

# HELIX

# ENSEMBLE

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Musical Director  
Anthony Weeden

## *Music in Miniature*

Fraser Noble Hall,  
University of Leicester  
Saturday 5 February 2005 at 7.30pm

## Programme

<b>Wagner</b>	<b>Siegfried Idyll</b>
<b>Ligeti</b>	<b>Six Bagatelles</b>
<b>Stravinsky</b>	<b>Suite No.1 for Small Orchestra</b>

----- Interval -----

<b>Pither</b>	<b>Concentus</b>
<b>Copland</b>	<b>Appalachian Spring: Suite (Original instrumentation)</b>



University of  
**Leicester**



## Siegfried Idyll

## Richard Wagner (1830-1883)

In most books about chamber music, Wagner only appears as a reference point and influence on others, not a subject of study, and in some cases rather dismissively. Siegfried Idyll was none the less written to be played on Christmas day 1870 in the most domestic of situations, to give his waking wife a joint 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday present and Christmas present in gratitude for their baby who shared the Opera hero's name, and performed on the staircase of their home. It must have been a very large staircase, as it was performed by 16 players on that occasion, and it is now commonly performed by a Mozart sized chamber orchestra. Siegfried Idyll is Wagner's only masterpiece of 'absolute' music. It is a single non-programmatic movement, subtly coloured, often contrapuntal and full of delicate nuances. Much of the thematic material is taken from the opera Siegfried, plus a German cradle song and some material from an earlier unpublished string quartet.

## 6 Bagatelles (1953)

## Georgy Ligeti (b 1923)

1. *Allegro con spirito*
2. *Rubato Lamentoso*
3. *Allegro grazioso*
4. *Presto ruvido*
5. *Adagio Mesto (Bela Bartok in memoriam)*
6. *Molto vivace Capriccioso*

György Ligeti is a leading living contemporary composer who has dominated contemporary music from the 1970s onwards. He was born in Hungary but fled to the West in 1956 after the Soviet invasion to crush the revolution. His most characteristic music uses a dense tangled polyphony which Ligeti terms 'micropolyphony', a style he used 1960-75 in works such as *Atmosphères* (1961) for orchestra.

The Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet are from his earlier Hungarian period and are arrangements of six movements from his *Musica ricercata* (1951-3) for piano, a work which did not receive its first performance until 1969. The Bagatelles were a commission from the Jeney Quintet and were first performed in September 1956 before Ligeti left Hungary, although the sixth had to be omitted as it was considered to be 'too dangerous' because of its use of dissonance. The approach behind the original *Musica ricercata* is to reduce the pitch material and gradually build up a language from the bare minimum, thus avoiding complex harmony. For the Bagatelles he does not set the most radical or reduced movements of the original piano work (the second of which is used in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*) but uses movements which demonstrate a Hungarian folk music quality. The arrangement for wind quintet allows Ligeti to create textures which are much more colourful and distinctive than the original piano work. It is music which demonstrates the importance of Bartók for Hungarian composers writing in the 1950s, even when they are trying to find their own distinctive voice as Ligeti clearly was in *Musica ricercata* and the Bagatelles.

In the 1968 Ligeti returned to the wind quintet with his *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet*, these are much more radical and texturally-based than the Bagatelles but similarly well-written for wind. Ligeti's style and language returned to one closer to Bartók's in his later life with works such as the *Horn Trio* (1982), and *Violin Concerto* (1993) which show clear echoes of a tonal past.

## Suite no.1 for small orchestra

## Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

1. *Andante*
2. *Napolitana*
3. *Espanola*
4. *Balalaika*

In this programme of "Music in Miniature", both Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* are commonly performed with a larger ensemble than they were originally conceived for. The Suites for small orchestra by Stravinsky however began life as two sets of pieces for piano duet – 3 *Easy Pieces* (1915) and 5 *Easy Pieces* (1917), and were subsequently transformed into two *Orchestral Suites* by the composer. In both of the sets of piano duets, the simplicity of one of the two piano parts was specifically designed for the small range of Diaghilev's technique, and Stravinsky used the 5 *Easy Pieces* as music lessons for his children. When Stravinsky performed these pieces to Diaghilev and the Italian composer Alfredo Casella, they were amazed that the composer of *Le Sacre de Printemps* should have produced such a piece of "popcorn". Casella recognised that in the *Easy Pieces*, Stravinsky was creating a new musical path towards the 'synthetic' style of neo-classicism.

The first *Orchestral Suite* which was published in 1926 is made up of 4 pieces taken from the 5 *Easy Pieces* for 4 hands written in 1915. The *Napolitana*, *Espanola* and *Balalaika* were written following Stravinsky's visits to Spain and Italy, the *Balalaika* is a "Russian Souvenir", and the *Andante* was composed last of all.

## — Interval —

## Concentus

## Anthony Pither

*Concentus* was written at the request of Helix to mark the friendship and mutual support between the Ensemble and the University of Leicester. Their concerts have been held in Leicester each year – all but one at the Fraser Noble Hall - since the Helix Ensemble was formed in 1992.

The composer writes: 'as the harmonious title implies, this ten-minute work, although serious, has an air of optimism. Being specially composed for the occasion, I took the opportunity of involving all the players: their instruments range from flutes to double bass while taking in a tuba and, as part of a one-woman percussion section, xylophone, triangle and a single drum (timpanum).'

*Concentus* has as a subtitle - 'Concerto', though the listener will only be aware of intermittent solo flourishes. Indeed, it is even more difficult than usual to predict what the effect of the work will be since, at the time of writing, the notes remain on the page and have not reached the reality of the ensemble sound. What I can share is the plan and my intentions. But as with most extended pieces, from time to time in the act of

creating, the music itself took hold and ‘guided’ the hand of the composer - and the best-laid plans changed.

First, the slow introduction – stabbing primary chords and, rising from the tuba’s notes, a dotted rhythm that will become the prominent triplet dance pattern in the main fast sections. As an intermittent contrast, there is an easily recognisable chorale-style sequence of chords that, for all its simplicity, I could not use or get out my head in a recent composition. These elements are revisited with ever-changing orchestration.

Probably, the most immediate aspects of the piece are its ever-shifting bar lengths and its strongly tonal framework: opening in E minor, the work appears to be concluding happily in C major, when a quiet E minor chord is left suspended. But there is no conscious programme, no story being retold.’

## **Appalachian Spring: Suite**

## **Aaron Copland (1900-1990)**

*(Original instrumentation)*

Appalachian Spring was composed for a 1942 commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation of the Library of Congress, for a new ballet by the Martha Graham dance company.

Graham presented Copland with a scenario to which he invented his music “It is essentially the coming of a new life. It has to do with growing things. Spring is the loveliest and saddest time of the year.” Based on this, Copland wrote the piece that he simply titled “Ballet for Martha”, a composition that succeeded in capturing the essence of an ideal America, one of open fields and endless possibilities, and has become one of the landmark works of American twentieth-century music. The title Appalachian Spring was only given to the piece later by Martha Graham.

The scenario that Martha Graham gave Copland is a simple one, touching on basic issues of marriage and survival. It is set in the Pennsylvania hills early in the nineteenth century. A young pioneer couple who are about to be married enact the emotions, both joyful and apprehensive, that their new life suggests. An older neighbour suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left alone to their new lives and home.

His earlier ballets had used folk songs to create an American character, but nearly all of the melodic material in Appalachian Spring is Copland's own, only at the climactic point of the ballet does he introduce folk material in the guise of an old Shaker melody.

Appalachian Spring was originally composed for a chamber-sized complement of 13 instruments - the maximum that would fit in front of the stage at the Coolidge Auditorium in the Library of Congress, where Martha Graham's company gave the premiere of the ballet in 1944. Appalachian Spring received the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for music, and Copland quickly produced two more versions of the score in 1945: a suite for full orchestra, and a complete ballet score for full orchestra.

**ANTHONY WEEDEN.** As a composer, trumpeter and pianist, Anthony’s musical aspirations began early, studying at the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy until he was 18. He completed his undergraduate degree in Music at the University of Durham (1993-1996) specialising in composition, and continued his studies at the Royal College of Music (1997-1999) as an orchestral conductor.

Towards the end of his first year at Durham University, Anthony was appointed Conductor of the Durham University Symphony Orchestra, keeping the post for a further two years before graduating in 1996. During the following year, Anthony won a scholarship to study orchestral conducting at the Royal College of Music. He studied with Neil Thompson, Edwin Roxburgh, John Carewe, Jorma Panula, Gerhard Markson, Paul Goodwin and Peter Stark, and worked closely with distinguished conductors such as Lorin Maazel and Daniele Gatti. After winning the August Manns prize for conducting two years consecutively, he then became the first ever winner of the Norman Del Mar Conducting Prize in 1999, receiving one of the late Norman Del Mar's batons from Sir David Willcocks.

In March 1999 Anthony was recorded and broadcast by BBC Radio 3 conducting the Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* as part of the Youth Orchestras of the World programme, and in July 1999 and 2000 by Lyric FM, appearing with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland (RTE) in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, conducting Brahms' First Symphony and Beethoven's Third Symphony (*Eroica*). In February 2002, Anthony was a Western European finalist of the prestigious Maazel/Vilar International Conducting Competition.

Although working primarily in the UK, Anthony’s work has also taken him across Europe, America and Asia and he has appeared on local and national television. Orchestras he has conducted include the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Duisburger Philharmoniker, Nottingham Philharmonic Orchestra, Santa Clarita Valley Symphony (Los Angeles), Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra, Durham University Symphony Orchestra and City University Symphony Orchestra amongst others. Having recently been invited to conduct for the eminent contemporary jazz composer Django Bates, Anthony made his debut alongside Django, his jazz quartet Human Chain and renowned pianist Joanna MacGregor at the Traumzeit festival in Duisburg conducting the Duisburger Philharmoniker in June 2004, broadcast live by West German Radio (WDR3).

Anthony is a staff conductor and teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy, a regular guest tutor of conducting at Trinity College of Music, London and is Musical Director for the innovative contemporary music ensemble Avenue A.

**ANTHONY PITHER** has had a long association with Helix. Over ten years, the ensemble has enjoyed his support in the roles of concert promoter, player and composer.

Since February 1995, when Anthony first invited Helix to Leicester to give a concert in the Fraser Noble Building, the ensemble has made annual visits under the auspices of the University of Leicester concert season. The players have always enjoyed a warm welcome from Anthony and his colleagues, as well as playing in the fine acoustics of the venue that are ideally suited to the size and repertoire of the ensemble.

The Helix Ensemble's concert at the Fraser Noble on 20 March 1999 was a very special occasion, as it included the first performance of a new work that Anthony had composed for Helix the previous summer: *Pater Noster*.

Anthony wrote,

“This work has two starting points, both called *Pater Noster*. One is Stravinsky's short choral prayer; the other, the continuous moving boxes that provide an alternative to the lift, and which take me to the dizzy heights of the eighteenth floor of the Attenborough Building – the home of Leicester University Music Department. The wooden boxes...assist one in reaching the state of nirvana. As one slowly ascends, the views of Leicester subtly change. I did not set out to create an image of heaven, though one hopes that the experience is therapeutic.”

Anthony undoubtedly enjoyed his work at the University! Certainly the Helix players benefited with a fine and elegant work written especially for them.

Anthony's interest in composition also lent Helix tremendous support for its most ambitious project to date: *Composers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. With funding from the *Millennium Festival Awards for All* scheme, Helix worked with a number of Leicestershire sixth formers and their music teachers, with input from the acclaimed composer Michael Finnissy. The outcome was a performance, again in the Fraser Noble Building, that included works by several local young composers interspersed with works written at the turn of the previous three centuries. A wonderful event, and a unique creative opportunity for young composers.

One of the most memorable concerts in Helix's twelve-year history was a performance in Leicester's New Walk Museum & Art Gallery as part of Holocaust Memorial Day January 2002. Invited by the Council of Faiths to participate, Helix performed a haunting programme of works by Jewish composers. The culmination of the concert was Anthony's simple and beautiful arrangement, of Schumann's *Traumerei*, the work that was often played by the camp orchestras in the Jewish ghetto of Terezin, and Auschwitz, as a symbol of hope for the future.

In recent years, Anthony has joined Helix on several occasions as a continuo player, most notably in Bach's third Brandenburg Concerto at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert in Loughborough on 15 June 2002. He has also been known to undertake the occasional glockenspiel part.

The history and success of Helix has been intertwined with Anthony's involvement and support over the years. Tonight, we are delighted to acknowledge this by performing a third premiere of his music. We wish him a happy retirement and hope that his association with Helix will continue in the future.

*Susan Lansdale*

## The HELIX Ensemble

**Musical Director** Anthony Weeden

<b>Violin</b>	Jon Barwell	<b>Flute</b>	Jo Conquest	
	Jayne Cooper		Sarah Waters	
	Sarah Cresswell	<b>Oboe</b>	Sophie Cash	
	Karen Eveson		<b>Clarinet</b>	Susan Lansdale
	Sarah Mozley			Christine Taylor
Peter Johnston	<b>Bassoon</b>	Sarah Brookman		
Merri Williams		Shelagh Thomson		
<b>Viola</b>	Andrew Chadwick	<b>Horn</b>	Julian Haslam	
	Mark Lansdale		Simon Locke	
	Elin Roddy		<b>Trumpet</b>	Martin Cresswell
Margaret Chadwick	<b>Trombone</b>	Alex Hewins		
<b>Cello</b>	Eileen Jensen	<b>Tuba</b>	Andrew Bestwick	
	Viv Williams		<b>Percussion</b>	Constanza
<b>Bass</b>	David Walker			
<b>Piano</b>	Brenda Walker			

# HELIX ENSEMBLE

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Formed in 1992, the Helix Ensemble is a flexible group of experienced players from the East Midlands. Their programmes aim to explore rarely performed chamber or small orchestral works alongside more traditional items for this combination. The Helix Ensemble also aims to introduce a variety of contemporary works and has given a number of first performances by composers in the region. In recognition of this programming policy, the Performing Right Society has twice awarded Helix an Enterprise Award.

The Helix Ensemble is grateful for the continued support of Arts Council England East Midlands, Making Music, and Leicester University, who have made it possible to work in rehearsal with a variety of internationally-renowned soloists and conductors, including Anthony Weeden on this occasion.

If you would like any further information about the Helix Ensemble, and future concerts, then visit our website at: [www.helixensemble.co.uk](http://www.helixensemble.co.uk).

## Details of the next HELIX Ensemble Concert:

Saturday 2 July 2005 7.30pm	<b>Barber</b> Summer music Adagio for Strings
Emmanuel Church, Loughborough	<b>Copland</b> Music for Theatre
Musical Director: Ken Woods	<b>Ives</b> Symphony No. 3
	<b>Piston</b> Sinfonietta