

Ensemble 10:10

November 20 programme notes

Inspired by unfinished symphonic sketches by Schubert, Luciano Berio decided to “cement the gaps” with his own musical reflections and restorations and created a 20th century classic. Oliver Knussen, inspired by Shakespeare’s Ophelia chanting “snatches of old tunes”, snatched snippets of Schumann and Debussy for his highly compressed set of dances. In the 21st century Elliott Carter’s last orchestral piece, a “series of short, interrelated episodes”, is an often lyrical and moving farewell to life, whilst a similar dark beauty occupies the genre defying music of North West based Phoenix Rousiamanis. Manoj Kamps makes their debut with Ensemble 10:10.

Manoj Kamps

Manoj Kamps is a Sri-Lankan/Dutch conductor, theatre maker and composer. Kamps began music lessons with Sureka Amerasinghe and studied composition, orchestral and choral conducting at the Royal Conservatoire of the Hague.

In 2023 Kamps appeared with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra at the Holland Festival, conducting a televised performance of William Basinski’s *The Disintegration Loops*. In the 2023/24 season, Kamps debuted as conductor and curator with the Rotterdam Philharmonic in two special projects and embarked on an extensive tour with the Orchestra of the 18th Century, bringing semi-staged performances of *Così fan tutte* to major halls. In March, the 36-year-old was musical director and curator of *The Shell Trial* at the Dutch National Opera and has also conducted a number of **world and Dutch opera premieres**. Other notable previous engagements include performances with BBC Philharmonic and Brussels Philharmonic, and tours with Phion (formerly Het Gelders Orkest/Het Orkest van het Oosten) and the Netherlands Student Orchestra, culminating in Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* at the Concertgebouw.

Highly respected in the new music world, Kamps has forged strong relationships with some of today’s leading contemporary ensembles and festivals including B’Rock, KLANG, November Music Festival, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and Gaudeamus. Kamps held the coveted post of Junior Fellow in Orchestral Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music from 2015-17, mentored by Sir Mark Elder and studying with Clark Rundell, and has participated in masterclasses with Bernard Haitink, Carlo Rizzi and Vasily Petrenko.

A passionate advocate of music education projects, Kamps has collaborated with the Chineke! Juniors in festivals at the Southbank Centre, and the Dutch Radio Music Centre and Dutch National Opera on large-scale educational projects.

Phoenix Rousiamanis

Please be aware, there is mention of physical, sexual and emotional harm within the following composer’s note.

Phoenix Rousiamanis is a composer of instrumental and electronic music, a songwriter and performer who composes around themes of folklore, queerness, nostalgia and magic, and creates genre-defying music that finds beauty in dark, violent and uncomfortable contexts. Involvement in the trans community, interest in ballroom culture, voguing and activism are also integral to her artistic practice.

Rousiamanis – who studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, was awarded several scholarships, and won the 2022 Gold Medal Competition – is currently a London Philharmonic Young Composer and a fellow at the Onassis Foundation. Her works have been brought to the

stage by performers and ensembles including Juliet Fraser, the Greek National Radio Orchestra, Elias String Quartet, Riot Ensemble, Trans Chorus of Los Angeles and Psappha Ensemble.

Places I'm starting to forget, which receives its world premiere at the Tung Auditorium, was commissioned following the 2023 [Rushworth Composition Prize](#), in which Rousiamanis was awarded a special commendation – the first in the prize's history.

Please be aware, there is mention of physical, sexual and emotional harm within the following composer's note.

Explaining the background to the new work, Rousiamanis says:

“Even though coming out as trans has come with many joys, it also means that it is not possible for me to visit my hometown in rural Greece anymore. *Places I'm starting to forget* is a piece that explores the fading memories of my childhood home. While writing it, I was trying to recollect and concentrate on small details of my house that were once so intimate to me – the wood patterns of a specific door, the vibrant plastic table covers with the fruit patterns, old toys and stationery that has gone dusty at the back of a drawer, my favourite music box. By delving so deep into the sensory memories of my early life, objects started conjuring up sounds, smells and experiences – the sound of my sister playing Bach on the piano, the smell of dried oregano and the pain of being hit by an adult. I realised my recollections of this place vary from cosy to violent and mystical to mundane. The feeling of rubbing against plastic made me viscerally relive memories of sexual abuse, but on the other hand the sensation of my coarse woolly blanket made me feel like I was back in my mother's arms by the radiator on a cold winter morning. Starting to forget all of this is very bittersweet to me, because my youth was equal parts beautiful and tragic.”

Elliott Carter – *Instances*

[Elliott Carter](#) is internationally recognised as one of the most influential American voices in classical music and a leading figure of modernism in the 20th and 21st Centuries. He was hailed as ‘America's greatest musical poet’ by leading music critic Andrew Porter and ‘one of America's most distinguished creative artists in any field’ by his friend Aaron Copland.

Carter's prolific career spanned over 75 years with more than 150 pieces ranging from chamber music to orchestral works to opera, often marked with a sense of humour. He received many awards including two Pulitzer Prizes for music – for his *String Quartet No.2* in 1960, and his *String Quartet No.3* in 1973. He was the first composer to receive the United States National Medal of Arts.

Born in New York in December 1908, he was encouraged towards a career in classical music by his friend and mentor Charles Ives. At Harvard, Carter studied under composers Walter Piston and Gustav Holst, and later travelled to Paris where he studied with Nadia Boulanger. His early works, such as his *Symphony No.1* (1942) and *Holiday Overture* (1944) were written in neoclassical style and influenced contemporaries like Copland, Stravinsky and Hindemith. After the war, he began to develop a signature rhythm and harmonic language which he continued to refine throughout his life.

[Carter](#) was still composing regularly at the age of 100 – in fact, he composed *Instances* at the age of 103! One of his final works, the piece was written in 2012 and premiered by the Seattle Symphony in February 2013, just three months after Carter's death just shy of his 104th birthday. The work was dedicated to [Ludovic Morlot](#), Seattle's music director who, Carter wrote, ‘has performed many of my works so beautifully’.

Instances – scored for chamber orchestra - is a series of short, interrelated episodes of varying character. The piece includes solos by horn, trumpet, flute and other instruments, and – in an

extended coda – some beautiful long lines for strings over the ‘slow ticking’ of piano. Listen out for the vibraphone which creates an otherworldly atmosphere. The piece has been recorded by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Oliver Knussen.

Oliver Knussen – *Ophelia Dances, Book 1*

One of the pre-eminent composer-conductors in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, [Oliver Knussen](#) was born in Glasgow in 1952 and grew up near London, where his father was the principal bass of the London Symphony Orchestra.

He served as artistic director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1983 to 1998 and was also head of contemporary music at Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts from 1986 to 1993. Knussen’s other appointments included music director of the London Sinfonietta and artist-in-association with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. At the time of his death in 2018 he was artist in association with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Richard Rodney Bennett Professor at the Royal Academy of Music. He was the recipient of many awards and honours and was appointed a CBE in 1994, while in 2015 he received the Queen’s Medal for Music.

[Ophelia Dances, Book 1](#) dates from 1975 and remains one of the composer’s best loved and most performed pieces. Knussen was inspired by Shakespeare’s description in *Hamlet* of Ophelia’s madness, and said he wanted to write something ‘whose light-headed and giddy qualities would suggest a crossing of the line that divides laughter from tears’. The eight-minute work for nine instruments (strings, winds and keyboard) responds to Ophelia’s line ‘snatches of old tunes / as one incapable of her own distress’ and has echoes of Debussy and of Schumann’s *Carnaval*. It is structured as an introduction followed by four dances which in Knussen’s words ‘become more and more compressed’ before ending with a coda which features the evocative voice of a solo horn against shimmering celeste.

Luciano Berio – *Rendering*

Italian composer, conductor, theorist and teacher [Luciano Berio](#) was among the leading figures of the 20th Century’s musical avant-garde. Born on the Ligurian coast in 1925, Berio’s father and grandfather were both organists and leading figures in the musical life of his hometown Oneglia. During the war, a teenage Luciano was conscripted into the Italian army but was accidentally wounded and later fled to hide with partisans. He studied at the Milan Conservatory and then at Tanglewood, and attended the International Festival of New Music in Darmstadt where he was influenced by avant-garde ideas, becoming interested in electronic music. He then co-founded Milan’s Studio di fonologia musicale for experimental electronic contemporary classical music.

In the 1980s he opened Tempo Reale, an electronic music research, production and education centre in Florence. Along with his pioneering of electronic music, Berio was a prolific composer who wrote for a wide range of instruments and voice. He was particularly known for his experimental work like the 1968 composition *Sinfonia* and his *Sequenza* solo series. Berio also arranged or transcribed works by Kurt Weill, Purcell, Monteverdi, Mahler, Brahms and Bach.

Rendering, composed in 1990, takes the fragments of Schubert’s unfinished *Symphony No.10 in D major* and ‘renders’ it by filling in the gaps in the Austrian’s score. Schubert left the manuscript, started in the last few weeks of his life, in the form of a piano sketch. In a composer’s note, Berio wrote he was “seduced” by Schubert’s sketches for the symphony which were “of considerable complexity and great beauty” and decided to “restore them, not rebuild them”. Berio’s [work in three movements](#) – allegro, andante, allegro/scherzo – uses motifs and

quotes from Schubert's score in a textured restoration project which embraces Schubert's romanticism but adds a 20th Century rhythmic complexity. Each addition of this often dreamy 'rendering' is announced by the celeste. And the andante second movement also includes an exercise from a counterpoint lesson which Schubert had noted down on the same manuscript.