

**UK CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS PORTRAIT I**  
**BIRTWISTLE, HARVEY, BEDFORD**  
**The Egyptian Contemporary Music Ensemble**  
February 19, 2014 | 8 p.m. / 20h00 | Ewart Memorial Hall, Downtown Cairo

**Program**

Jonathan Harvey: Hidden Voice 2 (1999)  
Luke Bedford: Igor, The Bird Who Couldn't Sing (2011)  
FILM SCREENING: Barrie Gavin: A Mind of Winter (George Benjamin) (2010)  
Sir Harrison Birtwistle: Secret Theatre (1984)

Hossam Shehata, <i>violin I</i>	Tamer Kamal, <i>bassoon</i>
Ahmed Kamal, <i>violin II</i>	Beram Elmaghany, <i>horn I</i>
Rasha Yehia, <i>viola</i>	Akiko Nishimura, <i>horn II</i>
Shady Ishaq, <i>violoncello</i>	Tarek Raouf, <i>trumpet</i>
Samar Talat, <i>double bass</i>	Mohamed Gamal, <i>trombone</i>
Peter Olah, <i>flute</i>	Toaa Aly Abdel Rehiem, <i>percussion</i>
Moustapha Elaraby, <i>oboe</i>	Sophie Patey, <i>piano</i>
Sherif El Razzaz, <i>clarinet</i>	
Conductor: Rossen Gergov	
Narrator for 'Igor, the Bird Who Couldn't Sing': Neveen Allouba	


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(*Good Dream She Has* and *Or Voit Tout En Aventure*) and to full orchestra (*Outblaze the Sky, Wreathe*). Tom Service wrote of *Or Voit Tout en Aventure*, that it was “one of the most outstanding pieces by any young composer I’ve ever experienced – music of brooding expressive intensity and charged with that indefinable quality that makes a piece sound as if it was written out of sheer necessity.” Bedford was the recipient of a prestigious Paul Hamlyn Artists’ Award in 2007, and in 2008 *Wreathe* won a British Composer Award. 2010 saw the world première of *At Three and Two* by the Hallé Orchestra. Bedford’s first opera – *Seven Angels*, based on Milton’s *Paradise Lost* – was premièred in 2011 by the Opera Group and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Bedford was the first ever composer in residence at the Wigmore Hall in London, which has earned him several commissions, including the string quartet *Nine Little Boxes, All Carefully Packed* (2011) and a new work for ensemble (to be performed by the Britten Sinfonia). In February 2012 *Wonderful Two-Headed Nightingale* was given its world première by the Scottish Ensemble. Bedford was awarded the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung Composer’s Prize in June 2012 in Munich.

FILM SCREENING  
**Barrie Gavin: A Mind of Winter (George Benjamin) (2010)**

The short film *A Mind of Winter (George Benjamin)* was created by British film director and contemporary music connoisseur **Barrie Gavin** in 2010, along with *How Slow the Wind (Toru Takemitsu)*, both productions being based on a single musical piece. Benjamin’s *A Mind of Winter* was originally premiered in 1981.

time-honoured principle of melody and accompaniment, with the endless song of the Cantus underpinned by the incessant clockworks of the Continuum. But the word ‘accompaniment’ conjures up concepts of primary and subsidiary roles, and this is very much a dialogue of equals. The Continuum frequently becomes highly complex and threatens to overwhelm the melody instruments; elsewhere, as if to assert their importance and independence, soloists emerge from the ranks of the Continuum with their own extravagant displays, oblivious to the singing of the Cantus. *Secret Theatre* was both a continuation and an elaboration of the musical world of the earlier Sinfonietta works, *Silbury Air* (1977) and *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum* (1987), but one which took their procedures into an unprecedentedly complex world. The mechanisms of the Continuum had their source in the perpetual motions of *Carmen Arcadiae...*, while the instrumental solos which constantly disrupt and reorientate the flow of *Silbury Air* were extended into the seamless *arioso* of the Cantus. *Andrew Clements*

 **Sir Harrison Birtwistle** was born in Accrington in the north of England in 1934 and studied clarinet and composition at the Royal Manchester College of Music, making contact with a highly talented group of contemporaries including Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr, John Ogdon and Elgar Howarth. In 1965 he sold his clarinets to devote all his efforts to composition, and travelled to Princeton as a Harkness Fellow where he completed the opera *Punch and Judy*. This work, together with *Verses for Ensembles* and *The Triumph of Time*, firmly established Birtwistle as a leading voice in British music. The decade from 1973 to 1984 was dominated by his monumental lyric tragedy *The Mask of Orpheus*, staged by English National Opera in 1986, and by the se-

Composers Concert in Aix-en-Provence, France, the European Capital of Culture 2013 (Marseille/Provence), as part of a four-day Mediterranean Composers Presentation by Radio France and the EECMS. Further international appearances are planned for 2014–15. The core members of the ECME develop each program in close collaboration with selected conductors and composers, and contribute to the organization of the sessions. The democratic decision-making of the ECME is an integral part of its concept of new music, and an element that makes for a lively and constructive working environment.

 Bulgarian conductor **Rossen Gergov** is gaining widespread recognition for his work both on the concert platform and in the opera pit, in repertoire from Mozart to the most challenging of contemporary works. Recent performances at Opera North (Mieczyslaw Weinberg's *The Portrait*) and the Bregenzer Festspiele (the opening concert of the festival with the Wiener Symphoniker) have consolidated his place as one of the brightest of today's emerging conducting talents. Already with substantial experience in the operatic field, his engagements include Tosca at the Seebühne, Benedict Mason's *Playing Away* and the Austrian premiere of Weinberg's *Das Portrait*, all at the Bregenzer Festspiele; Die Fledermaus and Rigoletto at the Volksoper Wien; La traviata and Le Nozze di Figaro at Theater Meiningen; Carmen in Varna, Bulgaria; the world premiere of Akos Banlaky's *Prinz, Held und Fuchsin* in Vienna; and the Czech premiere of Michael Jarrell's *Cassandra* at the Brno National Theatre. Rossen Gergov holds the position of Principal Guest Conductor at the Rousse State Opera, Bulgaria, and he conducted a production of *Falstaff* there in the 2012/13 season. Last season also saw a collaboration with Trinity College of Music, London in a new produc-

**Jonathan Harvey: Hidden Voice 2 (1999)**  
*for chamber ensemble of 12 players and CD*

“*HIDDEN VOICE (2)* is a companion piece to my *HIDDEN VOICE (1)*. The basic idea is that the principal material – rather chorale or song-like – is played very softly and tenderly throughout and is often almost hidden by the other sounds of the ensemble. Referring to Baudelaire’s ‘*douce langue natale*’ the music invokes the secret language of the ‘mother’ or God or of a past life – however the most intimate inner voice is described: the voice that is usually suppressed in the psychology of ordinary life but which occasionally and sensationally surfaces. The two layers of the music are an expressionistic string trio which is violently active, and behind it, in the distance, the winds which remain serene, slow and chorale-like, in a different time-world, turning round and round on the same few chords and eventually transforming into a gentle lullaby of sweetness. The trio also transforms – into an ethereal weightless and rapid sheen. There is also a third layer played back electronically from distant speakers; this echoes the first movement in a dream like memory giving a vast spatial expansion to the inner memories. *Hidden Voice (2)* was written for and commissioned by two ensembles to which I am very attached: Sinfonia 21 and Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, to whose tenth birthday celebrations this is a small contribution. My thanks also to the Arts Council of England for help with the English part...” *Jonathan Harvey*



**Jonathan Harvey** was born in 1939 and died in 2012. He studied with Erwin Stein, Hans Keller and at Cambridge. His presence at the cutting edge of music made him a natural for IRCAM, where he produced *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voce, Bhakti*, and many other IRCAM-commis-



Born in 1960, **George Benjamin CBE** started to play the piano at the age of seven, and began composing almost immediately. In 1976, he entered the Paris Conservatoire to study composition with Olivier Messiaen and piano with Yvonne Loriod, after which he worked with Alexander Goehr at King's College, Cambridge. His first orchestral work, *Ringed by the Flat Horizon*, was performed at the BBC Proms when he was only 20; since then his works have continued to be played across the world. There have been major retrospectives of his work in Tokyo, Brussels, Berlin, Strasbourg, Madrid, Lucerene, California and Aldeburgh. In 2010 there were extensive celebrations marking Benjamin's 50th birthday given by the San Francisco Symphony and at London's South Bank. Benjamin's orchestral, ensemble and chamber works have brought him much acclaim, although it is in the field of opera he has been working recently. His first operatic work, *Into the Little Hill*, a collaboration with the English playwright Martin Crimp, has toured widely on both sides of the Atlantic with Ensemble Modern since its premiere and won the Royal Philharmonic Society's 2008 Award for Large-Scale Composition. It received its London premiere in a new production – a collaboration between the Opera Group and London Sinfonietta – at the Royal Opera House in February 2009, where it was revived in July 2010. His second operatic collaboration with Martin Crimp, *Written on Skin* was commissioned and premiered by the Aix en Provence festival (July 2012), and has subsequently presented in eight European cities and at the Tanglewood Festival in the US. The opera has been greeted by universal praise, recorded on CD and DVD, broadcast on BBC radio and TV and won several prizes including an International Opera Award. Benjamin and Crimp are now working on their third operatic creation, a full-scale opera for the Royal Opera House, London, to be premiered in 2018.

ries of remarkable ensemble scores now performed by the world's leading new music groups: *Secret Theatre, Silbury Air* and *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum*. Large-scale works in the following decade included the operas *Gawain* and *The Second Mrs Kong*, the concertos *Endless Parade* for trumpet and *Antiphonies* for piano, and the orchestral score *Earth Dances*. Birtwistle's works of the past decade include *Exody*, premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Barenboim, *Panic* which received a high profile premiere at the Last Night of the 1995 BBC Proms with an estimated worldwide audience of 100 million, and *The Shadow of Night* commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra and Christoph von Dohnányi. *The Last Supper* received its first performances at the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin and at Glyndebourne in 2000. *Pulse Shadows*, a meditation for soprano, string quartet and chamber ensemble on poetry by Paul Celan, was released on disc by Teldec and won the 2002 Gramophone Award for best contemporary recording. *Theseus Game*, co-commissioned by RUHRtriennale, Ensemble Modern and the London Sinfonietta, was premiered in 2003. Premieres in 2004 included *The Io Passion* for Aldeburgh Almeida Opera and *Night's Black Bird* commissioned by Roche for the Lucerne Festival. A new work for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden is scheduled for 2008. The music of Birtwistle has attracted international conductors including Pierre Boulez, Daniel Barenboim, Elgar Howarth, Christoph von Dohnányi, Oliver Knussen, Sir Simon Rattle, Peter Eötvös and Franz Welser-Möst. He has received commissions from leading performing organisations and his music has been featured in major festivals and concert series including the BBC Proms, Salzburg Festival, Glyndebourne, Holland Festival, Lucerne Festival, Stockholm New Music, Wien Modern, Wittener Tage, the South Bank Centre in London and the Konzerthaus in Vienna.

tion of Orpheus in the Underworld. Orchestras with which he has worked include Bamberger Symphoniker, the Orchestre national de Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon, the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, the BBC Symphony and BBC Scottish Symphony orchestras; the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, Kyoto Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Century Orchestra Osaka, the Polish National Radio, Basel, Kyoto, Sapporo, Norrlandsoperan, Tokyo and Hiroshima symphony orchestras; and the Graz, Nagoya, Zagreb and Jena philharmonic orchestras. Engagements in 2012/13 included his debuts with the Orchestra I Pomeriggi Musicale, Ensemble Modern, Jyväskylä Sinfonia, the Sofia and Paderewski State Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Bulgarian National Radio Orchestra. Highlights in 2013/14 season include a return to the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, debuts with the Hyogo Center of Performing Arts Orchestra and Perm State Opera and a new production of Victor Ullman's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with Klangforum Wien. Born in 1981, he studied piano and clarinet before taking conducting lessons with Michail Angelov. He was accepted to Leopold Hager's class at the Universität für Musik in Vienna at the age of 18 and soon came to the attention of Seiji Ozawa who invited him to the Tanglewood Music Festival. He subsequently acted as his assistant in Vienna. He conducted the ORF-Sinfonieorchester upon graduation and went on to become Assistant Conductor of the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, a post he held until 2009. Rossen Gergov is a Laureate of the first Evgeny Svetlanov International Conducting Competition (held by the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg) in May 2007. His recording of works by David Chesky with the Symphony Orchestra of the Norrlandsoperan was nominated for a Grammy in 2008 and he has also recorded for the BBC, the Bayerische Rundfunk and ORF in Austria.

sioned works. Harvey wrote music in many genres. He is known to many as a composer of inspirational choral music; his four quartets commissioned by the Arditti Quartet are internationally performed; his three operas, *Passion and Resurrection, Inquest of Love* (an ENO commission) and *Wagner Dream* (commissioned by Netherlands Opera and restaged by WNO in 2013) have added lustre to his reputation. Perhaps, however, his skill at combining electronic sounds with live instruments was his greatest achievement, resulting in several large-scale orchestral works performed at major venues including the BBC Proms and Berlin Philharmonie. He wrote the 'Glasgow Trilogy' for the BBC Scottish SO as composer in residence between 2006-8. His commission from the Berlin Philharmonic, *Weltethos*, was conducted by Sir Simon Rattle in October 2011, and was performed in the UK by the CBSO and Edward Gardner. Harvey's many awards include the prestigious Monaco Prize in 2010 and a 2012 RPS Award for *Messages*.

**Luke Bedford: Igor, The Bird Who Couldn't Sing (2011)**  
*for narrator, clarinet and piano*

Text source: Satoshi Kitamura's "Igor, the bird who couldn't sing"  
Commissioned by Wigmore Hall



**Luke Bedford** was born in 1978 and studied composition at the Royal College of Music with Edwin Roxburgh and Simon Bainbridge. His works range from chamber groups (e.g. the string quartet *Of the Air*), to ensemble, sometimes with voice

**Sir Harrison Birtwistle: Secret Theatre (1984)**  
*for chamber ensemble*

Ritual has informed many of Birtwistle's major works, but none of his pieces uses ritual in an anecdotal sense; there is no grafting on of a dramatic skeleton just to reinforce an inconsistent argument; its importance in Birtwistle's music is always implicit rather than explicit, defining its own rules and becoming an indivisible part of the total conception of the work. In *Secret Theatre*, the last of a trilogy of pieces written for the London Sinfonietta between 1977 and 1984, the ritual that drives the music is very consciously a hermetic, undisclosed one. The audience is to be permitted access to a rite for which it has been given no justification; it simply watches and hears the instrumental protagonists operating according to a mysterious set of rules. Though the argument the ensemble presents remains entirely self-consistent and may be appreciated as an abstract discourse, its precise provenance, its *raison d'être*, adds a further layer of fascination, provides its 'magic'. The title of the work (which is dedicated to the composer's wife) is taken from a poem by Robert Graves, which promises "an unforeseen and fiery entertainment". To act out his suppressed scenario Birtwistle divides the fourteen-piece chamber orchestra into two groups, which he designates 'Cantus' and 'Continuum'. The Cantus instrumentalists play from solo positions at the front of the ensemble. The Cantus music is essentially linear; its instruments play in unison throughout, whether that is melodic unison, rhythmic unison or heterophonic unison (when the melodic lines unravel into distinct strands). By contrast the material of the Continuum is conceived vertically; it is built out of an array of *ostinatos*, interlocked, superimposed and defined strictly by their harmonic implications. In a very obvious way the music of *Secret Theatre* is a vast exploitation of the

Birtwistle has received many honours including the 1986 Grawemeyer Award, the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in 1986, a British knighthood in 1988, the Siemens Prize in 1995, and a British Companion of Honour in 2001. He was Henry Purcell Professor of Music at King's College of Music in London (1995–2001) and is currently Director of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

**The Egyptian Contemporary Music Ensemble (ECME) & Rossen Gergov**

Established by the EECMS in 2010, the **ECME** presents a series of new music concerts as Guest Artists of the Department of the Arts at the American University in Cairo. This gathering of some of the finest Egyptian musicians from several generations plays an important role in fostering contemporary composition and performance in Egypt today. All members of the ECME have pursued their musical education in Egypt as well as abroad, and by now occupy important positions in major cultural institutions and/or other professional ensembles. The ECME has over a very short period of time become an eminent cultural ambassador for Egypt. Beside its portrait series dedicated to international masters of new music as Hans Werner Henze, it is especially a set of about ten pieces by Egyptian composers created between 2011 and 2013 in the course of the EECMS composition initiative ON 25 that makes its repertoire so unique. After a highly successful Egyptian-Arab concert in Germany in 2011 in collaboration with the renowned Neue Vocalsolisten from Stuttgart and members of the Augsburg Opera, the ECME celebrated its first appearance at a national festival in the course of the Cairo Contemporary Music Days 2012. At Festival Présences 2013, it gave six world premieres in the course of an unprecedented Egyptian

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*“Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.” – A. Camus*