

MUSIC IN THE UNIVERSITY

McEwen Commission Concert

Ruth Morley *Flute*
Sharron Griffiths *Harp*
Shuna Scott Sendall *Voice*

Thursday, March 24, 2022, **1.10pm - 2.00pm**

Programme

Vocalise Etude	Jacques Ibert
A sa Guitare	Francis Poulenc
1st Arabesque	Debussy arr. Henriette Renie
Narhex	Bernard Andrès
Trois Chansons	Rosy Wertheim
Neon Flicker	Ruth Morley
<i>McEwen Commission 2022:</i> Three Love Poems by Marion Angus	Ailie Robertson

The McEwen Commission

Renowned composer, teacher and Glasgow graduate Sir John Blackwood McEwen (1868-1948) bequeathed the residue of his estate to the University to help promote the performance of chamber music by composers of Scottish birth and descent. Other composers resident in Scotland for a substantial period have also benefited from the fund. In fulfilment of the terms of the bequest the University Court commissions annually a piece of chamber music for not more than five players and every three years a work for larger forces. In 2022, we are delighted to award the commission to composer **Ailie Robertson**, whose piece **Three Love Poems by Marion Angus** will be premiered by our performers today. Find out about previous McEwen commissions on our website: www.gla.ac.uk/mcewen



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Programme Notes

By Ruth Morley and Ailie Robertson

Vocalise Etude by Jacques Ibert

Jacques François Antoine Marie Ibert (15 August 1890 – 5 February 1962) was a French composer of classical music. Having studied music from an early age, encouraged by his cousin, Manuel de Falla, he studied at the Paris Conservatoire and won its top prize, the Prix de Rome at his first attempt, despite studies interrupted by his service in World War I. Ibert had a lot in common but was not included in the group of composers known in the 1920' as Les Six, his piano music often seeming to share in an idiom familiar from the music of Poulenc and was classmate to two members, Honegger and Milhaud. Versatile and prolific, Ibert wrote operas, ballets and music for the theatre, cinema and radio in addition to vocal and instrumental works, all equally beautifully crafted, with particularly idiomatic handling of wind instruments. As a composer, Ibert did not attach himself to any of the prevalent genres of music of his time, and has been described as an eclectic. In tandem with his creative work, Ibert was the director of the Académie de France at the Villa Medici in Rome. During World War II he was proscribed by the pro-Nazi government in Paris, and for a time he went into exile in Switzerland. Restored to his former eminence in French musical life after the war, his final musical appointment was in charge of the Paris Opera and the Opéra-Comique. *Vocalise-étude*, subtitled *Aria*, was originally written in 1930 for voice and piano. Similarly to Ravel's work by the same name (en forme de habañera), the vocal range and style lent itself well to instruments, and several arrangements and transcriptions were subsequently produced under the composer's hand as well as that of others. Of these, the most popular remain the arrangements for flute and piano, and the vocal original is seldom heard in concert or on recording, this arrangement by the composer if for voice, flute and piano or harp.

A sa Guitare by Francis Poulenc

Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963) was a French composer almost as famous for his personal life as his music, including his Gloria and piano works. As a young composer, he was influenced by musicians like Debussy, Satie, and Stravinsky - he caught the latter's attention with his first surviving composition, Rapsodie Nègre, written in 1917. The death of his close friend Pierre-Octave Ferroud led to a religious awakening in 1936. As well as composing light music, he turned to more sombre themes, and his newly fervent Catholicism influenced his first sacred pieces. He continued to write in a range of styles, penning secular tunes alongside religious pieces. Even his sacred music had a cheeky edge: his Gloria caused a scandal due to its irreverence. Poulenc was one of the first openly gay composers, who was at ease with his sexuality in the context of his religious faith. There's still debate among music scholars who see the diverse range of styles in his music as an outward representation of Poulenc's inner moral wrestlings. *À sa Guitare* is a song composed in 1935 for voice and harp or piano. The lyrics are by 16th century poet Pierre de Ronsard:

My guitar, I sing to you,
By whom alone I deceive,
I deceive, I break, I enchant
The loves I entertain.

To the sound of your harmony
I rekindle my ardour,
My ardour, boundless flame,
Born of a lovely adversity.

1st Arabesque for harp by Claude Debussy arr. Henriette Renie

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) was a 20th-century French composer and one of the most prominent figures working within the field of impressionist music. His Deux Arabesques is a pair of Arabesques composed for piano while he was still in his twenties. The Arabesques are an example of one of the very early impressionistic pieces of music and contain hints of Debussy's developing musical style following the French visual art form. Debussy seems to wander through modes and keys, and achieves evocative scenes through music. His view of a musical arabesque was a line curved in accordance with nature, and with his music he mirrored the celebrations of shapes in nature made by the Art Nouveau artists of the time. The word Arabesque is from an Italian term meaning "Arabian in fashion". The delicate beauty of the Arabesque soon became synonymous with an ethereal quality in general, like that found in Claude Debussy's musical compositions. The two Arabesques have become some of Debussy's most popular compositions. Sharron will play an arrangement of the 1st Arabesque arranged for pedal harp by the famous French harpist and composer, Henriette Renie, who premiered many of Debussy, Ravel and Faure's works for harp. On presenting her arrangement of his Deux Arabesques to Debussy, he commented 'now why didn't I think of that!'

Narthex by Bernard Andrès

French composer and harpist Bernard Andrès, was born in Belfort in 1941. In 1966 he received first prize for harp from the Paris Conservatoire and in 1969 became the harpist of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio- France while also pursuing a career as a composer writing large number of works for solo harp and harp in various combinations. Narthex was written in 1971 inspired by the Romanesque churches in Burgandy. Struck by the poetry and drama of the medical structures – cool and dark on the inside and Bright on the outside. A *Narthex* is the entrance which pilgrims pass to retreat and contemplate. The piece uses a range of unconventional techniques on both instruments: for harp includes pedal slides, xylophone imitations, rattling the tuning key in the sound board and sliding it key up and down the pegs and the flute includes air souffle (blowing air through the flute), clicking the keys and playing the head joint alone.

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Trois Chansons by Rosy Wertheim

Rosy Wertheim was one of the first Dutch female composers to complete a professional music education and gain international acclaim. Next to music, she was deeply committed to social causes. She lived in Vienna, New York and in Paris for seven years where she became attracted to new sounds and colours, and the varied rhythms of Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky. Her compositions were influenced by this world of new ideas. Her Parisian salon soon became well-known meeting point for artists and musical stars of the early 1930s showed up to talk, debate, and exchange ideas, including Milhaud, Messiaen, Tailleferre, Ibert, Honegger. Her compositions were performed nationally and internationally, and she worked as a correspondent for several newspapers and magazines. She was in the Netherlands when World War II broke out and survived by going into hiding. She resisted in the best way she knew how, not only did she hide Jewish people in her basement, but she gave concerts there, too. At these (literally) underground performances, she ensured that work by banned Jewish composers continued to be heard and disseminated. After the Nazi invasion, life for Wertheim – as an unmarried woman, a professional composer, a feminist, and a Jew, even a religiously unobservant one – became increasingly difficult. She left a varied and interesting oeuvre of some eighty works. The Trois Chansons is originally written for Voice, Flute and Harp or Piano, in 3 movements:

1. La Danse des Dieux- Sans Lenteur
2. Les Deux Flutes – Moderato
3. Sur Les Bords Du Jo-Jeh – Allegro ma non troppo

Neon Flicker by Ruth Morley

This piece, written in Autumn 2021 explores the idea that life has been flipping in and out of focus lately, with flashes of normal, and very far from normal, and not having a clue what normal is. I was imagining the classic movie motel sign trope where the buzzing tells us all is not well, and maybe there is a kind of warped morse code in the defective sign. Images and memories of the last 18 months flashing through my head - loving clean air in the city, taking time, solving inequality, whales that can talk to each other unhindered, anxiety, wildfires, goats, hearing birds in the city, floods, storms, never wasting a crisis.... Flashing images and the sharp focus of helplessness in the face of huge challenges. And flick back to 'normal'.

McEwen Commission 2022

Three Love Poems by Marion Angus, by Ailie Robertson

For Mezzo-Soprano, Harp and Flute

Marion Angus (1865–1946) spent her life in Arbroath, where her father was a minister of the United Presbyterian Kirk. After his death, Angus moved to Aberdeen, living much of her adult life there with her sister. Her first collection of poetry, 'The Lilt and other poems' was published in 1922, at the age of 56. Heavily influenced by the Scottish ballad tradition and folk song, her work is mainly in Angus Scots, coloured by the voices and music of the region where she lived. (Biographical information from Katherine Gordon, 'Introduction' in *Voices From Their Ain Countrie: the poems of Marion Angus and Violet Jacob* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2006) These three poems address love in different forms. Imagery of the North East landscape acts as backdrop for love and loss.

1. Mary's Song

I wad ha'e gi'en him my lips
tae kiss,
Had I been his, had I been his;
Barley breid and elder wine,
Had I been his as he is mine.

The wanderin' bee it seeks the
rose;
Tae the lochan's bosom the
burnie goes;
The grey bird cries at evenin's
fa',
'My luve, my fair one, come
awa'.'

My beloved sall ha'e this he'rt
tae break,
Reid, reid wine and the barley
cake,
A he'rt tae break, and a mou'
tae kiss,
Tho' he be nae mine, as I am
his.

2. Invitation

Lad, come kiss me
Whaur the twa burns rin.
Am I no' sweet as honey,
Wild as gouden whin,

Slim as the rowan,
Lips like berries reid,
Fey as siller mune-floo'er
That sprang frae fairy seed?

Luve, come clasp me
Whaur the twa burns rin, –
A' but the white soul o' me
That ye can never win

3. Huntlie Hill

When I am deid an' gane
An' ye suld crave me still
Gae seek me in a bonnie birk
Grouin' on Huntlie Hill.

Clasp my sweet body slim
Syne lie an' tak' your ease,
My droosy kisses on yir hair,
Yir heid upon my knees.

Yon's but a pipin' bird
Gangs moontin' ower the plain
Or but the liltin' hert o' me
Ye never socht tae gain.

Farrer an farrer yet,
Aye soarin' as she sings,
Wi' glint o' rain upon her breist,
Wi' sunlight in her wings.

Sae turn ye tae yir sleep,
Yir heid upon my knee,
Anaith the droosy kisses
O' yir bonnie birkin tree

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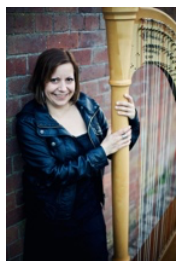


Ruth Morley, Flute

Ruth Morley was born in Lincoln and studied in Glasgow with David Nicholson, and as a Wingate Scholar at RNCM in Manchester with Peter Lloyd. She is principle flute for Red Note Ensemble, and appears with other ensembles, including the Edinburgh Quartet, Hebrides Ensemble, and as soloist with London Concertante. She performs regular solo recitals with pianist Scott Mitchell, and with Sharron Griffiths and Scott Dickinson in their flute, viola and harp trio. She also works regularly with composer and vocalist Laura Bowler and the duo's recent work includes a live broadcast for Radio 3 at Cop26. Ruth has appeared at many UK major music festivals as well as touring to festivals across Europe. She appears regularly on Radio 3 and Radio Scotland and has been a featured artist on Classic FM. She has recorded for Delphian, Metier, 7things, Natural Studio and Mode. During 2021/22 Ruth completed a solo project 'Lost and Found,' music includes 5 new commissions from Tansy Davies, David Fennessy, Laura Bowler, Lewis Murphy and Claire McCue, her own piece *Neon Flicker* and 4 existing works for solo flute by Bill Sweeney, Kevin Leomo, Kazuo Fukushima and Edwin Roxburgh. Ruth enjoys teaching at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is in demand as a private teacher. She is founder of the acclaimed Scottish International Flute Summer School, being Director from 1996 – 2015. Ruth enjoys working with young composers to help them to develop their work, and has done so on many occasions in workshops for RCS, RNCM and SOUND.



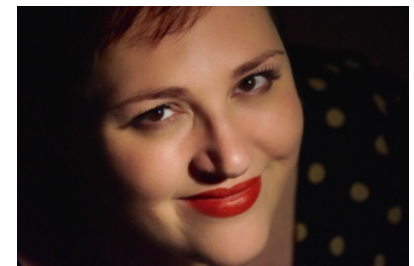
Sharron Griffiths, Harp



Sharron started playing the harp at the age of ten in her native Wales. She works regularly with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, RSNO, Scottish Opera, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and the SCO. Sharron is a busy soloist and chamber musician performing in concert halls and festivals across the country. She recently appeared as concerto soloist with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and is a member of many chamber ensembles including the innovative Bardic Trio [with Tenor, Jamie MacDougall & Guitarist, Matthew McAllister] Flute Viola Harp Trio with Ruth Morley [Flute] and Scott Dickinson [Viola] and the Clyde Duo with flautist Aisling Agnew.

Shuna Scott Sendall, Soprano

Scottish soprano Shuna Scott Sendall graduated from the Alexander Gibson Opera School at RCS. She is an alumnus of Samling, Crear, the Solti Accademia and the winner of the BBC Radio 2 'Kiri Prize' search for an Opera Star. She was the 2011/12 John Mather Trust Emerging Artist at Scottish Opera for whom she has performed Lady Macbeth and Gertrude (Hansel & Gretel), Dido/Sorceress, and False Angele (The Tsar has his Photograph Taken) with Scottish Opera Young Company. She created the roles of Elsa in Hirda and Lena in Navigate the Blood for New Opera in Scotland and soprano solos in Flodden and Equal Voices for Sally Beamish. Other roles include The Jay (Vixen) and The Aunt (Butterfly) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera and La Chatte (L'Enfant) in VOperas award winning and ground breaking lockdown video production. Current engagements include, Marcellina in Marriage of Figaro for Opera Bohemia, Santuzza (Catriona) in a new Scottish translation of Cavalleria Rusticana (a Paisley Kiss) for Paisley Opera and creating the role of Missus Pearson in Rubble with Scottish Opera Young Company.



Ailie Robertson, Composer



Ailie Robertson is the 2022 McEwen Commission recipient. Ailie, (b.1983) is a multi-award winning composer, performer and creative curator whose work crosses the boundaries of traditional and contemporary music. Winner of the 'Achievement in New Music' prize at the inaugural New Music Scotland Awards, Ailie has received commissions, awards and residences from PRS Foundation, Creative Scotland, Enterprise Music Scotland, the CCA, Culture Ireland, Celtic Connections, EIFF, and CALQ Montreal. Recent commissions include pieces for the 2019 BBC Proms, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sound Festival, Riot Ensemble, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Bang on a Can, Dunedin Consort, and the Glasgow School of Art Choir. She is Composer-in-Residence for Sound Scotland and Glyndebourne Opera.

Music in the University - Thursday Series

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