

# ONYX ENSEMBLE

‘An Evening of Dance and Discovery’

RNCM | Carole Nash Recital Room

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October | 6:30



“ONYX Ensemble make their debut with a vibrant and diverse programme including chamber music from Franz Schubert to Danny Elfman”



## **Hello and welcome...**

We are the ONYX Ensemble, a piano quintet formed of students based at the Royal Northern College of Music here in Manchester and we are so excited to be performing for you this evening!

Our surprising instrumentation allows us to explore a wide range of chamber works that are incredibly unique, which we cannot wait to share with you.



## Our Players...

### **David Harris**

Coming from Birmingham, David began violin aged 5 and has been involved in music throughout his entire life.

As an orchestral player, he first played with an orchestra at 6 years old and has since gone on to do a wide range of orchestral projects in his hometown but also at the RNCM.

During his final years at school David was elected as Leader of the Birmingham School's Symphony Orchestra as well as being a member of the City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Orchestra, playing at the city's iconic Symphony Hall on multiple occasions - most recently performing Mahler's 5th Symphony under the baton of Michael Seal.

As a student of the RNCM, he has been invited to play in a range of college orchestras - from opera projects, conducting classes and leading a college performance of Stravinsky's "The Firebird" with Ellie Slorach.

David is a passionate chamber musician alongside his orchestral work, having been invited to do recordings at the Spirit Studio's in Manchester. As a member of the ONYX Ensemble, he brings a vast knowledge of musical history to rehearsals.

When he does not have rehearsals or practice, David can usually be found at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, watching sport or out and about with friends.



## **Alexandra Harrison**



Growing up in Huddersfield, Alexandra began violin lessons aged 8 and was encouraged to try viola when she was 12.

Throughout her teens she has been a member of various youth orchestras including the National Children's Orchestra, The Halle Youth Orchestra as principal viola and went on to spend two intense but rewarding years with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, resulting in two sold out BBC Proms performances.

Alexandra studied at JRNCM for five years joint principal study violin and viola under the guidance of both Catherine Yates and Lucy Nolan. During her time at JRNCM, Alexandra was twice awarded the Vicci Wardman prize for viola as well as undertaking an array of solo, and orchestral projects.

Alexandra is now a second-year student at the RNCM under Martin Schafer.

When away from music, Alexandra lives on a hill farm in the Peak Park and when home enjoys a rural outdoor life, socialising, and sport.

## **Chloe Chen**

Chloe Chen is a cellist from Singapore and began playing at age 7. She is currently studying at the RNCM under the tutelage of Manchester Camerata Principal cellist - Hannah Roberts.

Chloe has been invited to partake in an array of masterclasses with various renowned cellists, from Qin Li-Wei to Bruno Philippe and was awarded the Amy Lindley Prize for cello in her first year of studies at the RNCM. She

was also awarded the Creative Arts Award by her Junior College in Singapore and was a recipient of the Ministry of Education's Music Elective Scholarship from 2021 to 2022. As an avid chamber musician, she is also a member of the RNCM's Spirit Trio, which recently won the RNCM Nossek Prize.

In 2018, Chloe was appointed as Principal Cello of the Singapore National Youth Orchestra and held the position to 2022. She has also represented the SNYO in multiple overseas concert tours playing in Guangzhou, China and Hong Kong. She has also played with the Orchestra of Music Makers and the Metropolitan Festival Orchestra in Singapore.

In addition to classical music, Chloe also enjoys playing and working with musicians in different music genres. In 2024, she worked with Icelandic composer and Paralympian Mar Gunnarsson in recording an album for the Paris Paralympics and has also played in singer-songwriter shazza's debut showcase held in the Esplanade Recital Studio, and recorded in her single "Rain in Manhattan".



## Thomas Judge

Hailing from Liverpool, Thomas found music a bit later than others juggling between horn, cello, tuba, before eventually fixing on Double Bass when he was 12 in secondary school and has since never looked back.

Progressing quickly, he became a pupil of renowned American bassist Thomas Martin for 3 years before coming to RNCM, helping him win various seats in Orchestras such as the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (holding the position of string leader), Oxford Symphony Orchestra and multiple opera and theatre orchestras.



While Thomas should have been revising for A-Levels, he tended to spend most of his evenings playing in theatres, earning his first job at Oxford Playhouse Theatre playing full time for the show “Calendar Girls” at just 16. Since then, he has undertaken many productions both across the UK and overseas, such as the British Premiere of Disney’s Olivier award-winning show “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” and the Belgian tour of “ENCORE.”

He has just finished the run of new musical “Marie Curie” on London’s West End - being one of the youngest musicians ever to work for a west end Orchestra.

Through his time in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Thomas enjoyed interviewing many of the orchestra’s artistic collaborators, having sat down with artists from Sandeep Das to Danny Elfman for the 2022 BBC Proms.

He is currently a second-year student of Ronan Dunne (BBC Philharmonic) and Jiří Hudec (Czech Philharmonic) at the RNCM.

Thomas is very grateful to be playing a Ruggeri Double Bass gifted to him by the Martin Family in 2021 and for the Waverley Fund for supporting his studies at the College.

When Thomas isn’t playing music, he tends to bury his head in conducting scores as a keen conductor and go on long walks along the beach with his dog Stanley at his home in Pembrokeshire.



## Asia Movsovic

Asia Movsovic is a Chinese-born pianist from Reading, UK studying at the Royal Northern College of Music under the guidance of Helen Krizos.



Asia began her musical journey at the age of 7, although her passion for music and especially the piano was discovered years before. She attended the Royal College of Music Junior Department from the age of 15 with Ann Martin Davis and Christine Stevenson where she achieved distinction in her DipABRSM exam and ultimately made a decision to pursue music professionally.

Throughout her life, she has engaged in a wide range of musical activities and is an avid chamber musician in conjunction with being a soloist, having been part of a piano trio for 4 years. At the

RNCM, her piano trio won the 2024 Nossek Prize. As well as this, she has accompanied choirs, orchestras and other instrumentalists and played in a rock band. She has won 1st place trophies in solo and recital classes in the Woodley, Berkshire and Oxford festivals. Her musical passions include Romanticism and 20th Century French Impressionism, as she is enthusiastic about bringing as much creativity and individuality into her playing as possible.

Asia is also excited to make her debut concerto performance with an orchestra, where she will be performing Dohnanyi's Variations for Piano and Orchestra with the Manchester Beethoven Orchestra on November 9th in Manchester, fiendishly difficult for both orchestra and soloist.

While music dominates much of her life, she also enjoys other art forms such as drawing, writing, baking and crocheting as different forms of creative outlet.

-Programme-  
Carole Nash Recital Room | 6:30

**Danny Elfman – ‘Die Wolfsjungen’**

**Yasunori Kanazawa – ‘Memories of Astor’**

**Franz Schubert – ‘Theme and Variations,  
Andantino – Allegretto’ from the ‘Trout  
Quintet’**

**Pérez Prado – ‘Que Rico el Mambo’**

-Performers-

Violin – David Harris  
Viola – Alexandra Harrison  
Cello – Chloe Chen  
Double Bass – Thomas Judge  
Piano – Asia Movsovic





## Danny Elfman

For over 30 years, four-time Oscar nominee Danny Elfman has established himself as one of the most versatile and accomplished film composers in the industry. He has scored over 100 films including, 'The Nightmare Before Christmas', 'Batman', 'Edward Scissorhands', 'Alice in Wonderland', and 'Beetlejuice'.

In addition to his film scores he has also written the iconic theme music for 'The Simpsons' and the new hit Netflix series 'Wednesday', as well as numerous orchestral concert works such as Wunderkammer, Serenada Schizophrana and his ballet Rabbit and Rogue for the American Ballet Theatre which received its premiere at the MET Opera in New York in 2008.



Our very own Thomas Judge interviewed Elfman for the 2022 BBC Proms before the World Premiere of his "Wunderkammer" which both Alexandra and Thomas played for under the direction of Andrew Gourlay. Thomas asked Elfman if he would ever consider writing a double bass concerto, to which Danny simply replied "never..."

Luckily, Elfman did express his regret of not being allowed to add a double bass to his piano quartet which was premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic's Piano Quartet on their United States tour in 2019. Thomas took Elfman up on the offer and has since adapted the work to include double bass, which will be played for the first time tonight with the work's intended instrumentation at the RNCM.

## Yasunori Kanazawa

Yasunori Kanazawa is a composer from Tokushima in Japan, born in 1964. Despite having written various works for orchestra and chamber ensembles, Kanazawa's work has remained relatively unexplored and his works have only just become noticed towards the later part of his life. To try "fit the mold" of western classical music, Kanazawa neglected his traditional Japanese Classical music training (Gagku) and looked for inspiration in other non-European composers.

As the name suggests ("Memories of Astor"), this piece is a tribute to the renowned Argentine Tango composer - Astor Piazzolla, who's works revolutionised the traditional tango into a new style termed 'Nuevo Tango', incorporating elements of jazz and classical music.



## Franz Schubert

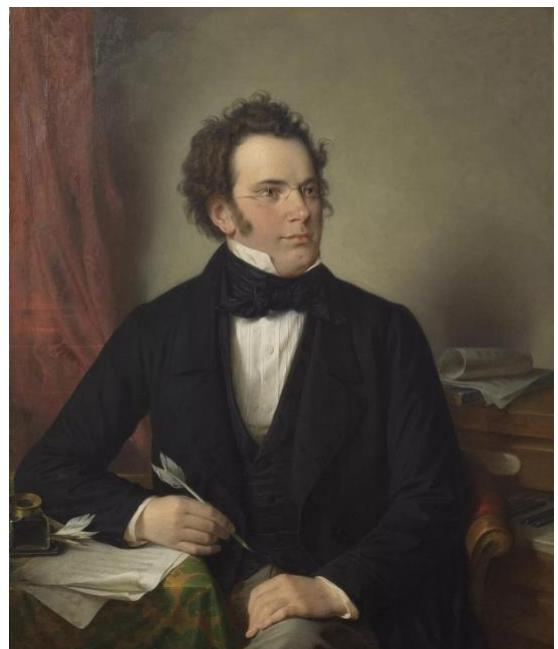
Franz Schubert was an Austrian composer who helped bridge the gap between the late Classical and early Romantic Eras. Despite his short life, he is widely considered to be one of the greatest 19th Century and Western Classical composers, having written 9 symphonies, multiple operas and a vast amount of piano chamber works. Despite this, his work was only appreciated by a small circle of admirers in Vienna, however after his death at just 31, his interest increased, greatly inspiring composers such as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and many other 19th Century composers.

At age 22 he wrote his iconic “Trout Quintet”, however it was never performed until a year after his death in 1829. Rather than the typical Piano Quintet (piano and string quartet), Schubert decided to add a double bass to the ensemble, adding a much deeper and rounded sound to the sonority, likely from his influences of Johann Hummel.

The composition is regarded as one of the greatest and most revolutionary chamber works of classical music, so much so that very few composers dared to compose for the same instrumentation. It incorporates drama and entertainment but is also harmonically rich in its mediants and chromaticism - something far beyond Schubert’s classical training.

To further add to the works reputation, the piece was performed by Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Jacqueline du Pré, Zubin Mehta and Daniel Barenboim at the Queen Elizabeth Hall London, 1969. Regarded as one of the most iconic chamber performances, considering the colossal talents of the musicians involved and a recording the ONYX Ensemble have been greatly influenced by during rehearsals, so much so Chloe is unable to listen to it without grinning mischievously with ideas.

Many may also recognise the “Theme” of the 4th movement from the Samsung washing machines, which uses the first portion of the variations when finishing a spin cycle!





## Pérez Prado

Prado was a Cuban bandleader, pianist, composer and arranger who globally popularised the music of Mambo in the 1950's. His big band adaptation of Danzón-mambo proved to be a worldwide success with hits such as "Mambo No.5" earning his nickname "The King of Mambo".

In 1950, arranger Sonny Burke heard "Qué Rico el Mambo" (How Wonderful Mambo Is or How I Love Mambo) while on vacation in Mexico and recorded it back in the United States shortly afterwards, leading to a huge success resulting in Prado launching a tour of the US the following year.



Prado is considered one of the great pioneers of introducing Latin culture to the United States and the world. However this popularity began to

wane after the rising popularity of American singer and songwriter Elvis Presley, who was rumoured to acquire the title of "The King of Rock and Roll" to try and reduce Prado's own popularity and influence in American music culture. After this defeat, Prado returned to Mexico City where he continued to give concerts and write music for Latin American audiences across the globe until his death in 1989.

In 2022, Alexandra and Thomas performed an arrangement of the work in the Royal Festival Hall in London as an encore after "The Rite of Spring" under the baton of Mexican conductor and music director of the North Carolina Symphony Carlos Miguel Prieto, a close friend of Prado during his musical education growing up in Mexico.

During a rehearsal break, Thomas asked Prieto why he chose to pick a piece by Prado as an encore after Stravinsky's iconic and exhausting ballet. Prieto simply said he had never seen an audience member walk out a concert without a smile after hearing Prado's music.

## **Thank You!**

Without an audience, our group or college would simply not function.

We would like to thank you for attending tonight's concert and invite you to come to another performance if you would like to hear more...

While it may be our debut performance, we have lots of exciting news coming up which you can keep updated on via our socials.

Instagram: @onyxensemble

Facebook: @onyxensemble

Phone: 07733402435



