



Saturday 1 June 2024

7.30pm

St. Cecilia's Hall

Fretwork Viol Consort

Emilia Benjamin, Emily Ashton, Joanna Levine,
Sam Stadlen and Richard Boothby · viols

'Take Five'



Take Five

Praeludium BWV 552.1

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

La Fille aux cheveux de lin

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Prelude & Ground

2 In Nomines in 5 parts

William Byrd (1540-1623)

Fantazia 6 in F major *14th June 1680*

Fantazia 7 in C minor *19th June 1680*

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Take Five

Paul Desmond (1924-1977) arr. Jonathan Rees

*** INTERVAL (20 minutes) ***

Fratres

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

In Nomine in 5 parts

Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)

Balancing the Books

Michael Nyman (b.1944) arr. Richard Boothby

Fantasy: two parts in one the fourth above

Browning

William Byrd

Running Up That Hill

Kate Bush (b.1958) / arr. Sally Beamish

Take five viol players and what can you play? Well, in addition to the English consort music from the golden age of English music - Byrd, Purcell, Weelkes and others - other music from different times, and even some from our own.

Bach in particular is, of course, often supremely contrapuntal and we have often played *The Art of Fugue* almost unaltered, and arranged other works. Much has come from the Clavierübung III, and we start tonight's concert with the opening Praeludium from that collection. And Bach has been a source of inspiration to generations of jazz musicians. Our own Jon Rees - unfortunately not able to be with us tonight - has arranged the iconic piece (not actually by Dave Brubeck, but Paul Desmond), beloved of buskers everywhere, and has smuggled in the In Nomine plainchant to boot. This was the basis for literally hundreds of pieces in the 16th and 17th centuries, and we include two by the master of the form, William Byrd, and one by the always arresting Thomas Weelkes.

Next year Arvo Pärt will be 90 years old and his work *Fratres* has been arranged for many different ensembles, and I'm glad to say that includes a consort of viols. Michael Nyman is not far behind Pärt in age, though with a very different aesthetic sensibility. 'Balancing the Books' was a work written for the Swingle Singers which I arranged for viols. Likewise, the limpid beauty of Debussy's eighth Prelude from 1910 lends itself to the delicate sounds of viols.

For a recent project, *Albion*, we asked ten composers to arrange works that they thought represented something important about British identity. Sally Beamish arranged Kate Bush's hit from 40 years ago, long before it became number one again, attached to a popular tv show.

Richard Boothby

Emilia Benjamin began her musical journey at the age of 5 playing Suzuki violin, but started to branch out musically while at university, where she studied History of Art but spent more time in the music department. From the violin, it was but a small step to the viola (people always need violas), and then, after seeing a concert of Dowland's *Lachrimae*, the heavenly sound of the five viols prompted her to take up the treble viol and join the university consort. While at UEA she made a treble viol in the workshop of a lute maker, and it has served her well for many years, before being finally superseded by the magnificent instrument she now plays in Fretwork.

After quite a few years of orchestras, viol consorts and chamber groups (principal among them Trio Sonnerie with Monica Huggett, Concordia and Phantasm), something possessed Emilia to take up the lirone, which has 13 strings and has been the subject of many of her anxiety dreams. And from the sublime to the ridiculous, her new venture last year, all on one string, was learning the Trumpet Marine. She is hoping not to learn any more new instruments in the near future and is in fact thinking of becoming a sculptor one day.

Emily Ashton studied music at Clare College, Cambridge and subsequently baroque cello and viola da gamba with Jonathan Manson at the Royal Academy of Music. Since then she has worked with most of the UK's leading period instrument ensembles, including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Dunedin Consort, Academy of Ancient Music, Classical Opera, Early Opera Company, Orchestra of the Sixteen and Gabrieli. In 2015 she joined Fretwork, and has since performed with them all around the UK, and on tour in Spain, the US, Canada and Colombia. She was a member of the viol consort Chelys for several years, and recorded discs of Simpson and Dowland (with Emma Kirkby) with them, and has also performed and recorded with Phantasm. Emily has given solo recitals at the Spitalfields Festival and Cotswolds Early Music Festival, and in various locations in the East of England. She is also an examiner for ABRSM, coaches the University of Cambridge viol consort, and teaches piano, viol and cello. Emily's other passion is environmental activism, and she is a founder member of XR Baroque, a group of early music environmentalists.

Joanna Levine studied cello and viola da gamba at the Guildhall School of Music, learning with Raphael Wallfisch, Anthony Pleeth and Sarah Cunningham. She is a founder member of Concordia, with whom she has made recordings for Hyperion, Chandos, Metronome, Signum and Real World Records, as well as for BBC, and was thrilled to join Fretwork in 2017. Joanna has played in many productions at the Globe Theatre, including 'Farinelli and the King', which transferred to the West End, and 'All the Angels', a play about Handel's Messiah. She particularly enjoys the creative processes involved and the chance to work with composers, directors and actors such as Mark Rylance and Simon Slater. Joanna has also collaborated with the photographer Mandy Jandrell, composing and performing music for her installation The Blue Hour. She also enjoys playing the viol solos in the John and Matthew Passions. The Times commented 'for the sheer power of non-verbal expression, Joanna Levine's viola da gamba solo took some beating'.

A viol player, lecturer, musicologist, sound engineer, and videographer **Sam Stadlen** has been a member of Fretwork since 2015, appearing regularly with the group both in the UK and internationally. He is also active as a soloist and chamber musician around the world, and his Canadian trio with Michael Jarvis and Paul Luchkow recently released its debut album – the world premiere recording of Tommaso Giordani's Op. 30 trios published in 1782. Sam is Viol Consort Professor at the Royal College of Music and has been an associate and guest lecturer at the University of York and the Royal Academy of Music. He holds a PhD in the influences of poetry and declamation on the composition and performance of the *pièces de viole* in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France.

Richard Boothby has been playing the viol ever since David Fallows handed him a tenor viol while attempting to teach him about Wagner's 'Ring' in Manchester University in 1977. He founded The Purcell Quartet in 1984 and co-founded Fretwork in 1985. He has helped to enrich the viol-consort repertory with new music from today's composers, from Elvis Costello to George Benjamin.

With the Purcell Quartet he recorded nearly 50 albums for Hyperion and Chandos; and with Fretwork he recorded over 30 albums. His record of the complete solo lyra viol music of William Lawes on Harmonia Mundi was greeted with high critical praise; and he has recently recorded the rediscovered fantasias for solo viol by Telemann. In addition to his work with Fretwork, he now regularly performs both entirely alone, in programmes that include the new Telemann Fantasias, lyra viol music, Abel's solo improvisations and contemporary music. He is professor of Viola da Gamba at the Royal College in London.

Forthcoming concerts in the Syper summer concert series 2024:

Saturday 8 June, 7.30pm, St Cecilia's Hall.

Bojan Cicic (violin) and John Kitchen (harpsichord)

German Sonatas before Bach

Saturday 15 June, 7.30pm, St Cecilia's Hall.

Les Cuivres Romantiques featuring Jean -Francois Madeuf

French Brass Chamber Music of the 1840s

Tickets £23 / £20 / £8 Please book via Eventbrite:

www.eventbrite.com/cc/sypert-summer-concert-series-2024-3301439

Tickets may also be purchased by cash on the door, subject to availability.

This series of concerts is generously supported by Dr George and Dr Joy Sypert.

Thanks also to the staff of St Cecilia's Hall and the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall.