

LSO St Luke's

LISA ROBERTSON

CÀNAN

NAN EUN

**LSO Jerwood Composer+**

Saturday 5 September 2026 7pm

Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

[lso.co.uk/jerwood](https://lso.co.uk/jerwood)

LSO Jerwood Composer+ is generously supported by **Jerwood Foundation**,  
with additional support from the **Boltini Trust**, **Hinrichsen Foundation**,  
and **The Marchus Trust**.

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# Tonight's Concert

**Arlene Sierra**

Avian Mirrors (London premiere)

**Ailie Robertson**

Skydance (London premiere)

**Trad**

Cànan nan Eun

**Carola Bauckholt**

Doppelbelichtung

**Linda Buckley**

Fiach

**Daniela Terranova**

Rainbow Dust in the Sky (UK premiere)

Interval

**Emily Doolittle**

Field Guide (UK premiere)

**Bent Sørensen**

The Wings of Spring

**Trad**

Pill iù Pill ill ill ill Eòghainn

**Helen Grime**

To see the summer sky

**Lisa Robertson**

fèath nan eun (world premiere)

**Chihiro Ono** violin

**Anna Bastow** viola

**Colin Alexander** cello

**Mischa Macpherson** voice

**Sandy Leong** live projection and animation

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly forbidden.

Please make sure that digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

# LSO Jerwood Composer+

LSO Jerwood Composer+ supports early-career composers in planning and delivering two artistic projects. Composers gain valuable knowledge and practical experience to develop their own opportunities and careers.

The scheme supports two composers each year through a 15-month placement. Mentored by LSO staff, they are encouraged to develop entrepreneurial skills around programming for specific audiences, planning, marketing, budgeting, fundraising and evaluation.

**Pre-concert tracks:**

*Pill iù Pill ill ill ill Eòghainn*, Calum Johnston (contributor),  
Thorkild Borg Knudsen, (fieldworker), ref: SA1965.104.5,  
The School of Scottish Studies Archives,  
The University of Edinburgh and Tobar an Dualchais

*Cànan nan Eun*, Annie Johnston (contributor),  
Dr John Lorne Campbell (fieldworker), ref: CW0098C.416,  
The Canna Collection Sound Archive,  
National Trust for Scotland and Tobar an Dualchais

# Avian Mirrors (London premiere)

Arlene Sierra

- 1 **Greeting**
- 2 **Reflection**
- 3 **Display**

*Avian Mirrors* explores the title concept in three ways. The first movement, 'Greeting', is a dialogue in which musical calls are answered in quick succession. The game of answering leads to seeming mistakes and resulting variations. The second movement, 'Reflection', takes simple melodic figures and presents them with their inversion – an aural approximation of an avian image reflected in water. Finally, the third movement, 'Display', has the two performers displaying their most flamboyant virtuosity in amiable competition with each other.

**Programme note by Arlene Sierra**



2013

# Skydance (London premiere)

## Ailie Robertson

As with so many others around the world, I have spent the past 40 days almost entirely within the four walls of my flat in Glasgow.

The highlight for me has been sitting at my window-seat every morning, watching the spring slowly arrive. No matter how alone I have felt, sitting there, I realise how much life is around me ... As I sit there, quietly, I see squirrels and hear the birds in the trees. I see the buds on the trees opening into leaves. I notice the subtle warming of the days. And for the first time in years, I take the time to just watch it all. It's a lot like meditation. But I think it's even deeper than that. The primary thing I think I get from that – in some strange way – is not feeling as alone.

Nature goes on without us.  
It surrounds us always.

Most people have never seen a hen harrier, but once witnessed it's rarely forgotten. Last spring, whilst in Orkney, I was lucky enough to spot one high above me, twirling and diving in the open sky. Utterly joyful. Completely free.

Each spring over the heathland of the UK, the endangered bird undertakes a dramatic courtship ritual known as sky dancing. The male acrobatically rises and plunges repeatedly to an almost invisible audience in order to entice an on-looking female to take him as her mate.

This piece is a memory of that experience, a longing for that freedom, and a meditation and prayer that one of the outcomes of this time will be a greater awareness of our relationship with nature.

**Programme note by Ailie Robertson,  
written during the COVID-19 pandemic**



2020

# Cànan nan Eun

## Trad

*Cànan nan Eun*, meaning ‘the language of the birds’, is a collection of rhymes, containing either witty lyrics or vocables (ie, spoken or sung sound). The rhythms and patterns of this Gaelic speech imitate those of the bird calls. A famous recording exists of tradition bearer Annie Johnston from Barra singing these songs, and her humour and characterisation of each bird brings to life that sense of connection felt with birds.

These rhymes were used to pass on ecological knowledge to children, maintaining Gaelic culture’s intimate relationship with the environment. Birds imitated include the smeòrach (song thrush) and the feannag (crow) among others.

**Programme note by Lisa Robertson**

# Doppelbelichtung

Carola Bauckholt

Bird calls have an incredible intensity – brought about by the syrinx of the bird's throat. They have no larynx at all, but rather several bronchial tubes with inner and outer membranes, the tympanic membranes, which are controlled by a complex muscle system. This allows the almost two-part appearing jumps and the rapid adornments to be created.

The violin is the only instrument that can produce this extreme height, but through a completely different process. That is precisely why it is so appealing to bring both worlds together, like a 'narrowing' in counterpoint.

My string quartet *Lichtung* from 2011 already works with photographically accurate transcriptions of bird calls. At the performance of the Cikada String Quartet at the Ultima Festival in 2013, I was completely fascinated by how Karin Hellqvist was able to imitate the finest nuances of the original sounds, eg, of a butcherbird with the violin.

These subtleties require different playing techniques and, above all, a lot of empathy and the finest hearing. Karin Hellqvist then commissioned me to write this solo piece.

Double exposure is a technique from analogue photography in which one image is exposed on top of the previous one. In this way, several levels of reality are captured in one picture.

As Olivier Messiaen said on April 3 1959 (translator Jan Reichow), 'In my dark hours, when I suddenly became aware of my own uselessness, when every musical idiom – classical, oriental, old, modern and ultra-modern – seemed to me only as an admirable, arduous experiment, without any final justification, what was left for me but this: to look for the true, lost face of the music somewhere outside, in the woods, in the fields, in the mountains or on the coast, among the birds.'

**Programme note by Carola Bauckholt**



2016

# Fiach

Linda Buckley

*Fiach* channels an almost gothic, nocturnal energy and is connected to the prominence of the raven (in Gaelic, 'fiach') in Celtic folklore. The raven would be buried with its wings outstretched to symbolise the connection between this world and the otherworld, the fiach being a connection between the two worlds. Some may associate the raven with death, spirits and darkness, but many believed it to be the bringer of light, truth and goodness.

**Programme note by Linda Buckley**



# Rainbow Dust in the Sky

(UK premiere)

Daniela Terranova

*Rainbow Dust in the Sky* offers a delicate, abstract echo of Harold Arlen's iconic *Over the Rainbow*, famously sung by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*. Rather than reinterpreting the song, the piece deconstructs it – dissolving its narrative and melodic clarity to suggest shifting, discontinuous outlines. The song remains only as a distant trace, resurfacing in the form of a recurring minor third that quietly evokes the lullaby-like atmosphere at the heart of the work. Through subtle gestures and a suspended, circular structure, the music unfolds as a drifting memory – fragile, elusive and quietly resonant.

**Programme note by Daniela Terranova**



# Field Guide (UK premiere)

Emily Doolittle

- 1 **Horned Lark**
- 2 **Sage Grouse**
- 3 **Western Meadowlark**

*Field Guide* was commissioned by the Fair Trade Chamber Music Society for their 2017 tour of the Pacific Northwest (a region of North America covering roughly Oregon, Washington, Idaho and British Columbia). As I was writing the piece, I was feeling inspired by the activism and resistance displayed by the US National Parks in the face of an increasingly hostile American political environment. Each movement is based on the song or call of a bird whose well-being is protected by the National Park system: the horned lark, the sage grouse and the Western meadowlark. I began by transcribing a number of songs from each species of bird, and then developed them following the musical ideas they sparked. In most cases, the melodic material, the durations and the structures are directly inspired by birdsong, while the harmonies point more towards the emotional affect these songs evoke.

**Programme note by Emily Doolittle**



2017

# The Wings of Spring

Bent Sørensen

*The Wings of Spring*, composed in 2010 and dedicated to cellist Jakob Kullberg, like some of the other pieces in the programme, contains birdsong-like patterns. However, in this case, these are realised using pizzicato technique. The combination of this with glissandi evokes the voices of birds while adding a pained, sigh-like feeling to the gestures. The haunting beauty of Sørensen's lyrical style allows us to feel both the optimism of spring and a darker melancholy simultaneously.

**Programme note by Lisa Robertson**



2010

# Pill iù Pill ill ill ill Eòghainn

Trad

*Pill iù Pill ill ill ill Eòghainn* is a Gaelic caoine, or 'keening', song, believed to imitate the evocative call of the redshank, a bird associated with mourning. A famous recording exists of piper and tradition bearer Calum Johnston from Barra. This was described by musicologist John Purser who said 'the dividing lines between bird-song, music and speech are impossible to determine'.

**Programme note by Lisa Robertson**

# To see the summer sky

Helen Grime

*To see the summer sky* for violin and viola (2009) falls into four movements. The first movement opens with the two instruments sounding almost as one, playing very high, glassy harmonics. Gradually, an expressive viola solo emerges, with both instruments descending to their lower ranges. A livelier quasi-scherzando solo for violin accompanied by viola pedal notes leads to a chorale-like passage, the violin at the top of its range, whilst the viola is at its lowest. The movement ends with the two instruments coming together once again on a unison B-flat and fades away almost as it begun, but this time in the husky lower registers.

The second movement is much faster and opens with a downward flurry for both instruments. A continuous pizzicato line for viola is interrupted by more violent passages in the violin. The two instruments come together in a dance-like passage before the roles are reversed. Finally, an ecstatic melody surfaces in the viola and is later

continued in the violin before the movement closes with the spiky figures of its opening, the two instruments ending in unison.

The third movement is the most delicate and still music of the piece. After a very tranquil opening, an expressive violin melody is accompanied by a gentle rocking figure in the viola. Tentative at first, intensity and speed gather until the violin reaches stratospheric heights. Both of the instruments play at the extremes of their registers before moving to common ground for a more lively textural passage. This is followed by a passionate reminder of the movement's opening, gradually fading away to nothing.

The piece ends with a *moto perpetuo*. The instruments begin by dovetailing a single line which develops into two strands before a more violent section appears, punctuated by strident double stops. Both instruments have slightly manic solo episodes before the movement quickly dies away in the single line of its opening.

## Programme note by Helen Grime



2009

# **fèath nan eun** (world premiere)

Lisa Robertson

The title *fèath nan eun* comes from a term meaning ‘the calm of the birds’, traditionally used to describe the time of year, starting around November, ‘when the birds are said to be unusually quiet’. Here, the term alludes to a quietening of the soundscape with the decline of bird populations.

This piece combines fragments of traditional Gaelic bird imitation songs in the vocal part with transcriptions of bird calls in the instrumental parts. The piece transitions through woodland, moorland and then seashore habitats. Throughout the piece, as bird populations are under threat, the bird sounds become sparser and less vibrant. The music becomes unusually quiet as the soundscape

is less dense and active. Interspersed with the bird songs are traditional Gaelic proverbs, which give an ominous warning about environmental destruction.

This work journeys through bird calls, Gaelic songs and proverbs representing a number of birds, some with lyrics and others with vocables. Proverbs include that of the wren and the eagle which is a warning against arrogance, and of the owl who is portrayed as a warning messenger, foretelling rain. The final bird, the redshank, was associated with mourning. The piece ends with all parts echoing a caoine or traditional keening song, imitating the redshank’s call as the bird sounds dwindle to nothing.

**Programme note by Lisa Robertson**



**2026**

# fèath nan eun

## Bird / Text

### 1 An smeòrach

### 2 An dreathan-donn

Do dhà shùil bheag bhiolach  
Gam choimhead tron toll,  
'S cha leig mi ort, cha leig mi ort.

Nuair a thilleas an dreathan  
Air ais dhan an tom,  
Bidh sinn aoibhneach ò,  
bidh sinn aoibhneach ò.

### 3 An dreathan-donn agus an iolaire

San fharpais, cò a dh'itealaich as  
àirde, cha bhuannaich faclan bragail.  
'Càit a bheil thu, dhreathainn-duinn?'  
ars' an iolaire le ardan.  
'Tha mis' an seo, os do chionn',  
ars an dreathan-donn air a dhruim.

### 4 An fheannag

### 5 An eun-fraoich

### 6 An guilbneach

### 7 An seumas-ruadh

### 8 An fhaoileag

## Bird / Translation

### 1 Song thrush

### 2 The wren

Your two sharp wee eyes  
watching me through the gap,  
and I can't reach you, and  
I can't reach you.  
When the wren returns  
back to the hill,  
we'll be happy oh,  
we'll be happy oh.

### 3 Proverb of the wren and the eagle

In the competition, who flew the  
highest, bragging words didn't win.  
'Where are you, wren?' said  
the eagle with arrogance.  
'I'm here above you'  
said the wren on its back.

### 4 The crow

### 5 The grouse

### 6 The curlew

### 7 The puffin

### 8 The seagull

## **9 A' chomhachag**

Nuair a tha comhachag ri bròn,  
thig tuitlean oirnn.

## **10 An uiseag**

Cò a chreach mo neadan?

## **11 Am buidheag**

Na creach mo nead,  
no thèid thu dhìth.

## **12 Am maor-cladaich**

## **9 Proverb of the owl**

When the owl is sad,  
a deluge will come on us.

## **10 The lark**

Who plundered my nestie?

## **11 The goldfinch**

Don't plunder my nest,  
or you'll meet your end.

## **12 The redshank**

# Lisa Robertson

composer / curator



© Julian Maunder

Lisa Robertson is a composer from the West Highlands of Scotland, interested in natural sounds, examining relationships between humans and nature, and highlighting environmental concerns. She is a Gaelic speaker and often focuses on Gaelic language and culture.

Robertson gained a PhD from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Her music has been performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, The Sixteen, EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble, Defunensemble and Red Note Ensemble, among others.

Her music has also been performed at festivals including Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Musica Nova Helsinki, Nordic Music Days, Sound Festival and on BBC Radio 3.

Robertson has been shortlisted four times for the Scottish Awards for New Music, was featured in *BBC Music Magazine*'s 'Rising Stars' column and was the classical artist in *The Scotsman*'s 'Ones to Watch in 2026' segment. She took part in the Royal Philharmonic Society Composers programme, is a Music Patron composer and her music is published by Composers Edition.

# Chihiro Ono

violin



© Kevin Leighton

A Japanese-born, London-based violinist and violist, Ono specialises in music spanning medieval, Baroque, Classical, contemporary, new and experimental, as well as folkloric, noise, improvisation and field recording.

As a violinist and violist, Ono has built a distinctly collaborative career, performing internationally with esteemed ensembles and composers, such as Apartment House, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, CHROMA, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, Royal Opera House, London Mozart Players, Octandre Ensemble, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, with classics and contemporary composers such

as Georges Aperghis, Peter Ablinger, Friedrich Cerha, Shasha Chen, Bushra El-Turk, Péter Eötvös, Brian Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, Brigitta Muntendorf, Steve Reich, Du Yun, Rufus Isabel Elliot and more, at established venues and festivals worldwide such as Aldeburgh Festival, Prussia Cove Open Chamber Music, Salzburg Festival, Wiener Festwochen, Sacrum+profanum, Donauensinger Musiktag, Darmstadt, ECLAT, E.v.Siemens Musikstiftung, Festival d'Automne a Paris, Barbican Hall, Cafe Oto, Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall, Schoenberg Centre, Berlin Philharmonic, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Philharmonic Koln, Teatro Coliseo, Suntory Hall, Takemitsu Hall, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Carnegie Hall and Zankel Hall.

# Anna Bastow

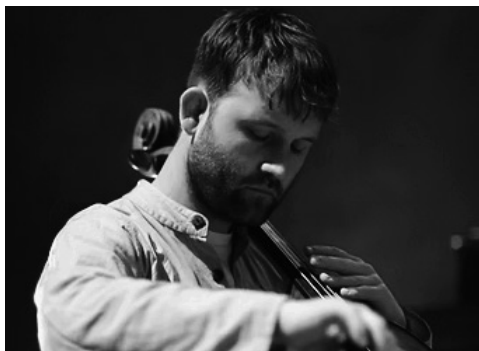
viola



Anna Bastow grew up in East Yorkshire, where she started learning the violin aged seven. She concurrently studied music at the University of Manchester and violin and viola at the Royal Northern College of Music. She then continued her viola studies with Predrag Katanic in Linz, Austria. Soon after graduating, she spent five years as Co-Principal Viola of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra before joining the LSO in 2011.

# Colin Alexander

cello



Colin Alexander is a cellist and composer working across a range of disciplines and traditions. While collaborating with artists such as Kit Downes, Héloïse Werner, Abel Selaocoe, Max Baillie, Alice Zawadzki, Sean Shibe and Misha Mullov-Abbado, Alexander also performs with a variety of ensembles such as 12 Ensemble, LSO Ensemble for composers, Phaedra Ensemble and United Strings of Europe.

Alongside his performing schedule, he has written new works for the London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Contemporary Orchestra, Contrechamps, The Mercury Quartet, Hyper Duo,

Le Nouvel Ensemble Contemporain and Bush Theatre, London. He features on a variety of recordings on Delphian Records, Nonclassical, Accidental Records and October House Records.

Recent projects have included a new electro-acoustic commission for Flamenco Dancer, live cello and electronics for Resolution Festival 2025, a world premiere at London's Wigmore Hall and a series of performances of his own solo cello suites – works described by Fiona Maddocks in *The Observer* as 'quixotic and otherworldly, and strongly recommended'.

# Mischa Macpherson

voice



© Elly Lucas

Winner of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award and MG Alba Scots Trad Music Award for Gaelic Singer of the Year, Macpherson is 'one of the most exciting and fully rounded talents to emerge from the Scottish scene in many a year' (BBC Radio 2). Having grown up immersed in the distinctive culture of the Outer Hebrides, she unearthed her love for music and Gaelic at a very early age, and it is these influences that the singer now presents with clarity and tenderness to audiences around the world.

Mischa has toured across Asia, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Scandinavia, Switzerland and the UK and performed to crowds as large as 20,000 (Fairport's Cropredy Convention).

Her music soared to the forefront of the UK's wider musical audience after live sessions on BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 3, and she has since made several TV performances, including with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. In 2023, she was chosen to represent the UK at the G20 Summit in India and sang in the Gaelic language for the invited global politicians in Varanasi, India. Highly regarded as a collaborator, Macpherson has also performed and worked alongside internationally acclaimed artists such as Carlos Núñez Muñoz (Galicia); Capercaillie (Scotland); Suraj and Chand Khan (Lahore, Pakistan); The Unusual Suspects of Celtic Colours (Canada); and Martyn Bennett's GRIT Orchestra.

# Sandy Leong

live projection and animation



Sandy Leong is a visual artist and illustrator, born in Macao and currently based in the UK. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2019 and Hong Kong Baptist University.

Her practice primarily explores drawing, water-based painting and poetry, while remaining open to experimenting with a range of media and approaches. She has collaborated with musicians and theatre practitioners to create experimental animations and live performances, and has also participated in community-based projects supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Her work has been shortlisted for the FAB Prize UK, the CA Competition and the Cheltenham Illustration Award.

# FUTURE CONCERTS

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Friday 18 September  
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

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12.30pm

**BBC RADIO 3 LUNCHTIME CONCERT**

## **Elizaveta Ivanova and Sanja Bizjak**

An exceptional programme of flute music from the last century, from dreamy Dohnányi, to mysterious Liebermann, to Prokofiev at his most spirited.

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Saturday 3 October  
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

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7pm

**JERWOOD COMPOSER+ SHOWCASE**

## **Euchar Gravina: Once upon a place**

Euchar Gravina returns to curate a contemporary chamber music event that explores memory through location.

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Friday 25 September  
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

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12.30pm

**LSO DISCOVERY**

## **Free Friday Lunchtime Concert**

Curious about instrumental music? Looking to make lunchtime musical? Try this bite-size, informal concert for solo piano.

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Thursday 5 November  
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

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12.30pm

**BBC RADIO 3 LUNCHTIME CONCERT**

## **Andreas Bartelid and Julien Quentin**

Cellist Andreas Brantelid and pianist Julien Quentin present a performance of Prokofiev's and Shostakovich's cello sonatas in this BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert.