The hauntingly eloquent ‘Sentimental Sarabande’ has a sombre theme that unfolds over a throbbing G in the cellos and bass, and the ‘Fratysissme Finale’ lives up to its name, with a memorably scurrying opening theme, a brisk development section, and a celebratory coda dashed off as quickly as the players can manage.

David Nettle

Martin Suckling (1981-) Chimes at Midnight (2013)

Postcard #3 - from the turning of the year

Jonathan Morton

Jonathan Morton is Artistic Director and Leader of the Scottish Ensemble and enjoys a varied career as a director, leader, soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. In 2012 he became Leader of the London Sinfonia after enjoying a longstanding relationship as a guest player. A champion of new and little-known music and a highly versatile performer, his appearances at numerous festivals and venues include Wigmore Hall, London; Edinburgh International Festival; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; and Kammermúsik Festival, Nuremberg. His eclectic and engaging programming style has seen him collaborate with and perform under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton.

The Ensemble has commissioned new works from composers such as John Taverner, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, and Luke Bedford amongst others in recent years, as well as working with guest artists such as trumpeter Alison Balsom, tenor Toby Spence, and cellist Pieter Wispelwey. Alongside performances across Scotland, the Ensemble presents an annual series of concerts at London’s Wigmore Hall and has appeared at BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International, City of London, Aldeburgh and St Magnus Festivals. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Belgium, Austria, Turkey, China and the USA.

Jon Waterfield

Ian Waterfield studied music at Girton College, Cambridge, followed by studies in piano and harpsichord at London’s Royal Academy of Music, with David Willison and John Toll. As principal harpsichordist with Paul McCreesh’s Gabrieli Players, she has played throughout Europe and contributed to many award-winning recordings; most recently ‘A New Venetian Coronation’, with the celebration of the ceremonial beauty of Giovanni Gabrieli’s instrumental and vocal music. She also plays harpsichord regularly with the Academy of Ancient Music, Classical Opera Company, The Sixteen, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Scottish Ensemble and Edinburgh’s own ‘Ludus Baroque’.

Scottish Ensemble

Re-defining the string orchestra, the Scottish Ensemble inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. As the UK’s only professional string orchestra, the Ensemble is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of 12 outstanding string players who perform together with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. As the UK’s only professional string orchestra, the Ensemble is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of 12 outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton. The Ensemble has commissioned new works from composers such as John Taverner, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, and Luke Bedford amongst others in recent years, as well as working with guest artists such as trumpeter Alison Balsom, tenor Toby Spence, and cellist Pieter Wispelwey. Alongside performances across Scotland, the Ensemble presents an annual series of concerts at London’s Wigmore Hall and has appeared at BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International, City of London, Aldeburgh and St Magnus Festivals. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Belgium, Austria, Turkey, China and the USA.

Ian Waterfield studied music at Girton College, Cambridge, followed by studies in piano and harpsichord at London’s Royal Academy of Music, with David Willison and John Toll. As principal harpsichordist with Paul McCreesh’s Gabrieli Players, she has played throughout Europe and contributed to many award-winning recordings; most recently ‘A New Venetian Coronation’, with the celebration of the ceremonial beauty of Giovanni Gabrieli’s instrumental and vocal music. She also plays harpsichord regularly with the Academy of Ancient Music, Classical Opera Company, The Sixteen, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Scottish Ensemble and Edinburgh’s own ‘Ludus Baroque’.

Scottish Ensemble

Re-defining the string orchestra, the Scottish Ensemble inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. As the UK’s only professional string orchestra, the Ensemble is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of 12 outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton. The Ensemble has commissioned new works from composers such as John Taverner, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, and Luke Bedford amongst others in recent years, as well as working with guest artists such as trumpeter Alison Balsom, tenor Toby Spence, and cellist Pieter Wispelwey. Alongside performances across Scotland, the Ensemble presents an annual series of concerts at London’s Wigmore Hall and has appeared at BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International, City of London, Aldeburgh and St Magnus Festivals. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Belgium, Austria, Turkey, China and the USA.

Jan Waterfield

Ian Waterfield studied music at Girton College, Cambridge, followed by studies in piano and harpsichord at London’s Royal Academy of Music, with David Willison and John Toll. As principal harpsichordist with Paul McCreesh’s Gabrieli Players, she has played throughout Europe and contributed to many award-winning recordings; most recently ‘A New Venetian Coronation’, with the celebration of the ceremonial beauty of Giovanni Gabrieli’s instrumental and vocal music. She also plays harpsichord regularly with the Academy of Ancient Music, Classical Opera Company, The Sixteen, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Scottish Ensemble and Edinburgh’s own ‘Ludus Baroque’.

Scottish Ensemble

Re-defining the string orchestra, the Scottish Ensemble inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. As the UK’s only professional string orchestra, the Ensemble is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of 12 outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton. The Ensemble has commissioned new works from composers such as John Taverner, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, and Luke Bedford amongst others in recent years, as well as working with guest artists such as trumpeter Alison Balsom, tenor Toby Spence, and cellist Pieter Wispelwey. Alongside performances across Scotland, the Ensemble presents an annual series of concerts at London’s Wigmore Hall and has appeared at BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International, City of London, Aldeburgh and St Magnus Festivals. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Belgium, Austria, Turkey, China and the USA.
In an evening devoted both to infernally catchy tunes – let’s call them earworms – and to links with the past, it’s only fitting that the first piece should have both. ‘La Follia’ is one of the oldest earworms around, first emerging at the end of the 15th century in Italian music. The set was probably written for performance at the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian school for orphaned and illegitimate girls where Vivaldi taught from 1703 to 1725. This tenth concerto is scored for the unusual combination of four solo violins, solo cello, strings and continuo, and is in three short movements. The opening Allegro begins with a striking dialogue between the soloists rather than with the full orchestra. An extraordinary Larghetto passage in the middle of the slow movement calls upon the four violin soloists to use four contrasting arpeggio techniques, creating a glinting texture that calls to mind ‘Winter’ from The Four Seasons, and a dancing, triple-time theme winds its way through the final Allegro.

The Polish composer Henryk Górecki established his international reputation in the early 1990s, when a recording of his Third Symphony brought him long before his Third Symphony brought him international acclaim, Henryk Górecki enjoyed a career of compositions that swept art and music in the first half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, his Concerto for violin and string orchestra (Concerto Accademico) (1925) marked an abrupt turning point. What the Polish avant-garde, with a flamboyantly virtuosic work, with quiet nobility from the bubbling texture. The mysterious first movement nestle among Bach-style counterpoint, the introspective central section has an earworm tune, much-loved and known by all, which emerges with quiet nobility from the bustling texture.

The Polish composer Henryk Górecki established his international reputation in the early 1990s, when a recording of his slow, maudlin Third Symphony of 1976 became a worldwide sensation. His snappy, sparkling Harpsichord Concerto, written four years later and cast in two fast, vigorous movements, is a world away from the serious Symphony, but, like it, manages to bring maximum emotional effect from the most minimal means. In the case of the Concerto, those means are constant movement, unapologetic repetition, ostinato melodies and unstoppable motoric rhythms. The piece’s iconoclastic tone confounded critics at its premiere, but the composer signalled that we perhaps shouldn’t take the work too seriously, even referring to it as a ‘prank’. In the first movement, Górecki seems to be looking back to Baroque toccata forms, with a slow-moving unison string melody accompanied by ceaseless, fast-moving harpsichord ornamentation, each new phrase heralded by a sweeping flourish from the soloist.

In the dance-like second movement, which follows without a pause, a jaunty melody is passed back and forth between harpsichord and strings in incessant quavers and a bright D major tonality, contrasting with far more dissonant harmonies later on.

Concerto for violin and string orchestra (Concerto Accademico) (1925)
1 Allegro pesante 2 Adagio 3 Presto

Vaughan Williams might not be the first composer you’d associate with the clean-cut neo-classicism that swept art and music in the first half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, his Concerto for violin and string orchestra (1934) was a critical and commercial success. The set was probably written for performance at the St Paul’s School, Hammersmith, where he had settled in 1714. After a solemn movement that opens with a D minor violin solo, the rest of the strings are joined by violins in a simple melody that suggests, on folk music often centuries old. The melancholy first movement has a haunting atmosphere, led by viols in a simple melody that gets louder and more confident at each of its four repetitions. The dance-like second movement accompanies a scurrying violin melody with sprightly chords in the rest of the strings. The introspective third movement is based on a 16th-century Polish wedding song. This ancient-sounding music is interrupted twice, though, by a dense, dissonant counterpoint that combines in a single note. The mysterious first movement nestle among Bach-style counterpoint, the introspective central section has an earworm tune, much-loved and known by all, which emerges with quiet nobility from the bustling texture.

Aria 2 Menuetto I 3 Menuetto II

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (1933-2010)

1 Allegro molto –
2 Largo – Larghetto
3 Allegro

Concerto grosso in B minor op.3 no.10 for four violins, cello and strings (from L’Estro armonico) (1711)
1 Allegro 2 Largo – Larghetto 3 Allegro

L’Estro armonico (usually translated as ‘Harmonic Fancy’) was Vivaldi’s first published set of concertos, and with its daring orchestrations, striking textures and propulsive rhythms, it made the composer’s name throughout Europe. Demand was so high that following its 1711 publication in Amsterdam, it was reprinted in London and Paris, and even the great J.S. Bach reworked the B minor work heard tonight as a concerto for four harpsichords and strings.

The set was probably written for performance at the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian school for orphaned and illegitimate girls where Vivaldi taught from 1703 to 1725. This tenth concerto is scored for the unusual combination of four solo violins, solo cello, strings and continuo, and is in three short movements. The opening Allegro begins with a striking dialogue between the soloists rather than with the full orchestra. An extraordinary Larghetto passage in the middle of the slow movement calls upon the four violin soloists to use four contrasting arpeggio techniques, creating a glinting texture that calls to mind ‘Winter’ from The Four Seasons, and a dancing, triple-time theme winds its way through the final Allegro.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Simple Symphony (1934)
4 Frolicsome Finale

Britten, too, looked back to the past in his Simple Symphony, but it wasn’t to music from centuries earlier. Instead, it was to his own childhood compositions, written when he was aged 9 to 12. He finished the Simple Symphony in the year he completed his studies at London’s Royal College of Music, but by that time he had already been composing for an astonishing 16 years, amassing a remarkable number of piano pieces, songs, chamber works and even orchestral pieces. This richly imaginative score combines the innocence of childhood with the sophistication of the young adult in music of far more emotional depth and inventiveness than its rather flippant movement titles might suggest.

The ‘Boisterous Bourrée’ is a brisk, contrapuntal allegro based on two themes, one spiky, the other more lyrical and folk-like. The ‘Playful Pizzicato’ tests its players’ plucking abilities with witty interlocking phrases passed back and forth between them, and its folkly central section has an earworm whose halting melody soon lodges itself in the brain.

J.S. Bach reworked the B minor work heard tonight as a concerto for four harpsichords and strings.

The set was probably written for performance at the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian school for orphaned and illegitimate girls where Vivaldi taught from 1703 to 1725. This tenth concerto is scored for the unusual combination of four solo violins, solo cello, strings and continuo, and is in three short movements. The opening Allegro begins with a striking dialogue between the soloists rather than with the full orchestra. An extraordinary Larghetto passage in the middle of the slow movement calls upon the four violin soloists to use four contrasting arpeggio techniques, creating a glinting texture that calls to mind ‘Winter’ from The Four Seasons, and a dancing, triple-time theme winds its way through the final Allegro.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Simple Symphony (1934)
4 Frolicsome Finale

Britten, too, looked back to the past in his Simple Symphony, but it wasn’t to music from centuries earlier. Instead, it was to his own childhood compositions, written when he was aged 9 to 12. He finished the Simple Symphony in the year he completed his studies at London’s Royal College of Music, but by that time he had already been composing for an astonishing 16 years, amassing a remarkable number of piano pieces, songs, chamber works and even orchestral pieces. This richly imaginative score combines the innocence of childhood with the sophistication of the young adult in music of far more emotional depth and inventiveness than its rather flippant movement titles might suggest.

The ‘Boisterous Bourrée’ is a brisk, contrapuntal allegro based on two themes, one spiky, the other more lyrical and folk-like. The ‘Playful Pizzicato’ tests its players’ plucking abilities with witty interlocking phrases passed back and forth between them, and its folkly central section has an earworm whose halting melody soon lodges itself in the brain.

J.S. Bach reworked the B minor work heard tonight as a concerto for four harpsichords and strings.

The set was probably written for performance at the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian school for orphaned and illegitimate girls where Vivaldi taught from 1703 to 1725. This tenth concerto is scored for the unusual combination of four solo violins, solo cello, strings and continuo, and is in three short movements. The opening Allegro begins with a striking dialogue between the soloists rather than with the full orchestra. An extraordinary Larghetto passage in the middle of the slow movement calls upon the four violin soloists to use four contrasting arpeggio techniques, creating a glinting texture that calls to mind ‘Winter’ from The Four Seasons, and a dancing, triple-time theme winds its way through the final Allegro.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Simple Symphony (1934)
4 Frolicsome Finale

Britten, too, looked back to the past in his Simple Symphony, but it wasn’t to music from centuries earlier. Instead, it was to his own childhood compositions, written when he was aged 9 to 12. He finished the Simple Symphony in the year he completed his studies at London’s Royal College of Music, but by that time he had already been composing for an astonishing 16 years, amassing a remarkable number of piano pieces, songs, chamber works and even orchestral pieces. This richly imaginative score combines the innocence of childhood with the sophistication of the young adult in music of far more emotional depth and inventiveness than its rather flippant movement titles might suggest.

The ‘Boisterous Bourrée’ is a brisk, contrapuntal allegro based on two themes, one spiky, the other more lyrical and folk-like. The ‘Playful Pizzicato’ tests its players’ plucking abilities with witty interlocking phrases passed back and forth between them, and its folkly central section has an earworm whose halting melody soon lodges itself in the brain.