EVENT PROGRAMME

YCAT PRESENTS... EWAN MILLER
INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES 2026-27

Thursday, 8 October 2026, 8:00pm
Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Ewan Miller oboe

There will not be an interval during this evening's event.
Estimated event finish time: 9.15pm

Please no flash photography or visual/audio recording throughout the event.
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EVENT PROGRAMME

WHAT WILL WE HEAR?

Thea Musgrave (b. 1928)
Dawn

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)
Six Metamorphoses after Ovid, Op. 49

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788)
Flute Sonata in A minor, Wq. 128, I. Poco adagio

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Flute Partita in A minor, BWV 1013, arr. for oboe

Thea Musgrave (b. 1928)
Niobe

Emma-Ruth Richards (b. 1982)
Soul Cry

Anne Cawrse (b. 1978)
'Callisto' from *Carmen Perpetuum*

Jeffrey Agrell (b. 1948)
Blues for D.D.

You can also view our event programmes online. Please ask at Box Office for further information.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Our programme notes are written by a team of student volunteers as part of the Concert Management & Artist Personnel Programme, unless otherwise stated.

THEA MUSGRAVE (B. 1928)

Dawn

Thea Musgrave has composed many notable pieces in the realms of opera, chamber and orchestral music. Born in 1928 in the city of Edinburgh, Musgrave studied music at the University of Edinburgh, before spending 4 years at Conservatoire de Paris taught by Nadia Boulanger. She later became an educator herself, based mostly at Queen's College, City University of New York, but also as a guest professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her presence in both European and American music scenes has greatly influenced her works, with this perspective adding to the pieces' adventurous use of space.

Musgrave's music is often thought of as outgoing. Described as being known for her rich and powerful understanding of musical language, her pieces often include a strong sense of narrative and situational presence. Furthermore, she has often included elements of physicalising in her music; in one particularly bold performance of her clarinet concerto, the soloist moved around the orchestra whilst playing, yielding unique results in terms of the placement of sound amongst the ensemble. These dramatic elements of her compositions are one of the many reasons she is a vital figure in the contemporary music scene.

Premiering in King's Palace, London, 'Dawn' was written in 2012 for celebrated oboist Nicholas Daniel; the two of them have collaborated on multiple pieces across their respective careers. The piece is a reflection of the dawn breaking, with the swift, agile, rising passages reflecting the rise of the sun. Dawn progresses further throughout the piece as the phrases continue to elevate.

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)
Six Metamorphoses after Ovid, Op. 49

Benjamin Britten was a formidable presence in the world of English classical music. Britten is described by ENO as having changed the face of the British opera scene, as well as being responsible for composing many of the most loved choral works of this century. Born into a middle-class family in Lowestoft, England, his interest in music was nurtured by his music-loving parents, and he showed musical talent from a very young age. This led to him studying composition, guided by composer Frank Bridge, and eventually a scholarship at the Royal College of Music, where he studied under celebrated composers John Ireland and Ralph Vaughan Williams. He has won many awards across his career, including multiple GRAMMY awards, an Order of Merit in 1965, and a knighthood in 1953.

This piece was composed in 1951 with the work being completed for that year's Aldeburgh Festival in Suffolk. Written for solo oboe, the instrument depicts and emphasises the piece's sense of melancholy. Moreover, the use of the oboe in this work is said to have furthered the expressive potential of the oboe, influencing many later oboe works.

This piece is a suite of "miniature portraits" depicting the characters and stories told in Ovid's poem Metamorphoses. Britten was highly regarded for his character work within his music, with his pieces being known for sharing common themes around depicting outsiders or misfits facing corruption or temptation; he was described as having a flair for creating psychologically convincing characters. This piece expertly captures many levels of metamorphosis, with a strong sense of transformation being shown as it progresses, especially in the final sections.

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH (1714–1788)

Flute Sonata in A minor, Wq. 128,

I. Poco adagio

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was the second surviving son of J. S. Bach. Born in 1714, he was one of four of J. S. Bach's children to become a professional musician; this was largely influenced by guidance and training from his father. Composing across both the Baroque and Classical eras, his compositions feature approximately 30 sonatas and pieces, which were primarily written for the harpsichord and clavichord.

This piece was written in 1740 whilst Bach was employed by the crown prince of Prussia, Frederick II – he eventually became a member of the royal orchestra from this post when Frederick succeeded the throne in 1740. It is his slowest sonata, perhaps reflecting his contrasting, more sensitive compositional voice when compared to the rococo style of that era. The emotive, evocative piece was originally written for solo flute, never featuring a basso continuo or any other accompaniment. The oboe provides a fresh take on the sonata, with potential for new directions for emotional colour and nuance.

C. P. E. Bach's legacy is often defined by the very notable composers his style paved the way for. Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and Mozart are all known to have been influenced by his works, with Mozart once stating in reference to Bach that "he is the father, we are the children."

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Flute Partita in A minor, BWV 1013, arr. for oboe

Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the most notable and established names of the Baroque era. He was born in Eisenach, Germany in 1685, and became a composer working across a variety of genres and ensemble types, as well as a remarkable performer, with experience as an organist, harpsichordist, violist and violinist. His

work began in a choral setting, when he received a choral scholarship at St Michael's School in 1699, and later became the organist at St. Boniface's Church in Arnstadt.

Bach's choral background had a clear effect on his compositional style, especially his approach to harmony.This is reflected in the construction of this piece, despite it being written for a solo instrument. Originally meant for the flute, this partita is highly virtuosic, featuring many complicated runs, as well as stunning, more emotive passages. It remains a challenging piece in the context of the contemporary music scene. The work features four movements, each of which is named after a form of dance: The first is the Allemande, featuring layers of serious and heavy emotive material. The next movement is Corrente, a lighter dance section. This is followed by the more balanced and tender Sarabande movement, with the piece then concluded on a lighter note, by the Bourée Anglaise.

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

THEA MUSGRAVE (B. 1928)

Niobe

This is Thea Musgrave's second piece on the programme, illustrating her passion for oboe music and distinguished position within the compositional scene; her works have been played in numerous festivals and concert halls across the world. In addition to this, she has received a number of illustrious awards for her work, including two Guggenheim Fellowships and the Ivors Classical Music Award in 2018, as well as The Queen's Medal for Music and a CBE on The Queen's New Year's Honour List in 2002. Musgrave often discusses her position as a 'woman composer' and how much focus is put on that when she is discussed, to which she has said "Yes I am a woman; and I am a composer. But rarely at the same time."

Written in 1987, this piece was commissioned by the Park Lane Group for oboist Ian Hardwick and premiered in the London Purcell Room in 1988 – Janet Larson also featured in this piece on the flute.

The work is inspired by Greek Mythology, named after Niobe, the wife of the King of Thebes and daughter of Tantalus. She angered the gods Artemis and Apollo through boasting about her many children, causing Apollo to kill her sons and Artemis to kill her daughters. Taking pity on her severe grief, The Gods changed Niobe into a rock, and she continued to grieve in this form. The oboe is used mournfully in this piece, depicting her mourning her children; the accompanying tape and gong support this grief by connoting distant voices and tolling bells.

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

EMMA-RUTH RICHARDS (B. 1985)

Soul Cry

de Stâmparare roughly translates from Romanian into English as ‘soul cry’. The piece is based on an anonymous Romanian folk song called Hora Spoitorilor; the theme can be heard in full right at the end of the piece. The piece reflects some of the characteristics of the doina; a freerhythm, highly melismatic, ornamented tune; peasant doinas are mostly vocal and often include interjections such as choked sobbing effects and are often sung in solitude with melancholic themes. Doinas have an important psychological action to ‘ease one’s soul’ (*de Stâmpărare*) or as an invocation to God to help ease pain.

In writing this piece I was particularly interested in how I could use a single line to create space through its gestural activity and in doing so, give the impression of straining, crying out towards something. The sustained notes develop out of gestural activity and in the higher register of the oboe have a quasi-vocal, human sonority similar to that of a soprano voice or trumpet in the clarino register. When listening to these sustained tones on the oboe they seem to have a visceral presence and in order to emphasise this, I have used pitch-bending to enrich the poignancy of this ‘imperfect’, human quality: a cry from the soul.

ANNE CAWRSE (B. 1978)

‘Callisto’ from Carmen Perpetuum

Anna Cawrse, born in 1978, is an Australian composer with works that span across solo, chamber, orchestral and choral music. Growing up in Freeling, South Australia, she moved to Adelaide and completed her PhD in 2008 at the Elder Conservatorium of Music; she is now a lecturer there, as well as a private composition tutor as part of both the ASME Young Composers’ Programme, and the Australian Youth Orchestra’s Composition Programme. Cawrse is also the most-commissioned composer of the Adelaide Chamber Singers.

Her works are known for combining lyrical melodies with both dexterous, elaborate rhythms and rich, vivid harmonic patterns. This piece is no different; commissioned by Celia Craig in 2023 for St. Peter’s Cathedral in Adelaide, the work is split into six solos, and has been described as a companion to Britten’s Metamorphosis. Callisto is the fourth movement of the piece, named after the figure in Greek Mythology, and also known for her representation within the constellation Ursa Major. Callisto was a nymph and huntress that was turned into a bear — her son then grew up and became a hunter, then ending up encountering her in the woods and attempting to kill her. Using this myth as source material for her composition aligns with Cawrse’s greater compositional focus on uncovering the hidden potential in the words of female writers.

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

JEFFREY AGRELL (B. 1948)

Blues for D.D.

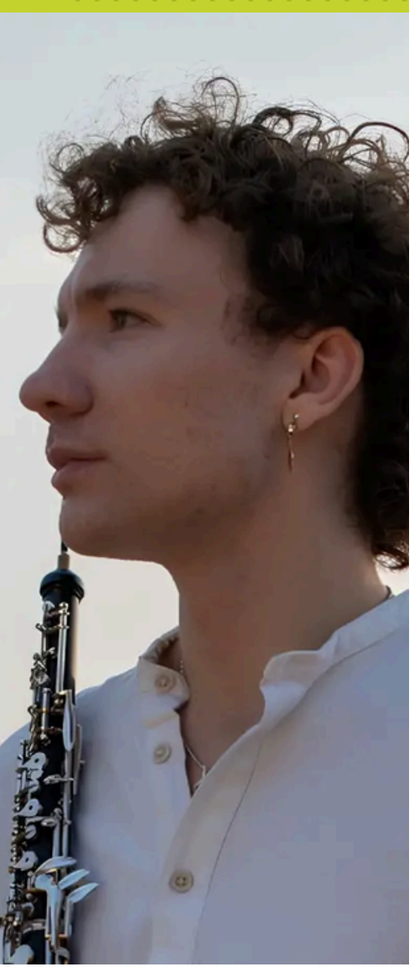
Jeffery Agrell, born in 1948, is primarily a horn player, having played and performed a wide repertoire of music including but not limited to repertoire for symphony orchestras, operas, musicals, ballet, operettas, and chamber music. He was Associate Principal horn in the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra for 25 years, before becoming a horn professor for the University of Iowa School of Music in 2000. Furthermore, he is a former member of the advisory council for the

International Horn Society, and a member of the faculty for the Asian Youth Orchestra of Hong Kong. As well as this substantial background in performance, Agrell is an award-winning writer and composer, having published seven books and over one hundred articles.

‘Blues for D.D.’ is a piece written specifically for Diana Doherty, an oboe virtuoso and principal oboe for the Sydney Symphony orchestra – Doherty requested the piece following her hearing a performance of Agrell’s Clarinet quartet in 1993. The piece has influences across several genres, primarily combining elements of blues, swing, latin and bebop. The piece begins with a slow and easy feel, but progresses into a dynamic and lively work for both the audience and the player. In fact, the main aim for the piece was for it to be a fun challenge for the oboist playing it, and for both the performer and audience to be entertained alike. When asked about the piece, Doherty has said that “it never stops being challenging, it never stops being fun, it always makes me laugh and feel good once I’ve got my breath back!”

— Emily Amos-Gaskell and Katie Gershikov

OUR PERFORMER



EWAN MILLAR
OBOE

One of the most prominent young oboists in the UK, in 2020 Ewan won the woodwind final of BBC Young Musician, giving an “...exemplary, richly shaded account...” (The Guardian) of Navarro’s ‘Legacy’ concerto with the BBC Philharmonic in the Grand Final.

In 2025 he won the coveted Gold Medal at the Royal Over-Seas League Competition, and in May 2026 was selected to join the roster of the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT), both at the Wigmore Hall in London. Ewan has been supported by both the Tillett Debut Scheme and Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, helping him secure recital opportunities around the UK; he has performed at the Windsor, Cheltenham, and Lake District Summer Music Festivals amongst others.

Highlights of Ewan’s 2026/27 season include performances of the R. Strauss concerto with the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra, and his debut recital at Britten Pears Arts. He has played as asoloist in Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, King’s Place, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and The Salle Cortot, and has given masterclasses in France and The Netherlands. Ewan's long-time collaborative pianist is the exciting young soloist Tomos Boyles. In their duo recitals they pride themselves on creative programming, performing niche repertoire and creating novel arrangements. They have also recorded a selection of arrangements for their debut with Delphian Records, due for release in October 2027.

Ewan recently performed the world premiere of a half-hour work, ‘Eau de Cologne’, for oboe and piano by distinguished composer and Oxford professor Martyn Harry, giving the international premiere in the summer of 2026 in the USA. Ewan is also a passionate chamber musician and was invited to join IMS Prussia Cove for their September 2026 seminar. He has also previously performed as a member of the award-winning wind quintet Lumas Winds.

As a freelancer, he has performed as principal oboe with the LPO, RPO, CBSO, SCO, BSO, Aurora Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Ulster Orchestra, Philharmonia of London and Birmingham Royal Ballet, as well as the Royal Northern Sinfonia, where he will take on the Principal Oboe position
from October 2026.

Ewan gained first class degrees from St. Hilda's College, Oxford, and his subsequent postgraduate at RAM, where he was awarded the Bicentennial Prize and Janet Craxton Memorial Prize, as well as winning the departmental Oboe Prize. He studied primarily with Melanie Ragge, while also receiving lessons from Christopher Cowie, Tom Blomfield, and Patrick Flanaghan for cor anglais. Growing up in Reading he was taught by Nicky Fairbairn.

Beyond oboe he is also a jazz pianist, and would gig professionally in bars and restaurants around Oxford and London.

Ewan is a Howarth Artist, and plays on a Howarth XM oboe, which he was kindly aided in buying by the Gerald Finzi Trust.

ycat.co.uk/ewan-millar

This event has been presented in partnership with

ycat Young Classical Artists Trust

Music at Royal Holloway

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

STEINWAY HUB DAY WITH MARTIN ROSCOE

14 October 2026, 6.00pm

Windsor Building Auditorium

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