. The work was born out of fierce commercial competition; revered instrumental makers Pleyel et Cie had recently created a chromatic harp and swiftly commissioned Debussy to write for the new instrument, yielding the 1904 *Danse sacrée et danse profane* for harp and strings. Determined not to be outdone, Érard sought out Ravel to create a new work to celebrate their pedal harp. The composer remained disparaging about the new instrument, stating that its ease of glissandi and arpeggios lent the instrument 'a sort of feeble sentimentality', and he completed the work in a daredevil eight days before embarking on a sailing holiday. Despite Ravel's reservations about the instrumental centrepiece of his 'miniature concerto', the work is nonetheless one of tremendous charm and finely-wrought sparkle.

Opening with a delicately hesitant flute and clarinet duet, the 'Très lent' introduction lasts just twenty-six bars and introduces each section of the ensemble in turn. There follows a fleet but sure-footed allegro in modified sonata form, with solo harp at the helm of the exposition. The work builds to an arresting harp cadenza, which closes with left hand holding the main theme in harmonics while the right hand accompanies with a string of faint glissandos, before the work dances to its glittering conclusion.

Music for Ravens (2005) by Anna Meredith captures the uneasy spectre of 'ghost ravens' through angular motifs, frantic repetition and a number of distinct performance directions: the opening phrases of the violins are to be played *sul pont* (by the bridge) 'and with a crude sound', while the viola and cello plucked entries are marked with 'quite a dead sound'. The composer writes:

Music for Ravens was initially commissioned to be a piece about ghosts. For some reason I can't quite remember I started mulling on the idea of ghost birds and then specifically ravens which seem at once fiercely intelligent and a bit hoppy and ungainly. This super-short piece was my little homage of four (imaginary, ghost) ravens sometimes as individual characters and sometimes pecking about as one.

Vaughan Williams' **The Lark Ascending** began life as a brief romance for violin and piano in 1914. The composer then set the piece aside and only on his return from World War 1 did he commence work on it once more, expanding the structure and adding an orchestral accompaniment. The piece takes its title from a poem by English writer George Meredith and an extract from Meredith's poem describing the lark's 'silver chain of sound' prefaces Vaughan Williams' score. The piece is heard this evening in a new chamber arrangement by Iain Farrington, who writes:

Vaughan Williams was always a highly practical composer, providing alternative small-scale versions of his works to ensure their wide use and affordability. The original orchestral scoring of *The Lark Ascending* was for a small orchestra, with an alternative reduced scoring for around 16 players. This new arrangement is for an ensemble of 11 players, maintaining most of the instruments from the original. The one addition is the harp, an instrument that is so characteristic of folk-like simplicity in Vaughan Williams' music. As well as being a practical chamber version, this arrangement highlights the tenderness and fragility of the work's unique soundscape.

Completed in 1825 when Mendelssohn was just 16, the **Octet in E-flat** for double string quartet was composed as a birthday offering for the composer's friend and violin teacher Eduard Rietz. The Octet stands as a true eight-part work. Mendelssohn yields extraordinarily rich and complex counterpoint, harmonies and textures from the two assembled quartets and the work has an ambitious and

symphonic form. Indeed, the composer issued strict instructions as to the 'symphonic' performance approach he sought, noting on the work's first public score that "this Octet must be played by all the instruments in symphonic orchestral style. Pianos and fortes must be strictly observed and more sharply accentuated than is usual in pieces of this character."

The Octet opens with a brilliant Allegro which features particularly luscious melodic scoring for the first violin and is followed by a lilting and lyrical Andante. The scurrying third-movement Scherzo conjures up a fleet-footed and rascally spirit world, sharing much with the composer's Scherzo from his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1842). The Octet closes with a racing fugue which recalls the young composer's dedicated studies of Bach, yet the movement's meticulous counterpoint only serves and never impinges on the finale's sense of boundless celebration. Indeed, the work as a whole remains a confirmed favourite among chamber musicians and audiences alike, and Mendelssohn himself cherished the piece throughout his life, naming the Octet as the 'favourite of all my compositions... I had a most wonderful time in the writing of it.' *Kate Wakeling*

Biographies

Elena Urioste

Elena Urioste is the true 21st-century musician, possessing not only technical and musical mastery but also an innate ability to communicate, an entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to social justice.

Since first appearing with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of 13, she has performed concertos with major orchestras throughout the United States,



including the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony orchestras. Internationally, she has also worked with orchestras such as the London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Würzburg Philharmonic, Malaysian Philharmonic and Chineke! orchestras.

As a recitalist she often performs with pianist Tom Poster, her husband. During the Coronavirus crisis, they created daily videos over 88 consecutive days of lockdown, with wide-ranging repertoire and creative presentations, which reached audiences across the world through social media. In 2017 they formed the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, a flexible ensemble that brings together diverse repertoire, players and audiences, and has just been announced as one of two new Associate Ensembles at Wigmore Hall.

A passionate chamber musician, Urioste is the founder and Artistic Director of Chamber Music by the Sea, an annual festival on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She has also been a featured artist at the Marlboro, Ravinia, La Jolla, Bridgehampton, Moab and Sarasota Music festivals and collaborated with artists such as Mitsuko Uchida, Kim Kashkashian and members of the Guarneri Quartet.

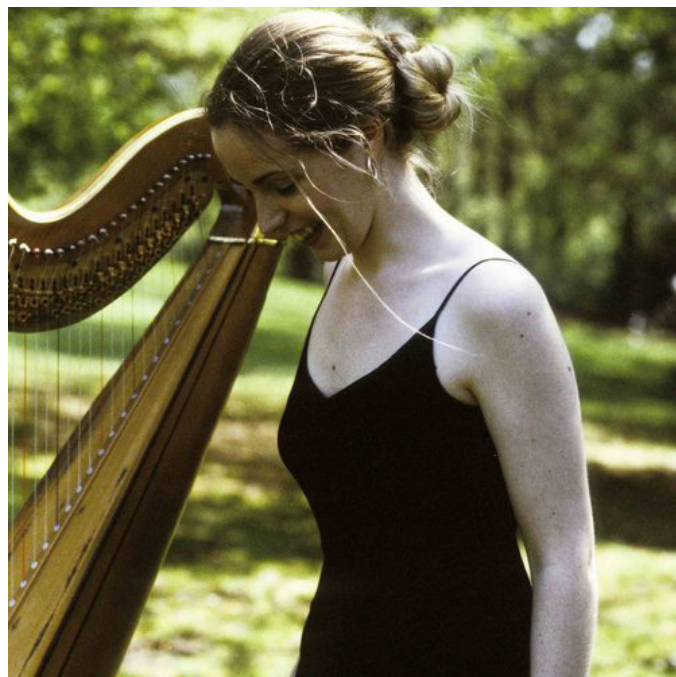
Yoga is central to Urioste's musical practice and she is co-founder of Intermission, a programme that aims to encourage healthy and holistic music making through yoga and meditation. She plays on a c. 1706 Alessandro Gagliano violin and a Nicolas Kittel bow, both on generous extended loan from the private collection of Dr Charles E. King through the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

Sally Pryce

Praised for her 'deft musicality,' Sally is much in demand as soloist, chamber and orchestral musician.

She is principal harp with Aurora Orchestra with whom she has been a participant in a wide variety of projects from full symphonic performances at the BBC Proms to being a regular chamber performer for their popular series of *Far, Far Away* concerts for children. As a freelance orchestral musician, Sally regularly works with orchestras including the Sinfonia of London, BBC Symphony and Concert Orchestras, Britten Sinfonia, Oxford Philharmonic, RPO and the Royal Opera House Orchestra.

Her concerto work has included performances of Debussy's *Dances* with the Northern Sinfonia, Britten Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Swan. With Adam Walker (flute) she has performed Mozart's Flute & Harp Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic and Bournemouth Orchestras and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (Mostly Mozart Festival, Barbican).



Sally was the solo harpist for a critically acclaimed series of performances of Britten's *Canticles* with Ian Bostridge. Other highlights include numerous concerts at the Wigmore Hall with various groups including with the Nash Ensemble as well as her own group (Sally Pryce Ensemble), world premieres at the Presteigne festival and BBC Radio 3 broadcasts of performances from the Cheltenham Festival. Further afield, Sally has performed across Europe and the USA. In March 2020 she was invited to perform as guest principal with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Aurora Orchestra

With its signature creative ethos, Aurora Orchestra combines world-class performance with adventurous programming and presentation. Founded in 2005 under Principal Conductor Nicholas Collon, it has quickly established a reputation as one of Europe's leading chamber orchestras, garnering several major awards including three Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, a German ECHO Klassik Award and a Classical:NEXT Innovation Award.

Collaborating widely across art forms and musical genres, Aurora has worked with an exceptional breadth of artists, ranging from Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sarah Connolly and Pierre-Laurent Aimard to Wayne McGregor, Edmund de Waal and Björk. A champion of new music, it has premiered works by composers including Julian Anderson, Benedict Mason, Anna Meredith, Nico Muhly and Judith Weir. In recent years, it has pioneered memorised performance (without the use of printed sheet music), and is thought to be the first orchestra worldwide to perform whole symphonies in this way. Since 2016, Aurora has been creating Orchestral Theatre productions spanning

diverse musical genres and art forms. These orchestral adventures rethink the concert format and offer bold new ways to engage with orchestral music for both old and new concert-goers alike.

Based in London, Aurora is Resident Orchestra at Kings Place and Associate Orchestra at Southbank Centre. Its busy UK calendar includes ongoing regional residencies at St George's Bristol, The Apex (Bury St Edmunds) and Colyer-Fergusson Hall (Canterbury). International highlights include appearances at The Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kölner Philharmonie, Victoria Concert Hall Singapore, Melbourne Festival and Shanghai Concert Hall.

By challenging expectations of what an orchestra can and should do on the concert platform, Aurora inspires audiences of all ages and backgrounds to develop a passion for orchestral music. Through an award-winning Creative Learning programme, Aurora regularly offers workshops and storytelling concerts for families, schools and young people, including children with special educational needs and disabilities. In 2020, Aurora launched 'Aurora Play', a free digital series showcasing the very best of Aurora's orchestral adventures online, with creative ways for listeners of all ages to join in at home.

Support Aurora Orchestra

These are challenging times for our musical community, but we are determined to continue to deliver a vibrant and inspiring programme both during and after the current crisis. If you are in a position to help us safeguard Aurora's future with a donation we would be hugely grateful for your support.

To make a donation please visit **auroraorchestra.com/donate-to-aurora**. From all of us, thank you.

Acknowledgements

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Mon 21 Jun | 7.30pm
Kings Place Hall One

London Serenade
Aurora Orchestra
with Allan Clayton

Elgar Introduction and Allegro
Britten Serenade for tenor, horn & strings
Whitley *Autumn Songs*
Walton Sonata for string orchestra

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