

ECHO Rising Stars: Sean Shibe

Start time: 1pm

Approximate end time: 2.15pm, with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Scottish Lute Manuscripts (compiled by Lady Margaret Wemyss) *A Scots Tune*

Mervell's Sarabande

Canaries

Holi and Faire

Ladie Lie Near Me

A Scots Tune

Federico Mompou *Canción y Danza X (sobre dos Cantigas del Rey Alfonso X)*

'Preludio', 'Coral', 'Canción' and 'Muñeira' from *Suite Compostelana*

Manuel de Falla *Homenaje pour le Tombeau de Claude Debussy*

Francis Poulenc *Sarabande*

Thomas Adès *Forgotten Dances* (co-commissioned by the Barbican and ECHO Rising Stars, UK premiere)

I Overture – Queen of the Spiders

II Berceuse – The Paradise of Thebes

III Courante – Here was a Swift (for Max Ernst)

IV Barcarolle – The Maiden Voyage

V Carillon de Ville (for Hector Berlioz)

VI Vesper (for Henry Purcell)

Popular plucked-string instruments such as the guitar and lute are arguably better placed than other classical instruments to move across and behind nationalist, stylistic and historical lines. This is a notion with which Sean Shibe himself would surely agree – as witness today's beautifully curated programme.

Here we find a spirit of the dance evident in music old and new, but also in evidence are the benign ghosts of those fellow classical guitar trailblazers Andrés Segovia and Julian Bream – Shibe's erstwhile mentor.

The recital opens with music from *Lady Margaret Wemyss's Lute Book*, this contains a group of pieces transcribed into French lute tablature collected in Scotland by the young noblewoman from her 12th year until her death at just 19 in around 1649. Among the treasures within them are a sarabande of the earlier, brisker type: *Mervell's Sarabande* by the French composer Jacques Gaultier (c1600–52), who was by all accounts a somewhat dubious character. His piece sounds surprisingly modern in a selection that also features traditional Scottish dances and tunes and even a sprightly *Canaries*, a dance whose origins, as the name suggests, lay in the Canary Islands.

The Catalan composer Federico Mompou (1893–1987) is a composer whom you can only wish had written much more for the guitar. The solo piano miniatures for which he is best-known draw on traditional folk material and Impressionist harmonies to create a subtle and distinctive musical language; these are exquisitely demonstrated in the *Cancion y Danza X* (1953), a piece that was originally known in its piano incarnation. Yet, as recently as 2001, an alternative was unearthed, in the composer's own hand, for solo guitar. The six-movement *Suite Compostelana* (1962) was written, as the name suggests, in Santiago de Compostela and dedicated to Segovia. Shibe here omits the 'Cuna' (Lullaby) and 'Recitativo', moving from the toccata-like 'Preludio' through the slow, spare 'Coral' and unsettled 'Canción' before ending with the joyful Galician dance, redolent of bagpipe drones, that is the 'Muñeira'.

Like Mompou, the Andalusian composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) drew on traditional and modernist musical styles and material; but, like Stravinsky, he also employed neo-Classical elements, particularly in his later music.

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His *Homenaje pour le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* (1920) – again his only work for classical guitar – was written with advice from his friend, the Spanish guitarist and composer Miguel Llobet. It was later arranged for piano, and then orchestra. Interestingly, in more recent times many of Falla's orchestral works have been arranged by performers for guitar, whether solo, duet, or ensemble, in a sense coming full circle.

Much has been made of Falla's use of the sensual Cuban dance, the habanera, in this sombre context; the work also quotes one of Debussy's *Estampes*, 'La soirée dans Grenade'. In a 1976 interview, the great Spanish guitarist José Rey de la Torre, who studied with Llobet, said that: '... the combination of this funereal feeling and the habanera together, it's very strange ... There is a contradiction of the rhythm itself, the habanera, combined with that feeling of grief.' It's from this contradiction, though, that *Homenaje pour le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* derives so much of its heart-wrenching tension.

Francis Poulenc's fragrantly melancholy Sarabande (the score instructs the guitarist to play *Molto calmo et melanconico*) was written in 1960 and regrettably the French composer's only work for solo guitar. Moving in stately fashion between different time signatures, it retains little of the form's original lively Spanish dance qualities but instead reflects its subsequent courtly evolution in Italy and France. And, despite its modernist underpinnings, it also looks back somewhat wistfully to the French *claveciniste* school of the Couperin family, Rameau and co.

Like Benjamin Britten before him, British composer Thomas Adès (born 1971) combines a profound, markedly literary, knowledge of and respect for British history, musical or otherwise, with an eclectic approach to his own writing. Newly commissioned by the Barbican and the European Concert Hall Organisation and here receiving its UK premiere, *Forgotten Dances* is not only Adès's first stand-alone work for solo classical guitar, but his first ever published solo work for an instrument other than the piano.

That said, his Habanera for guitar, from the opera *The Exterminating Angel* (2016), does, in a way, provide an indirect link between *Forgotten Dances* and Falla's *Homenaje*. There is also a more direct link between the opera and *Forgotten Dances*, with the title of one of its movements, 'Berceuse – Paradise of Thebes', referencing part of the Buñuel film on which *The Exterminating Angel* is based.

Before the Berceuse comes the ambiguous, filigree 'Overture – Queen of the Spiders'; after is the virtuosic 'Here was a swift'; a serene 'Barcarolle – the Maiden Voyage'; the dissonant tintinnabulations of 'Carillon de Ville'; and finally the Purcellian 'Vesper', a chaconne based on that composer's *Evening Hymn*.

The result is nothing less than a phantasmagoria of startling complexity and originality, with Adès making no concessions to the player in his novel treatment of the classical guitar's resources. But with such an advocate as Sean Shibe, *Forgotten Dances* will not be easily forgotten.

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Performers

Sean Shibe guitar

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