



STRING SOCIETY PRESENTS:

FOLK AROUND THE WORLD

FRIDAY 20TH MARCH 2026

8:00PM

PICTURE GALLERY

ROYAL HOLLOWAY,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



CONCERT PROGRAMME

YASUSHI AKUTAGAWA

Triptyque for String Orchestra, *Movement I*

JOSHUA WEN

The Cicada on the Eighth Day

SULKHAN TSINTSADZE

String Quartet No.2, *Movement I*

ANTONIN DVORAK

Piano Quintet No. 2, *Movement I*

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Ancient Airs and Dances, *Movements I & III*

- INTERVAL -

TAKASHI YOSHIMATU

And Birds Are Still...

FRANZ DOPPLER

Nocturne in A Minor

KELLY TANG

3 Folk Dances, *Movements I & II*

TRAD. ARR. HANNAH LAM

Danish String Quartet Medley

The background of the page is a collage of various abstract and figurative paintings. At the top, there's a painting of two figures in a landscape. To the left, a vertical strip shows a figure in a red garment. On the right, a painting depicts a figure in a blue and white outfit. The bottom section features a painting of a figure in a white garment, and another on the far left shows a figure in a red garment. The central text is set against a white background.

PERFORMERS

STRING ORCHESTRA

Violin

Phedra Low
Hannah Lam
Nicole Yuen
Lily Thompson
Livia Domaingue
Maisie Pearce
Paul Kam
Conrad Ho
Joseph McCarthy
Catherine McAlpine
Elodie Fifield
Solveiga Urbanaviciute
Mako Uemura
Terry Chen
Jacob Keet

Viola

Harry Aldridge
Isobel Wroe
Poppy Shingler
Angel Kasindi

Cello

Evelyn Pong
Claudia Buchanan
Kian Jan-Dickens
Niamh Sherwood
Bella Hughes
Jasmine Akibo-Betts

Double Bass

Owen Morgan

Piano

Jason Fan
Bernadette Chin

CONDUCTORS

Hannah Lam
Conrad Ho



YASUSHI AKUTAGAWA

Triptyque for String Orchestra

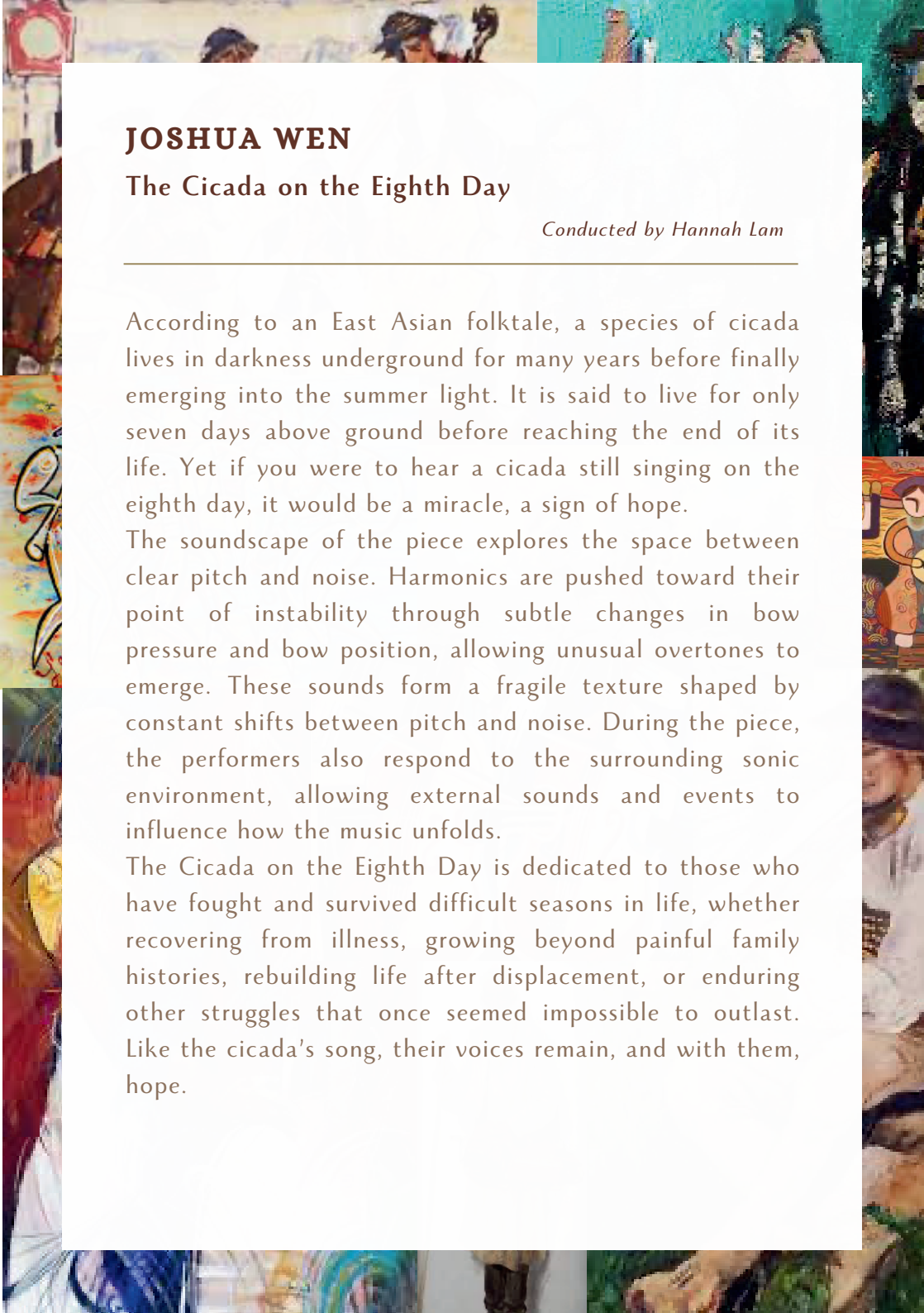
I. Allegro

Conducted by Conrad Ho

Yasushi Akutagawa's *Triptyque* for string orchestra was composed in 1953 on a commission from the Austrian conductor Kurt Woess. Although the work unfolds in three distinct movements, Akutagawa binds them closely together through the frequent return of the opening rhythmic figure—a propulsive motif that acts as the work's structural and expressive anchor. The title itself pays homage to Polish composer Alexandre Tansman, whose own *Triptyque* (1930) inspired Akutagawa both in name and in the idea of a triadic musical design.

The first movement bursts into life with the driving rhythmic cell that permeates the entire texture. Its energy is vibrant and unrelenting, creating a sense of forward motion that shapes the movement's character. Against this rhythmic backdrop, Akutagawa layers bold string writing, sharp contrasts, and a clarity of gesture that reflects his admiration for Stravinsky and the neoclassical Russian school.

Akutagawa became one of the most prominent Japanese composers of the post-war generation, aiming to foster a new musical culture. Deeply influenced by Russian musical aesthetics, he absorbed the styles of Shostakovich and Khachaturian and this influence is audible in *Triptyque's* rhythmic vitality and bright orchestral colours.



JOSHUA WEN

The Cicada on the Eighth Day

Conducted by Hannah Lam

According to an East Asian folktale, a species of cicada lives in darkness underground for many years before finally emerging into the summer light. It is said to live for only seven days above ground before reaching the end of its life. Yet if you were to hear a cicada still singing on the eighth day, it would be a miracle, a sign of hope.

The soundscape of the piece explores the space between clear pitch and noise. Harmonics are pushed toward their point of instability through subtle changes in bow pressure and bow position, allowing unusual overtones to emerge. These sounds form a fragile texture shaped by constant shifts between pitch and noise. During the piece, the performers also respond to the surrounding sonic environment, allowing external sounds and events to influence how the music unfolds.

The Cicada on the Eighth Day is dedicated to those who have fought and survived difficult seasons in life, whether recovering from illness, growing beyond painful family histories, rebuilding life after displacement, or enduring other struggles that once seemed impossible to outlast. Like the cicada's song, their voices remain, and with them, hope.



SULKHAN TSINTSADZE

String Quartet No. 2, *Movement I*

Violin 1: Phedra Low

Violin 2: Lily Thompson

Viola: Izzy Wroe

Cello: Claudia Buchanan



ANTONIN DVORAK

Piano Quintet No. 2, *Movement I*

Violin 1: Jacob Keet

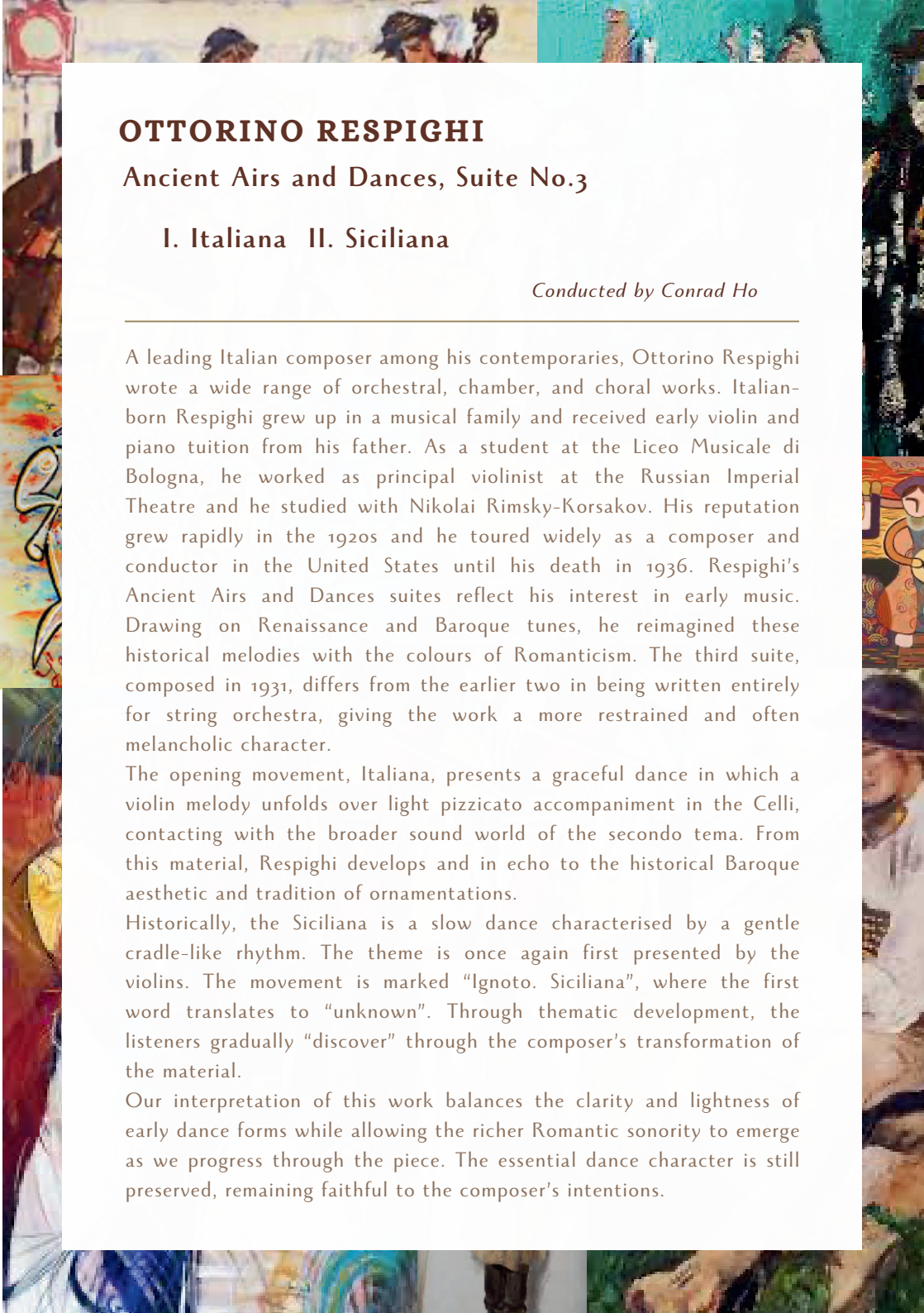
Violin 2: Terry Chen

Viola: Maisie Pearce

Cello: Evelyn Pong

Piano: Paul Kam





OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No.3

I. Italiana II. Siciliana

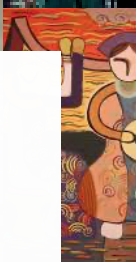
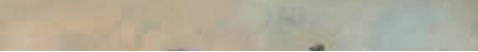
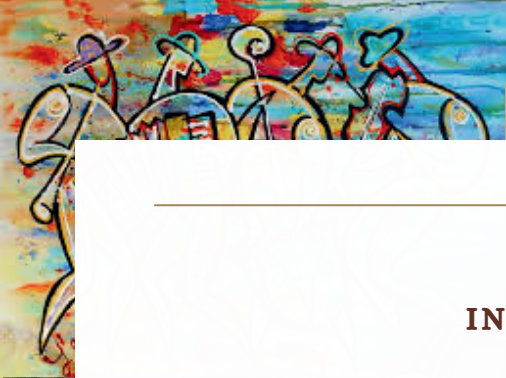
Conducted by Conrad Ho

A leading Italian composer among his contemporaries, Ottorino Respighi wrote a wide range of orchestral, chamber, and choral works. Italian-born Respighi grew up in a musical family and received early violin and piano tuition from his father. As a student at the Liceo Musicale di Bologna, he worked as principal violinist at the Russian Imperial Theatre and he studied with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. His reputation grew rapidly in the 1920s and he toured widely as a composer and conductor in the United States until his death in 1936. Respighi's Ancient Airs and Dances suites reflect his interest in early music. Drawing on Renaissance and Baroque tunes, he reimagined these historical melodies with the colours of Romanticism. The third suite, composed in 1931, differs from the earlier two in being written entirely for string orchestra, giving the work a more restrained and often melancholic character.

The opening movement, Italiana, presents a graceful dance in which a violin melody unfolds over light pizzicato accompaniment in the Celli, contacting with the broader sound world of the secondo tema. From this material, Respighi develops and in echo to the historical Baroque aesthetic and tradition of ornamentations.

Historically, the Siciliana is a slow dance characterised by a gentle cradle-like rhythm. The theme is once again first presented by the violins. The movement is marked "Ignoto. Siciliana", where the first word translates to "unknown". Through thematic development, the listeners gradually "discover" through the composer's transformation of the material.

Our interpretation of this work balances the clarity and lightness of early dance forms while allowing the richer Romantic sonority to emerge as we progress through the piece. The essential dance character is still preserved, remaining faithful to the composer's intentions.



INTERVAL





TAKASHI YOSHIMATU

And the Birds Are Still...

Conducted by Hannah Lam

And the birds are still... draws on the deep cultural resonance birds hold within Japanese tradition, where they are often regarded as messengers between the earthly and the divine. Yoshimatsu channels this symbolism into a sound-world of quiet radiance, evoking a moment of collective mourning in nature: a flock gathered around a fallen companion.

Yoshimatsu's writing amplifies this imagery through delicate textures and finely layered sonorities. Multiple divisi lines allow the ensemble to shimmer with a sense of weightless suspension, as though the music itself were hovering above the ground, hesitant to disturb the silence it inhabits. Each line drifts independently yet remains part of a single organism.

Against this soft, luminous backdrop, solo lines emerge through the texture. They function almost as individual birds breaking from the flock - calls that rise and fade within the collective stillness. The interplay between these solitary voices and the gently shifting divisi textures gives the piece its emotional depth: intimate yet spacious and serene.

What results is a transcendental, folkloric ode to the stillness of the afterlife. The music never forces its narrative; instead, it invites the listener into a moment of contemplation, where time seems to slow and the boundary between the natural and the spiritual becomes permeable. In its restraint and tenderness, And the birds are still... offers a quiet but deeply felt reflection on the dignity of loss and the luminous calm that follows.

An abstract painting with various colors and figures, including a person in a blue hat and a person in a white shirt, set against a background of green and blue.

FRANZ DOPPELR

Nocturne in A minor

Flute: Conrad Ho

Violin: Nicole Yuen

Cello: Evelyn Pong

Piano: Jason Fan

KELLY TANG

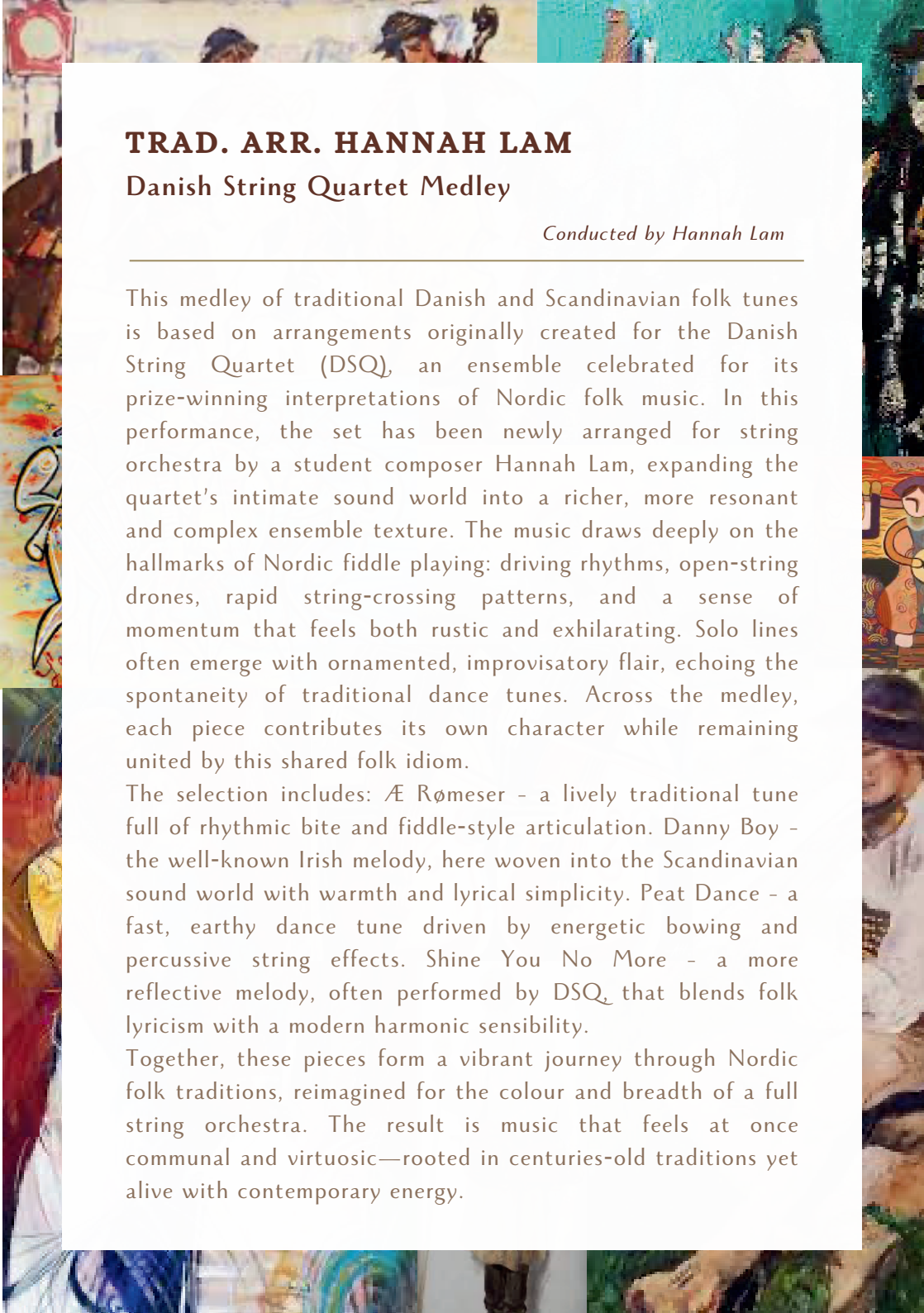
3 Folk Dances, *Movements I & II*

Violin 1: Mako Uemara

Violin 2: Maisie Pearce

Viola: Poppy Shingler

Piano: Bernadette Chin



TRAD. ARR. HANNAH LAM

Danish String Quartet Medley

Conducted by Hannah Lam

This medley of traditional Danish and Scandinavian folk tunes is based on arrangements originally created for the Danish String Quartet (DSQ), an ensemble celebrated for its prize-winning interpretations of Nordic folk music. In this performance, the set has been newly arranged for string orchestra by a student composer Hannah Lam, expanding the quartet's intimate sound world into a richer, more resonant and complex ensemble texture. The music draws deeply on the hallmarks of Nordic fiddle playing: driving rhythms, open-string drones, rapid string-crossing patterns, and a sense of momentum that feels both rustic and exhilarating. Solo lines often emerge with ornamented, improvisatory flair, echoing the spontaneity of traditional dance tunes. Across the medley, each piece contributes its own character while remaining united by this shared folk idiom.

The selection includes: *Æ Rømeser* - a lively traditional tune full of rhythmic bite and fiddle-style articulation. *Danny Boy* - the well-known Irish melody, here woven into the Scandinavian sound world with warmth and lyrical simplicity. *Peat Dance* - a fast, earthy dance tune driven by energetic bowing and percussive string effects. *Shine You No More* - a more reflective melody, often performed by DSQ, that blends folk lyricism with a modern harmonic sensibility.

Together, these pieces form a vibrant journey through Nordic folk traditions, reimagined for the colour and breadth of a full string orchestra. The result is music that feels at once communal and virtuosic—rooted in centuries-old traditions yet alive with contemporary energy.

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

JOSHUA WEN



Joshua Wen is a music composer, conductor, and educator. Joshua grew up in Guangzhou, China, and later pursued his Bachelor's degree in Music from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago where he studied composition and conducting under Dr. Jae Hyeok Jang and Dr. Yongmin Kim. Joshua recently earned his Master's degree in Music Composition with distinction from Royal Holloway University.

Joshua's creative evolution is largely guided by expressive storytelling, diverse cultural influences, and complex soundscapes. His compositions include orchestral, ensemble, chamber, solo, and choral works, and have been performed, broadcast, and recorded worldwide. His recent project The Emoji Suites, in collaboration with Moody Campus Orchestra, is an interdisciplinary work with multimedia elements for advanced music education that aims to inspire young minds to creativity in music.

Joshua has conducted choral, instrumental, and combined ensemble works around the world, from EnZhu children's choir in Guangzhou, China to Moody Campus Orchestra and the Rise, Heart musical recital in Chicago. Recent guest conducting includes Heathside Walton-on-Thames String Orchestra and WBC Orchestra of Winnetka. Joshua brings joyful and energetic influence to the performances through engaging and expressive conducting.

CONDUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

HANNAH LAM



Hannah Lam is a composer and conductor. She studied composition and piano at the Junior Royal Academy of Music and is currently pursuing a joint degree in Music and Mathematics. She was chosen as a Ludlow Song Festival Young Composer in 2024, receiving mentorship from Julian Philips and subsequently was awarded a commission for the 2025 festival.

As a New Music Residency Composer with Music for Youth, Hannah composed and arranged for a large massed orchestra and choir, conducting the premiere at the Royal Albert Hall in 2024.

Hannah was awarded the prestigious ORA Singers Young Composer Prize in 2023 and was a finalist in the International Young Percussion Composer Competition. Her compositions have been performed at renowned festivals, including the Ludlow English Song Weekend, Cambridge Summer Festival and the Three Choirs Festival. She has also received mentorship from esteemed composers such as Gareth Moorcraft, Alexander Campkin, Dr Ewan Campbell, Diederik Glorieux and Annelies Van Parys.

CONDUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

CONRAD HO



Conrad is a 2nd year undergraduate reading Theoretical Physics here at Royal Holloway. Alongside their academic pursuits, Conrad is also a flautist and violinist, with a primary focus on conducting.

They previously studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Junior Department, receiving flute tuition from Ms. Liz Wrighton, violin tuition from Mr. Sam Mason, and conducting tuition under Ms. Margarita Mikhailova. During this time, Conrad benefited from mentorship by Mr. Jeff Snowdon and Ms. Monica Leiher, and gained early ensemble leadership experience through directing student groups.

At Royal Holloway, Conrad previously served as Junior Assistant Conductor of the Royal Holloway Symphony Orchestra under Ms. Rebecca Miller (Director of Orchestras). They are currently conductor for both the Royal Holloway String Society and the newly established, temporary named, Gustav Mahler Philharmonie where they also serve as the overall musical director.

THANK YOU!

COMMITTEE

General Manager - *Maisie Pearce*

Musical Director - *Hannah Lam*

Librarians - *Phedra Low + Lily Thompson*

Socials Secretary - *Evelyn Pong*

Events Officers - *Izzy Wroe + Kian Jan-Dickens*

Treasurer - *Nicole Yuen*

Stage Team - *Joseph McCarthy + Angel Kasindi + Elodie Fifield*

THANKS!

Programme notes - *Hannah Lam + Maisie Pearce*

+ *Conrad Ho + Joshua Wen*

Programme design - *Maisie Pearce*

Do follow us on instagram, @rhstringsociety for more updates on our future concerts!