

Lammermuir Festival

16 September 2021, 8:00pm | Dunbar Parish Church

Jeremy Denk piano Solo Piano Recital

Johann Sebastian Bach

Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829

I. Praeambulum • II. Allemande • III. Corrente • IV. Sarabande
V. Tempo di minuetto • VI. Passepied • VII. Gigue

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

They will not lend me a child

Thomas 'Blind Tom' Wiggins

The Battle of Manassas

Frederic Rzewski

Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

Scott Joplin & Louis Chauvin

Heliotrope Bouquet

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Sonata in C Minor, No. 32, Op. 111

I. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato
II. Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile



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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.

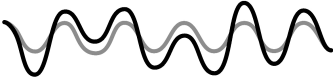
We are most grateful to Creative Scotland for their continuing support and to EventScotland for generously supporting our online streaming programme which will add a new and, we hope, permanent dimension to the festival.

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 Dunbar Parish Church

Dunbar Parish Church, Gillespie Graham's grand red sandstone gothic church of 1821 stands proudly looking out to sea.

Damaged by fire in 1987, its spacious interior was restored with a colourful mix of ancient and modern features including an elaborate early 17th Century monument to the Earl of Dunbar and some fine 1990 stained glass by Shona McInnes and Douglas Hogg.

Lammermuir Festival is grateful to the Minister and Kirk Session of Dunbar Parish Church for making the church available for this concert.

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Programme notes

In this programme, music by two of the towering keyboardist-composers of the Western European classical tradition is juxtaposed by a group of less-familiar composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including three men of colour. While their styles and points of reference are different, the products of disparate times and places, together these works demonstrate the versatility and power of the piano in articulating a multitude of emotional expressions. From a lack of satisfaction with the established forms of the eighteenth-century keyboard suite, through subtle (and not-so-subtle) commentaries on American social issues, to sheer desperation in the face of complete hearing loss — for each of these composers, the piano was a medium to communicate with the wider world.

While **Johann Sebastian Bach's** keyboard music for performance outside the church was largely intended for the harpsichord, he was fascinated with the latest developments in keyboard technology. In fact, we know that Bach played — and praised — one of Gottfried Silbermann's pianofortes sometime around 1736. Bach's **Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829** was probably composed a little while before this, circa 1730. Bach composed six keyboard partitas (partita being the German equivalent of 'suite'), publishing them separately, before collating them in his *Clavierübung I* in 1731. This fifth partita is distinguished by its variety, and the way that Bach demonstrates his simultaneous affinity with a series of different forms. The opening *Praeambulum* essentially takes the form of a concerto with the pianist acting both as soloist and ensemble, with the variety of textures and tone colours that the modern piano possesses offering certain advantages over the harpsichord. The six successive dance movements that follow demonstrate Bach's unique ability at synthesising Italian influences with his own German, contrapuntal inclinations.

Born in London in 1875, **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** was the son of a doctor from Sierra Leone and a white English mother. He grew up in Croydon and showed musical talent from a young age and went on to study composition at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford. Coleridge-Taylor's music was well regarded in the early twentieth century — his oratorio *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (1898) became a staple of the choral society repertoire and was, for a time, almost as popular as *Messiah*. Coleridge-Taylor made several trips to the USA and became increasingly captivated with African-American musical traditions. ***They will not lend me a child*** is taken from his collection *Five Negro Melodies*, which was originally scored for piano trio, but later adapted by the composer for solo piano. It begins with the most tentative statement of the melody, but eventually opens out into an unapologetically Romantic work.

Thomas 'Blind Tom' Wiggins endured a series of seemingly insurmountable obstacles to become one of the USA's best-known pianists. Blind from birth and most likely autistic, he was sold along with his enslaved parents in 1850 to James Bethune, a lawyer in Columbus,

Georgia. However, due to his blindness, Wiggins was unable to perform manual work and instead spent his early years exploring the Bethune plantation. After hearing Bethune's daughters practising the piano, he became fixated with the instrument and taught himself to play by ear, composing his first works at the age of five. By the time he was eight, Bethune was promoting Wiggins on nationwide tours, marketing him as a 'Barnum-style freak', and taking a significant income from his performances.

The Battle of Manassas was Wiggins's most popular piece. It is a programmatic depiction of the Battle of Manassas (also known as the Battle of Bull Run), which took place on 21 July 1861 during the American Civil War. The battle saw just 15,000 Confederate fighters rout some 50,000 Union soldiers. Wiggins's score interweaves a series of popular patriotic songs — including *Yankee Doodle*, *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *Le Marseillaise* — with the violent noises of cannons and musketry, frequently depicted by the violent cluster-chords in the pianist's left hand. The piece has a complex reception history, with many of Wiggins's black contemporaries disparaging it, regarding it as a celebration of the Confederates' victory. However, hearing it with fresh ears, it is difficult to hear it as anything other than a powerful evocation of the sheer brutality of the battle and, ultimately, as a meditation on the futility of war.

Having died in June earlier this year, **Frederic Rzewski** left an important legacy as one of the most politically engaged composer-pianists in American history. Though he came from a privileged background, being educated at Harvard and Princeton, his music was often based on Leftist social and political themes. **Winnboro Cotton Mill Blues** is based on a tune thought to date from the early 1930s, which was sung by workers at a textile plant in South Carolina. The lyrics describe the arduous nature of their labour:

When I die don't you bury me at all
Hang me up on the factory wall
Place a bobbin in my hand
So I can keep on a-workin' in the Promised Land

Rzewski's minimalist re-working of the popular tune, made famous in the mid-twentieth-century US by singers including Pete Seeger, captures both the monotony of the workers' manual labour as well as the relentless looms. It calls on the pianist to employ a series of advanced techniques, in blurring the lines between man and machine.

Heliotrope Bouquet is, in fact, the work of two composers. **Scott Joplin** apparently heard **Louis Chauvin** performing in Chicago in 1906 and was so impressed that he immediately wrote down the first theme heard here. Though Chauvin was, by all accounts, an extremely talented pianist, he was unable to read or notate music, so none of his compositions have survived. The way that the theme blends ragtime with a tango rhythm is almost unique, and this is probably what inspired Joplin, who accompanied it with his own distinctive harmonies and appended two additional themes. Joplin made sure to credit

Chauvin in the publication. Sadly, however, Chauvin would never make any significant profit from the royalties, dying shortly after his twenty-fourth birthday, following his diagnosis with syphilis and multiple sclerosis.

Almost a century earlier, in 1820, when **Ludwig van Beethoven** began work on the three piano sonatas Opp. 109-111, he must have had some sense they would be his final contributions to the genre which, over the course of his life, he had virtually redefined. Although completely deaf by this point, at the age of fifty, Beethoven was at the height of his compositional powers.

From analysis of the multitude of sketches Beethoven left for his **Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111**, it appears that he actually began thinking about his final piano sonata before he had completed Op. 110. In C minor, regarded a particularly 'pathetic' key, it was also unusually cast in just two movements. The opening theme is one of the most fragmented of any of those in Beethoven's sonatas. It opens with an austere descending figure that is followed by insistent pairs of chords. It is some time before anything even resembling a melody emerges. The second movement, marked *Arietta*, returns to a quasi-vocal idiom. Just like the last movement of Op. 109, it is a theme with variations — but is incredibly understated in comparison to the bravura endings of Beethoven's middle-period sonatas, instead invoking a touching fragility and unmistakable pathos.

Having eventually submitted the two-movement sonata to Schlesinger, the publisher quickly wrote to Beethoven to check if he had forgotten to enclose an additional movement, having come to expect a customary rousing Beethovenian finale. However, in concluding the last of his thirty-two piano sonatas on such a tender note, it seems that Beethoven was simply searching for a different sense of an ending.

David Lee

Jeremy Denk is one of America's foremost pianists. Winner of a MacArthur Genius Fellowship, and the Avery Fisher Prize, Denk was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Denk returns frequently to Carnegie Hall and in recent seasons has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra, as well as on tour with Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms.

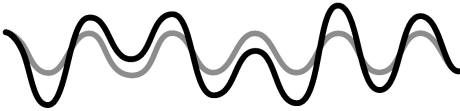
In 19-20, until the COVID-19 pandemic led to the shutdown of all performances, Denk toured Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1* extensively, and was to have performances culminate with Lincoln Center in New York and the Barbican in London. He returned to Carnegie Hall to perform Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with Orchestra of St. Luke's, and made his solo debut at the Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. He also made his solo recital debut at the Boulez Saal in Berlin performing works by Bach, Ligeti, Berg, and Schumann, and returned to the Piano aux Jacobins Festival in France, as well as London's Wigmore Hall. Further performances abroad included his debut with the Bournemouth Symphony, his returns to the City of Birmingham Symphony and the Piano Espoo Festival in Finland, and recitals of the complete Ives Violin Sonatas with Stefan Jackiw.

Highlights of the previous season included a three-week recital tour, culminating in Denk's return to Carnegie Hall; play-directing Mozart concerti on an extensive tour with Academy of St Martin in the Fields; and a nationwide trio tour with Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. He also performed and curated a series of Mozart Violin Sonatas ('Denk & Friends') at Carnegie Hall.

Denk is also known for his original and insightful writing on music, which Alex Ross praises for its 'arresting sensitivity and wit.' He wrote the libretto for a comic opera presented by Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, and the Aspen Festival, and his writing has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, *The Guardian*, and on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. One of his *New Yorker* contributions, 'Every Good Boy Does Fine' forms the basis of a book for future publication by Random House in the US, and Macmillan in the UK.

Denk's recording of the Goldberg Variations for Nonesuch Records reached No. 1 on the Billboard Classical Charts. His recording of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111 paired with Ligeti's *Études* was named one of the best discs of the year by the *New Yorker*, NPR, and the *Washington Post*, and his account of the Beethoven sonata was selected by BBC Radio 3's Building a Library as the best available version recorded on modern piano. Denk has a long-standing attachment to the music of American visionary Charles Ives, and his recording of Ives's two piano sonatas also featured in many 'best of the year' lists. His recording c.1300-c.2000 was released in 2018 with music ranging from Guillaume de Machaut, Gilles Binchois and Carlo Gesualdo, to Stockhausen, Ligeti and Glass.

Jeremy Denk graduated from Oberlin College, Indiana University, and the Juilliard School. He lives in New York City.



Lammermuir Festival

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David Lee

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