

Lammermuir Festival

16 September 2021, 11:00am | Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

Jean-Sélim Abdelmoula piano

Leoš Janáček selections from *An Overgrown Path*
Robert Schumann *Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17*



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Lammermuir Festival 2021

Welcome to the 12th Lammermuir Festival — we're so glad to be back!

Two years ago, when we celebrated the landmark of our 10th festival we (perhaps fortunately!) had no inkling of what would unfold only a few months later. Then last year we mounted a small online festival and were grateful for the enthusiastic support, not only of our regular audience, but of many new Lammermuir followers around the world.

This year feels like both a celebration and a rebirth — not quite 'business as usual', but very much a festival that we have yearned, through many bleak months, to bring back to this beautiful part of Scotland and to share with you.

We have made a virtue of the new reality of international travel restrictions by inviting many old friends among our distinguished artists, but there are new faces too — headed by our Artist in Residence, the American pianist Jeremy Denk, and by vocal ensemble The Gesualdo Six. We explore a rich variety of repertoire and offer unique projects such as Hugo Wolf's *Italian Songbook*, an anniversary tribute to Dennis Brain, an intriguing afternoon chez the Wagners and a recital dedicated to a great British piano duo. We are delighted to welcome Scottish Opera back and look forward to BBC Radio 3's series of live vocal recitals.

For Covid-safety reasons we have concentrated many of our events in the larger venues in order to retain social distancing of one metre in our audience seating.

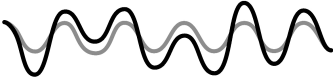
We are most grateful to Creative Scotland for their continuing support and to EventScotland for generously supporting our online streaming programme which will add a new and, we hope, permanent dimension to the festival.

We are fortunate indeed to have a number of generous individual donors, trusts and sponsors who, along with the support of our Friends of the Lammermuir Festival, make the festival possible. We thank each and every supporter most warmly, for without them we simply would not exist.

Hugh Macdonald and James Waters
Joint Artistic Directors

Next year's Lammermuir Festival dates:

9-19 September 2022



Lammermuir Festival

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Our valued supporters are at the very heart of our festival, helping it flourish, prosper and reach out so that as many people as possible can enjoy it every year.

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Welcome to Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

Holy Trinity stands on the site of a Franciscan friary (the original 'Lamp of Lothian' before that title passed to St Mary's Church nearby) which was built here in the 13th Century. The friary was demolished in 1572, and almost two centuries later, in 1769, work was begun on a 'qualified' Anglican chapel which was finally consecrated as Holy Trinity in 1815. The present chancel was added and the interior remodelled in an attractive neo-Byzantine style in 1930.

Lammermuir Festival is grateful to the Rector and Vestry of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for making the church available for this concert

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Programme notes

Leoš Janáček selections from *An Overgrown Path*

1. Naše večery ('Our evenings')
2. Lístek odvanutý ('A blown-away leaf')
4. Frydecká panna Maria ('Frydek's Madonna')
5. Štebataly jak laštovičky ('They chattered like swallows')
7. Dobrou noc! ('Good night!')
10. Syček neodlete! ('The barn owl has not flown away')

On hearing Leoš Janáček's *Po zarostlém chodníku* ('**On an overgrown path**') for the first time, it is difficult to believe that its short pieces were not, in fact, originally conceived for piano. The first five that make up Book I actually began as arrangements for the harmonium of Moravian folksongs, to be included in an anthology of Slovakian melodies that was published in 1901. However, at some point, Janáček clearly decided to go beyond merely arranging the tunes, and instead, over the next decade, developed them into a series of two books of short but exquisite preludes. In this recital, we hear six pieces, mostly drawn from the first book.

The cycle's title is taken from a Moravian wedding song, in which the bride complains that 'The path to my mother's house is overgrown with clover.' However, the poetic titles of the individual pieces were added by Janáček's as an afterthought, at the suggestion of the Czech composer and critic Jan Branberger. Janáček's titles are sometimes evocative, but they are often enigmatic and it can be difficult to hear exactly what they might refer to within the music. The Janáček scholar John Tyrrell has described the set as 'some of the profoundest, most disturbing music that Janáček had ever written, their impact quite out of proportion to their modest means and ambition.' Certainly, what seem like naïve musical postcards are often quickly developed by Janáček into complex pieces, employing many of the same techniques that characterise his operas. Ambiguous tonalities, jarring rhythms and wandering melodies all come together to create these miniatures of real substance.

This is audible in the first piece, **Our Evenings**, which opens with an innocent-enough seeming melody. However, a chromatic inner line hints at the more heated central section that soon follows. **A blown-away leaf** remains more faithful to the original folk-tune that was its basis, though its 5/8 metre depicts a sense of the music, just like the leaf, not being bound to the earth. **Frydek's Madonna** opens with a series of rising chords, before introducing a simple but touching melody in the right hand, which is accompanied by gentle oscillating semiquavers in the left. It is not clear who Frydek or, indeed, his Madonna were. **They chattered like swallows** is more pictorial, with its repeating octave leaps mirroring the birds' erratic flight patterns of, while **Good night!** actually makes use of a similar motif based on an octave leap, but in a completely different guise — this time, in a more nocturnal context. The final piece of this selection, **The barn owl has not flown away**, was printed as the final piece in Janáček's first book. After an energetic opening comes a more subdued, but nonetheless optimistic-sounding chorale. The two ideas alternate, but it is the opening that ultimately prevails, bringing the set to a suitably mysterious close.

Robert Schumann Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17

I. Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen; Im Legenden-Ton

II. Mäßig. Durchaus energisch

III. Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten

Robert Schumann began work on his **Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17** in June 1836. At that time, he was using the working title *Ruines: fantasia pour le pianoforte*. However, in September, he decided to add two further movements and offered it to the Leipzig publisher C.F. Kistner. Writing to Kistner, Schumann described how, 'Florestan and Eusebius would very much like to do something for Beethoven's monument, and to that end have composed: "Ruinen. Trophaeen. Palmen. Grosse Sonata f[ür] d[ie] Pianof[orte] für Beethoven's Denkmal"'. It seems that Schumann hoped that any money the publication might earn him would be donated toward the Beethoven monument, for which Franz Liszt was fundraising. However, Kistner rejected the work (as did Haslinger), and Schumann would not return to it until the spring of 1839. To begin with, he changed the title to *Dichtungen: Ruinen, Siegesbogen, Sternbild*, but eventually dropped this for the more generic *Fantasie*.

Schumann referred to the first movement of the *Fantasie* as 'a deep lament for Clara', who he would not marry until 1840. After the piece was eventually published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Schumann wrote to Clara, and explained that, 'You can understand the fantasy only if you think back to the unhappy summer of 1836, when I renounced you; now I have no reason to compose such unhappy and melancholic music.' Clara responded, telling her husband how much she approved of the work, and that she was 'still half-ill with rapture' after receiving the music the previous day.

Schumann's references to the names 'Florestan' and 'Eusebius' offer the key to understanding the *Fantasie* on a musical level. In the early 1830s, Schumann developed a sort of fantasy world, in which he depicted both his friends and himself as characters with alternative names. He would make reference to them throughout the remainder of his career, both in his writings and music. Florestan and Eusebius were intended to represent the two different sides of his own persona — Florestan being the brash virtuoso performer, with Eusebius a 'pensive clerk'.

The opening movement is highly unconventional, even for Schumann. It essentially brings together a series of different character-pieces into a sort of larger-scale sonata form, before directly quoting the final song of Beethoven's cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* at the end, by way of a coda. The second and third movements give voice to Florestan and Eusebius respectively. While the exuberant march of the middle is immediately impressive, it is the meandering harmonies of the final movement that leave a lasting impression. Generated through a series of unconventional but ingenious triadic transformations, they point to where Schumann — and, with him, the future of Romantic piano music — was headed.

David Lee

Jean-Sélim Abdelmoula studied with Sir Andrés Schiff at the Kronberg Academy, and with Jörg Widmann at the Barenboim-Said Academy. He was a prize-winner at the YCAT International Auditions in 2017.

Over the last year Jean-Sélim has given recitals at LuganoMusica, Musikdorf-Ernen (Switzerland) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festivals. He composed a new solo piano piece for Francesco Piemontesi, a short string quartet for the Lockenhaus Festival and created three video projects.

An avid chamber musician he took part in Lavaux Classics, Lucerne Orchesterhaus, the Gstaad Menuhin Festiva and, Der Zwerg Festivals collaborating with Anastasia Kobekina, Valery Sokolov, Sindy Mohamed and Stephen Waarts. This season's highlights include recitals at Wigmore Hall (broadcast by BBC Radio 3) and the Palais des Beaux-Arts with Anastasia Kobekina, a performance of Korngold's Piano Quintet with the Viani Quartet in Heidelberg-Frühling's Kammermusik Plus series, and concerts with Ivan Karizna in Kronberg. He gives solo recitals at the Lammermuir Festival (Scotland), Biel Salle de Loge and the Theatre Grand-Champs in Gland (Switzerland) and records the complete piano music of Janaček for Delphian.

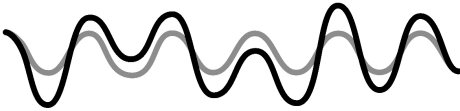
Jean-Sélim has performed widely in Europe appearing at the Tonhalle Zurich, Lucerne Festival, Lofoten Festival, Ittingen Whitsun Concerts, Dusseldorf Schumannfest, Royal Festival Hall, Barbican, the Palau de la Musica (Barcelona), Sendesaal (Bremen) and the Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels), among many others. He has given recitals as part of the Building Bridges series at the invitation of its creator Sir Andrés Schiff, taken part in IMS Prussia Cove Open Chamber Music, Kronberg Academy's Chamber Music Connects the World, the Banff Artist in Residence Programme, and held the Rebanks Family Piano Fellowship at the Glenn Gould School in Toronto.

A talented composer, Jean-Sélim's works have been performed by Heinz Holliger, Antje Weithaas, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sylvia Nopper, Gilles Colliard and Einar Steen-Nokleberg, and by ensembles including the Orchestre de Chambre de Toulouse, Swiss Chamber Soloists, Camerata Bern, Zürcher Kammerorchester and Ensemble Sequence.

An interest in cinema has led him to collaborate with several directors, writing the soundtrack for *Love After Sunrise* by Hadi Ghandour, which won prizes at the LA International New Wave Festival and Norwich Festival. Jean-Selim has won numerous awards including first prize at the 2012 Edvard Grieg International Composer Competition in Oslo, 2013 Lausanne Concours d'Interprétation Musicale and 2016 Premi de Musica de Cambra Montserrat Alavedra, 3rd prize at the 2015 Ciurlionis International Competition in Vilnius, the 2015 Guildhall Wigmore Recital Prize in London and the 2018 Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund Award in Boston.

Born in Switzerland, Jean-Sélim is an alumnus of Lausanne HEMU and Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied with pianists Christian Favre and Ronan O'Hora and composer Julian Anderson. He has played in masterclasses with Gyorgy Kurtag, Ferenc Rados, Sir Andras Schiff, Denes Varjon, Mitsuko Uchida, Imogen Cooper, Stephen Hough, Angela Hewitt, Richard Goode and Leon Fleisher, and been advised on composition by Heinz Holliger and George Benjamin.

Jean-Sélim has been supported by the Leenards Foundation, the city of Nyon, the Fritz Bach foundation, the Rotary Club, and the Denereaz foundation.



Lammermuir Festival

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