

Lammermuir Festival

Autumn Special

Online from 12 September 2020, 8:00pm | Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

Sean Shibe guitar

Works from Scottish Lute Manuscripts

*Sweet Saint Nickola • Mervell's Sarabande • A Scotts Tune • Canaries
Holi and Faire • Ladie Lie Neer Me*

Federico Mompou *Cancion y danza X*

Federico Mompou *Suite Compostelana*

1. Preludio • 2. Coral • 3. Cuna • 4. Recitativo • 5. Canción • 6. Muñeira

Francis Poulenc *Sarabande*

Julia Wolfe *LAD*



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Sean Shibe is steadily building a reputation not only as one of the most impressive guitarists of his generation, but also as an innovative and provocative programmer — both in concert and the recording studio. In this programme he juxtaposes old and new music, switching from his Michael Gee classical guitar to a Fender Stratocaster. While some of this programme was written specifically for the guitar, some of it was arranged for the instrument by Shibe himself. In bringing these apparently disparate pieces together, Shibe presents a soundscape that explores different musical heritages united by their shared sense of Celtic origin.

Works from Scottish Lute Manuscripts

Sweet Saint Nickola • *Mervell's Sarabande* • *A Scotts Tune* • *Canaries*
Holi and Faire • *Ladie Lie Neer Me*

The two opening sets bring together a series of tunes found in seventeenth-century Scottish lute manuscripts, which Shibe arranged for his album *softLOUD* (Delphian Records, 2018). Performing them on classical guitar rather than lute allows Shibe a certain amount of freedom to explore fresh approaches in each of these short pieces, rather than being bound by any sense of historicism. Hear how his transcription of *A Scotts Tune*, attributed to a 'Mr. Leslie' in the Balcarres Manuscript (c. 1695–1702), finishes with the lightest of touches, at the top of the guitar's neck. In an interview with Kate Molleson in *The Herald* in May 2018, Shibe acknowledged the complexity of this, contemplating, 'Maybe I'm being inappropriate in order to engage with what this music might mean today,' before ultimately accepting 'I think I'm OK with that.'

Federico Mompou *Cancion y danza X*

Federico Mompou was a Catalan pianist and composer, best known for his songs and music for piano. After receiving his early musical education in Barcelona, he went on to study at the Paris Conservatoire. His music is characterised by its focus on the small scale and has an intimate, improvisatory quality that often belies its sophistication. His tenth *Cancion y danza* was originally written for piano in 1953 and is based on two *cantigas* (a thirteenth-century poetic song form from the Galician-Portuguese tradition). It was later transcribed by the composer for the guitar, giving its meandering melodic lines an even more song-like quality.

Federico Mompou *Suite Compostelana*

1. Preludio • 2. Coral • 3. Cuna • 4. Recitativo • 5. Canción • 6. Muñeira

The *Suite Compostelana* was written in 1962 and dedicated to the Spanish guitar virtuoso Andrés Segovia. Mompou taught at the University of Santiago de Compostela, and each of the six movements draws on traditional and historical Galician influences. In each successive miniature, Mompou blends different textures and timbres, bringing together medieval chant with traditional Galician dance forms. The final movement (*Muñeira*), evokes the *gaita*, the Galician bagpipe.

Francis Poulenc *Sarabande*

Francis Poulenc's *Sarabande* was actually the only piece the French composer ever wrote for guitar. It was written in 1960, while the composer was in New York, for the guitarist Ida Presti. Printed on a single page and marked *molto calmo e melanconico* ('very calm and melancholic'), it plays with the metrical conventions of the triple-time sarabande — originally the Spanish *zarabanda* — by disrupting the flow via the insertion of bars of four and five beats. Poulenc's dance has something of a reflective, introspective quality to it, echoing earlier Renaissance lute repertoire rather than the Baroque suite, with which the sarabande came to be best known.

Julia Wolfe *LAD*

LAD, by the New York-based composer Julia Wolfe, was written to be performed by nine individual bagpipes. It was commissioned in 2007 for piper Matthew Welch by the River to River Festival in Manhattan. Having discovered the piece via that most twenty-first-century of platforms, YouTube, Shibe set about transcribing *LAD* for electric guitar, bringing an even more biting edge to its opening drones. For live performances, Shibe pre-records and multi-tracks himself playing several of the parts. In the opening section, these drones steadily accumulate over an extended period of about eight minutes, before the first melody ('The Slow Melody') is eventually heard, introduced over the top of a deep pedal drone. There is something incredibly compelling in hearing the drones as they narrow and eventually come into focus. Finally, as a means of conclusion, the second melody ('The Fast Melody') offers a genuinely cathartic release from this enormous buildup, as its raucous jig melody is passed between the different parts in close imitation.

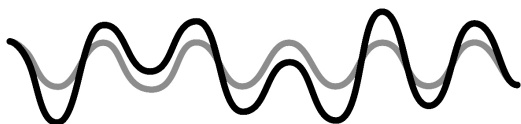
David Lee

One of the foremost guitarists of his generation, **Sean Shibe** brings a fresh and innovative approach to the traditional classical guitar by experimenting with instruments and repertoire. The first guitarist to be selected for the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme, and to be awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, he was selected for representation by the Young Classical Artists Trust artist between 2015-2017. In 2018, Sean Shibe became the first guitarist to receive the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Young Artists; in 2019, he won a Gramophone Award in the newly created 'Concept Album' category for his critically acclaimed recording *softLOUD*. Further awards include the Royal Over-Seas League First Prize and Gold Medal (2011); Ivor Mairants Guitar Award (2009); and a Dewar Arts and D'Addario endorsement.

Sean Shibe's commitment to expanding the repertoire for his instrument sees him conceive imaginative programmes, heavily featuring new music, as well as newly commissioned works; recent and future performances include new music by James MacMillan, Daniel Kidane, Brian Bolger, David Fennessy, Sofia Gubaidulina, and the premiere of a reworked version of Georges Lentz's *Ingwe*, in collaboration with the composer himself. New commissions include Liam Paterson, David Fennessy, Freya Waley-Cohen, and young Welsh composer Sylvia Villa.

After a five-star recital of electric and acoustic works at Wigmore Hall in March 2020, Sean was one of the first artists to return to the Hall for their new socially-distanced concert series in June, giving a recital of Scottish Lute Manuscripts, Bach and Steve Reich *Electric Counterpoint*, receiving five stars from *The Guardian* for his 'irresistible style and authority... a nonchalant virtuoso and boundary breaker'. Sean's new, chart-topping recording of Bach lute suites arranged for guitar was also released in May 2020 on Delphian Records. The disc received considerable attention: Sean was the cover star of *Gramophone* magazine's June 2020 issue, in which the disc was named Editor's Choice; *The Times* and *The Scotsman* both awarded the disc five stars; *Presto Classical* and *Europadisc* both named the recording 'Disc of the Week'; and it spent 3 weeks at number 1 as well as 2 months in the top 5, in the UK Specialist Classical Charts.

Sean's debut album *Dreams and Fancies* was released in 2017 on Delphian; a recording that explores the fruits of Julian Bream's history of commissioning in the 20th Century alongside music by Dowland, it was named Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine Instrumental Choice*. It was also nominated in the *BBC Music Magazine* 'Instrumental Award' category. In 2018, Sean Shibe released his second album, *softLOUD*, on Delphian. A revelatory and experimental programme, *softLOUD* includes a combination of acoustic and electric guitar, bringing together ancient and modern traditions in a collection of music ranging from Scottish lute manuscripts to electric guitar arrangements of Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*, Julia Wolfe's *LAD*, (originally written for 9 bagpipes) and David Lang's *Killer*. The live programme resulted in Shibe being shortlisted in both 'Instrumentalist' and 'Young Artist' categories at the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, and was hailed as 'spectacular' (*Gramophone*) and 'gripping' (*The Guardian*). Further recordings include solo works by Maxwell Davies on Linn with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and John Adams *Naive and Sentimental Music* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra on Chandos.



Lammermuir Festival

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