

JUSTIN CONNOLLY

Music for Strings (plus...)



Members of the Kreutzer Quartet

Neil Heyde – cello

Peter Sheppard Skaerved – viola and violin

Mihailo Trandafilovski – violin

Roger Heaton – clarinet

Royal Academy of Music musicians

Disc 1

String Trio, op. 43 (recorded 3 April 2024)

Mihailo Trandafilovski – violin, Peter Sheppard Skærved – viola, Neil Heyde – cello

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|----|--|-------|
| 1. | I. <i>Vivo ed energico</i> | 8:56 |
| 2. | II. <i>Calmo ed espressivo</i> | 4:55 |
| 3. | III. <i>Presto, Vigoroso, Largamente</i> | 10:19 |

Tesserae C, op. 15/III (recorded 3 April 2024)

Neil Heyde – cello

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|----|-------------------------------|------|
| 4. | I. <i>Intrada</i> | 3:03 |
| 5. | II. <i>Presto con sordina</i> | 1:45 |
| 6. | III. <i>Alla sarabanda</i> | 3:32 |
| 7. | IV. <i>Alla burlesca</i> | 2:59 |
| 8. | V. <i>Ripresa</i> | 2:53 |

Triad V, op. 19 (recorded 1 July 2024)

Emily Su – violin, Dmytro Fonariuk – clarinet, Neil Heyde – cello

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|-----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 9. | I. <i>Misterioso, velato</i> | 4:27 |
| 10. | II. <i>Risoluto, piuttosto brusco</i> | 6:15 |
| 11. | III. <i>Come prima</i> | 4:41 |

Gymel B, op. 39/II (recorded 18 July 2024)

Roger Heaton – clarinet, Neil Heyde – cello

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|-----|----------------------------------|------|
| 12. | I. <i>Misterioso</i> | 2:43 |
| 13. | II. <i>Concitato</i> | 5:37 |
| 14. | III. <i>Vivace</i> | 3:49 |
| 15. | IV. <i>Scherzando, Concitato</i> | 6:33 |

Total playing time 73:34

Disc 2

Ceilidh, op. 29/I (recorded 2 April 2024)

Peter Sheppard Skærved, Tiago Soares Silva, Muriel Oberhofer, Mihailo Trandafilovski – violins

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|----|------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1. | I. | Gathering | 2:33 |
| 2. | II. | Dordfiansa (spear-clashing dance) | 2:28 |
| 3. | III. | Night | 3:07 |
| 4. | IV. | Four-hand Reel | 2:17 |

Celebratio per viola sola, op. 29/IV (recorded 13 March 2024)

Peter Sheppard Skærved – viola

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|----|------|--|------|
| 5. | I. | | 3:46 |
| 6. | II. | | 4:51 |
| 7. | III. | | 5:25 |

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|----|---|-------|
| 8. | Collana, op. 29/III (recorded 1 July 2024) | 10:46 |
|----|---|-------|

Neil Heyde – cello

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 9. | Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo, op. 29/II (recorded 2 April 2024) | 12:17 |
|----|---|-------|

Peter Sheppard Skærved, Adonis Lau, Andrea Fages Saiz – violas, Alise Siliņa – accordion

'Bonus' recording (recorded 29 September 1983)

Tesserae E, Op. 15/V

Nancy Turetzky – flute, Bertram Turetzky – double bass

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|-----|------|------------------------------------|------|
| 10. | I. | Capriccio | 1:58 |
| 11. | II. | Melodia I | 3:04 |
| 12. | III. | Serenata | 3:20 |
| 13. | IV. | Melodia II (recitativo interrotto) | 3:40 |

Total playing time 59:39

Programme notes

String Trio, op. 43 (2009-10)

I – *Vivo ed energico*

II – *Calmo ed espressivo*

III – *Presto, Vigoroso, Largamente*

The final version of Justin Connolly's String Trio was completed in 2010, but despite the manuscript's starting date of 2009, its genesis goes back at least six years earlier. Immediately after the first performance of his Piano Concerto in October 2003, Connolly confirmed with enthusiasm to the pianist Nicolas Hodges that he had started a String Trio dedicated to Milton Babbitt. He was perhaps hoping to complete it for Babbitt's 90th birthday in 2006, as he had similarly composed his *Obbligati I* to be played at a concert in honour of Babbitt's 50th birthday in 1966.

The String Trio exhibits a number of characteristics typical of Connolly's late music. The span of movements follows an outwardly traditional, classical structure; gestural language (and corresponding use of notation) are more conventional than in many of his more modernist works of the 60s and 70s; and the music proceeds largely by means of tightly argued motivic interplay, with an intensity arising from the compression of complex, fast-moving patterns into relatively short timespans. There is an extraordinary energy and fecundity of invention, which shows no abatement.

Connolly writes in the score's performance notes that "the connection between the players is generally more competitive and soloistic in style than would be the case in a quartet", and this is borne out by a preponderance of polyphonic textures, the three instruments trading gestures and themes between each other, before converging for brief moments of simultaneity, often at climactic points. However, the balance of the musical argument is not always equally distributed.

The viola plays a particularly prominent role: it is often the first to initiate a new section or thematic idea (including the start of the second movement), and is given a number of important solos, including the first in the work, as early as bar 12.

The String Trio was Justin Connolly's last major work. It remained unperformed at his death in 2020 and was finally premiered by members of the Kreutzer Quartet (Mihailo Trandafilovski, Peter Sheppard Skærved, and Neil Heyde) on February 23, 2024 at the Royal Academy of Music. (Andrew McBurnie)

Tesserae C, op. 15/III (1971)

I – *Intrada*

II – *Presto con sordina*

III – *Alla sarabanda*

IV – *Alla burlesca*

V – *Ripresa*

Tesserae C was written for Ralph Kirshbaum, and first performed by him at a Wigmore Hall recital on 23 October 1971. The title refers to the compositional treatment of the background material used in this continuing series of works for various solo instruments; tesserae are the constituent parts of a mosaic, or the counters used in Greco-Roman games of chance, mere fragments of material lacking any significance in themselves but acquiring it by the use to which they are put.

The common background for the pieces in the series is provided by the proportions and pitch structure of a well-known Anglican hymn tune, adapted by its composer, C.H.H. Parry (1848-1918) from his oratorio *Judith*; it is often sung to the words 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind'. The relationship of this noble tune to the pieces based upon it is somewhat remote from the idea of 'variations on a theme'. Used much more in the manner of a medieval tenor, as the generator of particular musical events, there is no direct reference to any stylistic difference between Parry's work and my own, and while this relationship refers back to the technique of the *missa parodia*, with its development of a structure based upon extraneous and heterodox material, there is never any question of a parody in the colloquial sense of the word. (JRC)

Triad V, op. 19 (1971)

I – *Misterioso, velato*

II – *Risolto, piuttosto brusco*

III – *Come prima*

Triad V was written for members of the Nash Ensemble and continues a series of works begun in 1964. Each of them is in three movements, though they display wide differences of emotional content as well as of formal device.

This piece is the only one so far to preserve a unity of tempo throughout its length; though there are quick-moving passages from time to time, the overall pace of the music is slow from

beginning to end. Use is made of repetition, both of motives and phrase structures in a way not to be found in the other members of the set, and its three movements may be understood as three views of similar events. The result is rather like taking three photographs of a piece of sculpture from such positions as will emphasize diversity at the same time as drawing attention to an underlying unity of form.

Triad V was commissioned by the Extra-mural Department of Birmingham University, and performed for the first time on February 5, 1971, in the theatre of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, by Antony Pay, clarinet, Jürgen Hess, violin, and Jennifer Ward-Clarke, violoncello. (JRC)

Gymel B “... on Planet X with CN...”, op. 39/II (1995)

I – *Misterioso*

II – *Concitato*

III – *Vivace*

IV – *Scherzando, Concitato*

Gymel-B is one of a set of four¹ pieces related by the idea of twinship: the word 'gymel' is an old English term for duet, deriving from the Latin for 'twin'. Two of the pieces are for performers who are themselves twins, and the other two are for instruments whose twinship is of the fraternal rather than the identical type. Such is clearly the case with clarinet and cello: they are different in timbre, while overlapping in range; but each displays such varied tonal qualities within their own sound-world as to show a similar tendency to overlap in the dimension of timbre as well.

This built-in complexity of relationship between instruments is symbolised by the deliberately enigmatic subtitle of the work: "On Planet X with CN". CN is the American composer Conlon Nancarrow, to the relentless rhythmic style of whose player-piano studies my own piece pays an affectionate tribute, without venturing upon any direct imitation. Nancarrow's own *Study X*, also a two-voiced work, plays with relating range to speed: the expressive result is in its own terms absolutely exhilarating, rather like Scarlatti relived in terms of Varèse. For my own part, I wanted to extend such dimensional conflicts into other areas of contrast and so found myself on another planet X, where by happy chance, CN is my companion. (JRC)

1 *Gymel A* was completed in 1993, but after *Gymel B* no further pieces in this “set of four” were composed. It is therefore a set of two only, and the whole paragraph should be read with that in mind. (Nicolas Hodges)

Postscriptum:

Connolly left *Gymel-B* in an unfinished state. Or rather, overfinished: he finished all four movements but then embarked on a thoroughgoing recomposition of the last movement, which was left with a gap of several systems near the end. Some years later, when I was compiling his worklist for Grove 7, he told me it was unfinished but "only a matter of copying". No subsequent pieces in this "set of four" were composed – only *Gymel-A* beforehand was completed.

This is one of several reasons why the version now published and recorded on this disc is not the finished, unrevised version, but rather an attempt at a reconstruction of his intentions for the recomposition using the available material. The other main one is the sheer ambition and quality of what he had completed of the recomposed last movement, followed by the relative ease of the transplant necessary: not only is the amount of space to be filled fixed by virtue of being in the middle of a fair copied score, the space has at its end the same music as the original version, making the selection of the appropriate section to transplant significantly more straightforward. We feel the result is at least plausible, and allows this powerful piece to be performed at last. (Nicolas Hodges)

Ceilidh, op. 29/I (1976)

I – Gathering

II – Dordfiansa (spear-clashing dance)

III – Night

IV – Four-hand Reel

Ceilidh for four violins was commissioned by the Yehudi Menuhin School with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The Gaelic word *ceilidh* (pronounced 'kali') means 'a visit' and is used to describe the traditional practice of music-making, with its emphasis upon contrasted items involving singing, dancing, and instrumental performance of considerable virtuosity in which the violin takes an important part. In remote times the practice of music was also associated with military occasions, and there exist accounts of spear-clashing dances very like those of the ancient Greeks, although none of the music has survived for these.

The work is in four sections which play without a break; only the last contains any overt reference to folk material.

Ceildh was commissioned for the School's visit to the United States of America as part of the Bicentennial Celebrations. It is dedicated to the players: Krystyna Osostowicz, Ming-Feng Hsin, Colin Twigg and Ralph de Souza. (JRC)

Celebratio per viola sola, op. 29/IV (2005)

I
II
III

Justin Connolly wrote *Celebratio, per viola sola* in 2005 as a 60th birthday gift for the eminent translator David McDuff. Connolly and McDuff often played the duo repertoire for viola and piano together; of the repertoire for solo viola, McDuff recalls that Connolly was particularly interested in the Reger solo suites Op. 131d and the Hindemith solo sonata Op. 25 No. 1.

Connolly had already in 1994–5 written a *Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo* for three violas and accordion, in memory of Lionel Tertis. Despite sharing an opus number, basic title and central instrument, the later work appears to be otherwise musically unrelated. Its tightly argued structure and lyrical (while energetic) character is surely a tribute to the “talented artist, learned in both literature and musical skill” who is the work’s dedicatee.

The work is concerned with the interplay of contrasting material both within and across the three movements. The music has a lyrical quality, with melody – even if this is not always melody in the ‘cantabile’ sense – prominent, in preference to percussive or fragmented textures. Dynamics are generally graduated rather than pointillistic, underpinning the ebb and flow of phrase structures. Where shorter gestures predominate, these generally coalesce into extended passages of expressive melodic writing, which lead towards the climactic points in the work.

The first movement, in a modified arch-structure, resembles the archetypal first movement of the classical sonata structure both in its bold assertiveness (from the emphatic opening gesture onwards) and in the subsequent development and contrast of distinctive thematic ideas. Glissandi, natural harmonics, layered double-stopping, and short inverted motifs are prominent. The second movement is a Beethovenian triple-time scherzo, which advances with perpetuum mobile-like lightness from an opening arpeggiated pattern which clearly invokes E minor 7th harmony, taking in a riot of playful displaced rhythms, clear invocations of the waltz, and occasional slower-moving passages on the way. The final movement incorporates

elements of the previous two, revisiting and combining a number of prominent ideas; it contains at once the most disjointed and the slowest music in the work, but also, towards the end, the most extended melodic passage, leading to an emphatic coda. (Andrew McBirnie)

Collana, op. 29/III (1995)

This work, whose title means "necklace", is a sequence of 15 short movements. Eight of its sections, A to H, form the "string" of the necklace, and are in the form of recitatives which exploit specialised techniques of playing. By contrast, the "beads" are the rather longer sections I-VII, in which emotional and gestural differences are more strongly articulated. Sections A-H centre round the middle of the instrument's range, and focus on the two middle strings to a considerable extent. (JRC)

Collana is dedicated to Neil Heyde, who gave the premiere in 1995.

The "string" and "bead" sections alternate. The "beads" are headed *Brioso*, *Cantando*, *Drammatico*, *Calmo*, *quasi Corrente*, *Volante*, and *Feroce*.

Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo, op. 29/II (1994-95)

Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo is scored for three violas, with accordion; the violas play thirteen short sections based on the anagram derived from the name of Lionel Tertis: "Ter in Iyris leo", which means "The lion is thrice present in the instruments." The accordion plays music derived from the name itself: its role is that of an independent commentary on the viola music, rather than an accompaniment, since its twelve sections and their tempi are quite differently shaped, and never coincide. The difference between these two kinds of music is as great as that between the name and the anagram; the form of the music is entirely determined by the relation between them, which affects all aspects of the work, whether in terms of duration, register or pitch choice.

It is dedicated to the memory of an artist who in his life made an unprecedentedly single-handed contribution to the establishment of his instrument in a solo role. The modern accordion now awaits its own Lionel Tertis. (JRC)

The 13 movements run without breaks: *Ritmico*, *Grazioso*, *Capriccioso*, *Comodo*, *Sospirando*, *Cantando*, *Oscuro*, *Capriccioso*, *Comodo*, *Lontano e misterioso*, *Cantando*, *Grazioso*, *Grave*.

Postscriptum:

Connolly's note dates from 1995. In 2025 it should go without saying that the accordion is no longer waiting for its 'Tertis': the last few decades have seen an extraordinary flowering of players and repertoire.

Bonus recording

Tesserae E, op. 15/V (1972)

I – Capriccio

II – Melodia I

III – Serenata

IV – Melodia II (recitativo interrotto)

This piece is one of a series, for one and two instruments: each refers obliquely to the English hymn-tune which is the common background for all of them. [See note for *Tesserae C*, above.] However, it is rarely recognisable, being split into small fragments and re-assembled in such a way as to conceal its identity, which none the less governs the composition throughout. Tesserae are the constituent parts of a mosaic, or the counters used by the ancients in games, having no significance in themselves but acquiring it by the use to which they are put. (JRC)

Postscriptum:

There is a fifth movement (The dream of Monostatos) which was not included in this performance.

A personal reflection (Neil Heyde)

“[C]omposing is a matter of action.... The whole question of whether one is original or not is not a question of anything except how you are.... [I]f you looked at it from the point of view of [the chances of being dismissed as *déjà-vu* or ignored as insufficiently extraordinary]² being problems – if you started from that end, you could never do anything. And it seems to me that maybe that’s what composing is about in this age: that you have to have something to say and you have to be strong enough to say it. And if you are strong enough to say it, you will undoubtedly find people who listen to it.”

(Justin Connolly, interviewed by Andrew Kurowski in 1993)³

This double disc of Connolly’s music is a statement in action that this is music of consequence. This has nothing to do with whether it is (now, or yet) well known, or even appreciated or understood. When any important artist’s work slips from wider public consciousness there is a temptation to try to “explain” but without grappling directly with the work itself any reading of the scenario is merely extrinsic. In a 1988 interview, Pierre Boulez spoke about the British music that interested him during what he described as “golden years” in London and named only five composers.⁴ Connolly’s place in that list is striking, given the absence of his music from the public stage in recent years. For music, a *precondition* for engagement is that performers fully invest in the material, explore the panoply of what is entailed in realising it, and thus “open” it for others. It is not enough for it merely to be “read”, even by the most knowledgeable, and Connolly described the “sense of drama” of the playing of instruments as a “very important thing” to him.⁵ The interview cited above waited thirty years to be published and some of the music on these discs has waited almost as long to be heard at all, let alone recorded.

Our work here has been on the one hand a “reanimation” of music that has been forgotten and on the other a kind of archaeological “discovery”. *Triad V*, *Tesserae C*, *Cellidh* and *Collana* had significant performances near the time of their composition, but this project gave rise to posthumous premieres of the two *Celebratio...* pieces and the String Trio. It is also the first formal recording of everything here. (*Gymel B* is at the time of writing still waiting for its premiere.) In talking about the project as it evolved, I’ve playfully referenced archaeologist Howard Carter’s possibly apocryphal reply when asked whether he could “see anything” as he

2 Connolly is responding to an extract Kurowski read during the interview from Michael Oliver’s chapter, “Miscellany”, in Lewis Foreman, ed., *British Music Now* (Paul Elek, London, 1975) p. 162

3 Andrew Kurowski, “Justin Connolly in Interview”, *Tempo* 77, no. 303 (2023) p. 56

4 Andrew Ford, *Composer to composer: Conversations about contemporary music* (London: Quartet Books, 1993)

5 Keith Potter and Chris Villars, “Interview with Justin Connolly” *Contact*, 1. (1971) p. 16

peered through a tiny hole in a door during the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings in 1922: "Yes, wonderful things!"

Since Connolly's death in 2020, pianist Nicolas Hodges has been a vital advocate, succeeding in getting much into print, and directly stimulating this project. (Hodges is the dedicatee of Connolly's Piano Concerto from 2003, and responsible for Connolly's musical legacy.) Now that much more of the music is accessible in print, the baton passes to performers. In the most significant overview of Connolly's work yet published (*Tempo*, 2012) fellow composer Anthony Gilbert opens his profile with this striking observation:

One of the more significant aspects of this fine composer's music is its inaudibility. Far too few performances are given, and too few recordings are available for audiences to enter knowledgeably into its fairly complex world.⁶

The most recent disc of Connolly's music was released in 2001 (*Justin Connolly: Night Thoughts*, Métier MSVCD 92046 – also a product of Hodges' advocacy). The recordings here are thus the first major step in addressing his music in recording for over 20 years. We are very grateful for Métier's support in releasing the discs (and for the label's long-term advocacy of a wide range of new music), but without research funding to cover the basic costs of realising the recordings, these discs would never have been possible. All of the performers on this disc wish to express their gratitude to the Royal Academy of Music's Research Committee for this essential support.

An event at the Academy in February 2024 (*Unforgetting Justin Connolly*) revealed that Connolly and his music continue to attract interest. (We premiered the String Trio and *Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo*, presented a series of short "portraits" of Connolly and his work, and ended with a performance of *Ceillidh* and a conversation with Michael Finnissy.) The Academy's new chamber hall was packed, with a crowd that included people with knowledge of Connolly's work from the past, along with a new generation, perhaps most curious about the pieces for unusual groupings. The audience response was voluble and enthusiastic, and almost everyone with whom I spoke that evening commented on the extraordinary aspiration and "belief in the material itself" embodied in the pieces. In email to me, composer Michael Finnissy, who has described Justin as being "like a big brother" to him, wrote the following, which has been a touchstone through the making of the recordings:

I [will] concentrate on how "uncompromising" (would you say that is the right word?) and significant his work was (to me), and still is, representing a breadth and a seriousness

6 Anthony Gilbert, "Kaleidoscopes and a Labyrinth – The Musical Vision of Justin Connolly", *Tempo* 66, no. 260 (2012) p. 15

of (one might say “philosophical”?) engagement that is still too rare in Music – and EXTRAORDINARILY achieved with PITCHES & RHYTHMS.... [A] work-out for the ears, brain and sensibilities. Quite right too – no cheap tricks, just plenty of intelligence and skill and no playing “to the gallery”.

Especially important, for both reanimation and discovery, was a nearly-5000-word letter Connolly wrote to me in 1995 in connection with *Collana*. Although we had worked closely together as he drafted the individual sections of the piece, the final “assembly” arrived at a time when it was impossible to work together before the premiere. His letter presents a kind of “imaginary workshop” on the finished piece in place of what we might have done together. In developing the performances for this recording, the ideas, metaphors and performance strategies he outlines proved invaluable, as they speak to issues raised by all of the pieces, as well as the detail of *Collana* itself. It is almost all “difficult” music, both technically and conceptually – and possibly for the listener too. Some thirty years after the letter, it feels even clearer to me *why* Connolly had thought it might be useful to try to articulate some of his thinking and the questions he imagined I might have in detail (along with some he was still asking of himself...). As he playfully observed elsewhere in the interview quoted above, he was one of the “few exceptionally weird people who happen to be composers and also like talking”⁷ but it was always striking that talking/thinking was much more than merely something he “liked” – as Michael Finnissey also suggests above. (A detailed article on this letter is planned for *Tempo* in 2025.)

The letter works closely through almost every line of *Collana*, shuttling between referencing other musics (Cage and Fauré), theatre (Beckett) the bible (Psalm 118), and metaphors ranging from simple description (“mouse in a wardrobe”) to abstract suggestion (“motionless movement”), providing a valuable stock of personal and specific language to help make sense of the musical and technical challenges his music presents. It might be dangerous to share too much of that here, as I sense Connolly would have preferred listeners to discover or invent their own associations through direct experience. His programme notes (which are used here, when available) are models of restraint but almost always offer a carefully chosen perspective to help listeners orient themselves. I have added just a few extra viewpoints below that I hope will prove helpful too.

The idea of material being seen from different viewpoints (rather than developed or presented in “variations”) was important for him. *Triad V*, the earliest of the pieces here, is the most directly “sculptural” music on the discs (as also indicated in Connolly’s programme note), and the idea of changing viewpoints was very useful here to make sense of the permutations of material –

7 Andrew Kurowski, “Justin Connolly in Interview”, *Tempo* 77, no. 303 (2023) p. 57

not least in developing rehearsal strategies, and, in the middle movement, for managing the strange “loops” in pacing.

Although I don’t sense an overtly theatrical or dramatic rhetoric in *Triad V*, there is an inherently theatrical element to almost all of the other music on the discs. In the three-violin-and-accordion *Celebratio*... the accumulation and discharge of energy within and across the movements is strikingly articulated by the accordion, which moves from the left of the stage to the right in the seventh movement (*Oscuro*) as the violas implicitly strike three bells, slowly and deliberately, as in a funeral toll.

The three solo pieces all play with the rhetoric of virtuosity in different ways. They have in common an exceptionally densely varied declamation. The *Presto con sordina* in *Tesserae C*, for example, suggests the outer sections of the third movement of Alban Berg’s *Lyric Suite* but is even much more unstable and volatile, and the swiftly changing tenor in the second movement of the solo viola *Celebratio*... is particularly subtle and sophisticated. *Tesserae C* treats the performer as complete master of the instrument, traversing the entire range with impunity (perhaps a direct nod to the technical prowess of its dedicatee, Ralph Kirshbaum). *Collana* on the other hand is a source of constant surprise, changing pace incessantly, suddenly exploring technical extremes, while inexorably driving towards its paradoxically “unexpected” conclusion. (I have often wondered what – if anything – this reveals about Connolly’s view of me – c. 1995 – as cellist and/or as a person...)

The more recent pieces (the String Trio and the solo *Celebratio*...) use conventional rhythmic notation throughout, providing a masterclass in subtle inflection and differentiation, often aided by additional metric layers showing “nested” weightings that run against the conventional metric subdivisions. The earlier pieces, though, often move between traditionally notated sections and a variety of space-time notations. The different notational strategies are more important dramatically than in terms of literal timing or “rhythm”. The energy accumulation of the last movement of *Gymel B*, for example, is partly generated by two cadenza-like space-time sections. The psychological/theatrical role of the notation here was beautifully demonstrated in our recording session when clarinettist Roger Heaton asked, after an especially beautiful take: “Does that sound OK? I don’t feel I know what I’m doing...” We found ourselves laughing, as Connolly’s *Collana* letter explicitly suggests imagining one section (notated similarly) as “playing an instrument you don’t know”. It seems clear that “not knowing” is *exactly* the desired effect and helps to drive the drama towards the climax.

The Trio and *Celidh* are virtuosic too, and the ways in which Connolly handles the different kinds of difficulties reveals a special sensitivity to context and people. The Trio is absolutely uncompromising in its highly compressed and tightly interwoven “competitive” dialogue,

interplay and commentary, but *Ceilidh* is beautifully calculated for performances to be given by the teenage violinists of the Menuhin School. The music retains a gimlet focus on technically brilliant and challenging material (in the Four-hand Reel in particular) – knowing that the players would thrive in its brilliance – but even here there are the odd “weird” instabilities (a strange harmonic here, and a curious “out of register” note there) that exaggerate its playfulness in ways that never fail to make me smile. Connolly also finds a way to manage complex polyrhythmic interplay in *Dordfiansa* that is both pleasingly practical and genuinely surprising. This ambitious and idealistic showpiece for young musicians received its second performance at the British Embassy in Washington DC, as part of the British contribution to the US Bicentennial celebrations. What Queen Elizabeth II, President Gerald Ford, Elizabeth Taylor and Muhammad Ali (along with many other famous guests) made of it at that performance in 1976 we can never know, but I expect Connolly enjoyed the “game” immensely. (It is perhaps also a salutary reminder of a kind of idealism for which we probably have few analogues today.)

Connolly’s relationships with his friends and musical collaborators were very warm. (I loved working and talking with him.) He placed special value on the intense investment that players made in his pieces, hence the dedications, which are often specifically to the players. In the cases of the Lionel Tertis piece (*Celebratio...*), the Trio (dedicated to Milton Babbitt) or the reference to Conlon Nancarrow in *Gymel B*, Connolly acknowledges other musicians with whom he felt a special connection. I remain struck that *Ceilidh* is dedicated to its teenage performers and not the commissioning body, or the Menuhin School, or the US bicentenary scenario etc.. This is atypical and might have ruffled feathers...

In addition to the thanks expressed above to the Royal Academy of Music, I am grateful to Nic Hodges for his invaluable editorial work on the scores, and above all for his enthusiasm and support for this project. Thank you too, to Paul Roberts (Florence) for his outstanding and indeed *beautiful* work in setting Connolly’s complex and highly varied notation in print while keeping so much of the “character” intact.

To my longstanding professional collaborators and friends, I am deeply grateful for your artistry and your willingness to invest in this music – above all for allowing the music to encourage us to work in ways that were sometimes quite different to our usual practices. And lastly, special thanks must go to the wonderful Academy musicians who agreed to be part of this project. Your openness to – and energy for – a challenging journey of discovery would have pleased Connolly no end. Without a new generation willing to invest in what is already becoming “old” music it will remain silent on the shelves. For my generation, the opportunity to be able to work out *how* to communicate what needs to happen in this music, and to hear it come to life in the hands of others, has been a critical part of this journey.

Biographies:

Justin Connolly

Connolly was born in London on 11 August 1933, and was educated at Westminster School. He was at the Middle Temple before entering the Royal College of Music in 1958, where he studied composition (with Peter Racine Fricker) and conducting, winning prizes for both activities; simultaneously he had frequent informal contact with Roberto Gerhard. The music he wrote during this period was fluently composed in a Schoenbergian 12-note serial style, but was all subsequently withdrawn. In 1963 he went to Yale University on a three-year Harkness Fellowship, as a student of Mel Powell and later as a teacher, during which he found his individual voice and consolidated his outstanding technical mastery.

His earliest acknowledged works proceed largely by the scintillating play of small motifs within complex textures. They employ space-time notation and grace-notes as well as traditional metre in a virtuosic mixture. The series of *Triads* exemplify this, and also provide an example of his penchant for groupings of highly diverse instruments, which is carried through into the concertante textures of his works for larger forces. By the time of *Anima* and *Diaphony* (both commissioned for the Proms) Connolly had expanded his expressive range to encompass an increased directness and simplicity as well as the fragmentary motivic working typical of earlier works.

Ill health led to a period from 1978 to 1988 during which he produced only revisions of earlier works. His next new work, *Spelt from Sybil's Leaves*, came in 1989 in response to a BBC commission, and is for a typically unusual scoring. The vocal lines display sensitive and expressive word-setting (a characteristic of all his vocal music), but also a more sustained melodic impetus hinted at in his work of the late 1970s. During the 1990s, Connolly completed a steady stream of works, both substantial and occasional, culminating in *Scardanelli Dreams*, a formally and rhythmically complex work in which five fragments of Hölderlin are sung in parallel with ten solo piano movements of various sizes. The resulting work has unusual poetic power, providing ample proof of Connolly's sustained ability to steer a course between technical brilliance and expressive import.

He was an experienced and respected broadcaster and teacher (RCM 1966-1988, RAM 1989-1996). In 1982 he was visiting lecturer in composition at the University of Melbourne, and in 1979-80 visiting lecturer in composition at UC Santa Barbara.

Website: justinconnolly.com



Photo © Oxford Univeristy Press

Neil Heyde – cello

Neil Heyde has been cellist of the Kreutzer Quartet since the mid 1990s and has performed extensively as a soloist in the UK, mainland Europe, China and the USA, broadcasting on the major radio and television networks. He has made more than 50 commercial recordings of music ranging from the 17th to the 21st centuries, expanding the repertoire for both quartet and cello through exploratory collaborations with composers – and by championing music from outside the mainstream. He heads the postgraduate programmes at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where his work focuses on relationships between performers and composers – past and present – and he has held visiting professorships at the Sibelius Academy Helsinki, and the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL.

Performance with electronics has been an important component of his solo work and he worked closely with Brian Ferneyhough on a film project on the Time and Motion Study II (1973-76) and with Jonathan Harvey on Advaya (1994). He has recently released the outcome of a long collaboration with American composer Richard Beaudoin (Dartmouth) under the title Digital Memory and the Archive (New Focus Recordings). Each of these six groundbreaking pieces is a form of transcription of an iconic recording: Argerich playing Chopin, Casals playing Bach, Debussy playing Debussy, Gould playing Schoenberg, Monk improvising on Johnny Green, and Maggie Teyte and Alfred Cortot performing Debussy.

His next projects will explore different facets of the relationships between musicians and instruments – through recordings and performances of new and old music, writings and interviews.

Website: www.neilheyde.com

Peter Sheppard Skærvød – viola and violin

Peter Sheppard Skærvød is acclaimed internationally for performances of a vast range of solo repertoire stretching from the late 16th century to hundreds of works written for him: these include major works by established ‘greats’ such as Hans Werner Henze and George Rochberg, to the many young composers with whom he collaborates worldwide.

Peter is a Grammy-nominated recording artist, with over one hundred critically acclaimed albums to his name. These range from concerto discs with orchestras including the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra to the complete Tartini Solo Sonatas, 24 Telemann Fantasies, cycles of Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert Sonatas, eight discs of solo works from the 1600s and many recordings of the works dedicated to him. He is currently performing, filming, and

recording on great instruments in the collections of the Library of Congress, Washington DC, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Metropolitan Museum, New York City.

Peter is Honorary Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, London, and visiting Research Fellow of Goldsmiths, University of London. He regularly gives masterclasses and workshops at schools across the USA, including Peabody Conservatoire, Vanderbilt University, Ithaca College, Middlebury College, Cornell University and many more. His wide ranging 'Knowledge Exchange Violin' Project brings together institutions ranging from the National Gallery of Art Washington DC and the Museo Stradivari in Cremona, through to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK, with a linked series of concerts, recordings, residencies, films, recordings, podcasts and much more.

Website: www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com

Mihailo Trandafilovski – violin

Macedonian-born, London-based composer, violinist and educator Mihailo Trandafilovski's latest CD for Métier was released in 2022, and followed albums on Neuma (2021), Métier (2018), Innova (2015), Clarinet Classics (2013) and Lorelt (2011), featuring close collaborators Peter Sheppard Skærved, Neil Heyde, Roger Heaton, Roderick Chadwick, Linda Merrick, Saki Kato, Hugh Millington, Odaline de la Martinez, Lontano, Kreutzer Quartet and the New London Chamber Choir. These enduring creative relationships have been at the centre of his work as a composer and have allowed him to explore and stretch instrumental techniques in idiomatic and often uncompromising ways.

His music has been performed by leading contemporary music groups such as Quatuor Diotima (France), Reconsil Ensemble (Austria), Ensemble Horizonte (Germany), Icarus Ensemble (Italy), Ensemble ble Fractales (Belgium), Meitar Ensemble (Israel), Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble (Russia), The Cory Band (Wales), the European Contemporary Composers Orchestra; and has been broadcast throughout Europe, America and Asia.

As a violinist, Mihailo has recorded and performed extensively, both as a member of the Kreutzer Quartet and in solo/duo settings; he released his solo album Step(pe)s (violin/computer) in 2021. He has an avid interest in the application of new music to pedagogy, and has led a number of shared projects among the arts promoting contemporary artistic creativity to a wider audience.

Mihailo's music is published by United Music Publishing.

Website: trandafilovski.com

Roger Heaton – Clarinet (*Gymel B*)

Roger Heaton has performed with such groups as the Kreutzer and Smith String Quartets and the Fidelio Trio and has played with the Gavin Bryars Ensemble since the early 1980s. He was a member of the London Sinfonietta and has played with leading performers of new music including the Arditti Quartet and Ensemble Modern. Concerto performances have included Boulez's *Domaines* with the Sinfonietta and Henze's *Le Miracle de la Rose* with the composer conducting.

He was Music Director of Rambert Dance Company during the 1990s and Clarinet Professor at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (1982-94). Recordings include the chamber music of Hugh Wood (*Toccata*), solo works by Tom Johnson (*Ants/Silenzio*), clarinet quintets by Morton Feldman and Christopher Fox (*Metier*), a clarinet quintet by Mihailo Trandafilovski and a solo disc with works by Radulescu, Boulez and Scelsi, both for Clarinet Classics.

Writings include an edited book *The Versatile Clarinet* (Routledge), contributions to the *Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, *Cambridge History of Musical Performance* (CUP), *Perspectives on the Music of Christopher Fox* (Routledge) and *Gavin Bryars* (Kahn and Averill). He is Emeritus Professor of Music at Bath Spa University.

Website: www.rogerheaton.uk

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Adonis Lau – viola (*Celebratio super Ter in Iyris Leo*)

Adonis is an enterprising violist from Hong Kong. He switched from violin to viola at the age of fourteen and went on to study with Martin Schäfer at the Royal Northern College of Music, later moving to London to study with James Sleigh at the Royal Academy of Music. He was awarded multiple scholarships and prizes during his studies.

Adonis has worked with The Hallé, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia and the Manchester Collective, and played for masterclasses with Nobuko Imai, Timothy Ridout, Juan-Miguel Hernandez, Susie Mészáros and Veit Hertenstein. Lessons with renowned violists such as Thomas Riebl and Garth Knox have made an important contribution to his musical voice.

Alise Siliņa – accordion (*Celebratio super Ter in lyris Leo*)

Alise is a Latvian classical accordionist who works as a soloist as well as a chamber and orchestral musician. She has performed in theatre and opera productions, contemporary and classical chamber music projects, and collaborated with dancers, writers, and creative light designers.

Alise has performed in classical and contemporary music projects at the Royal Academy of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London Contemporary Dance School, the University of Cambridge. In 2023 Alise presented her first solo concert in London with “New Stages Creations” delivering a multi-art performance including solo accordion, narration, and creative light design, and in 2024 she performed in “Much Ado About Nothing” at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

Andrea Fages Saiz – viola (*Celebratio super Ter in lyris Leo*)

Andrea grew up in Barcelona, where she attended a specialist music school, playing the viola from the age of eight. She has played under the baton of renowned conductors such as Semyon Bychkov, Sir Mark Elder and Edward Gardner and has performed alongside the Czech Philharmonic orchestra in a US and Canadian tour including performances at Carnegie Hall and Koerner Hall in 2024.

Chamber music forms a large part of her musical life, having played alongside internationally acclaimed musicians and making her debut at Wigmore Hall in 2024 with the Royal Academy of Music Soloists. Andrea is a founder member of the Zenith Quartet, who receive mentoring from the Doric String Quartet.

Since 2022 Andrea studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London with a full scholarship covered by the Samworth Award.

Dmytro Fonariuk – clarinet (*Triad V*)

Dmytro is a multiple competition winning clarinetist from Ukraine. After BA and MA studies at the National Academy of Music of Ukraine in Kyiv he worked as a member of the National Ensemble of Soloists Kyivska Kamerata. In 2022 he came to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music, with awards from the Drake Calleja Trust and Help Musicians. He won the Academy's Buffet Clarinet Prize in 2023.

Dmytro has performed at the Ferrandou Festival, as principal clarinet with the Academy's Symphony Orchestra (under Semyon Bychkov), and in collaborative projects with Academy staff (Mozart Clarinet Concerto, Dohnanyi Sextet). He is also an improviser with a wide range of interests in new musics.

Muriel Oberhofer – violin (*Ceilidh*)

Swiss violinist Muriel Oberhofer has recently appeared in concerts across Europe in venues such as the Auditorio Nacional de Musica (Madrid), Wigmore Hall and Tonhalle Zürich. She was awarded the Calleva Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music where she recently completed masters studies under Roman Simovic, performing with Academy orchestras as leader (under Semyon Bychkov) and soloist.

She is a founding member of the Cobalt Piano Trio, which won the Piano Trio prize at the Academy, and, under the mentorship of György Pauk, appears regularly in recitals across England. She is also first violinist of the Castor Quartet, founded in 2023.

Muriel performs on a Vincenzo Rugeri violin, kindly loaned to her by Florian Leonhard Fine Violins.

Tiago Soares Silva – violin (*Ceilidh*)

A Southbank Centre Future Artist and Britten Pears Young Artist, Tiago Soares Silva has performed throughout Europe. Recent appearances include Wigmore Hall, Stamford International Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Lerici Music Festival, Southbank Centre, Petworth Chamber Music Festival, Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House, Fidelio Café, Apsley House, Queens Hall Edinburgh, and Ferrandou Musique. Tiago is a member of the 97 Ensemble, the FAMART Cultural Association (Portugal), and the Slate Quartet, which has recently recorded an EP of Brett Dean's String Quartet No. 1 "Eclipse" with Luminate Records.

Tiago currently performs on a Gioffredo Cappa violin (c. 1710), kindly loaned by the Royal Academy of Music.

Emily Su – violin (*Triad V*)

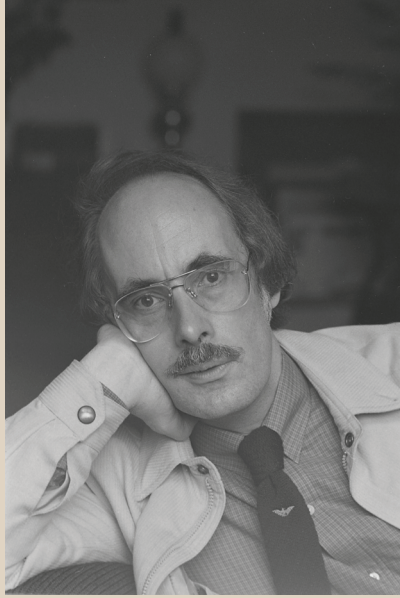
Emily is a multiple prize winning violinist from Australia. She was the youngest ever concertmaster of the Australian Youth Orchestra and has been Emerging Artist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. She recently graduated (MA) with the violin prize from the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied under Dr. Robin Wilson and had the privilege of working closely with Noah Bendix-Balgley, James Ehnes, Tasmin Little, and Steven Isserlis.

She has performed widely as a soloist in Australia and is also highly sought after as a chamber musician. She led the Academy's Chamber Orchestra under Barbara Hannigan and worked closely with the principal musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic in Strauss' *Metamorphosen*. She leads the Sonnen Quartet, prize winners of the Academy's Historical Women's Composers Prize.



Justin Connolly © David Waldner

Justin Connolly © Martin Tothill



Justin Connolly © Misha Donat



Mihailo Trandafilovski, Peter Sheppard Skærved & Neil Heyde



Roger Heaton & Neil Heyde

For all tracks except *Celebratio per viola sola* (and 'bonus' track *Tesseræ E*)

Engineer: Adaq Khan

Venue: Angela Burgess Recital Hall, Royal Academy of Music

Producer: Neil Heyde

Celebratio per viola sola recorded in Hastoe Village Hall (producer Peter Sheppard Skaerved, engineer Jonathan Haskell)

Tesseræ E recorded at Australian Broadcasting Company Waverley Studio, Melbourne 29/9/83 (producer/engineer unknown) © 1982 Australian Broadcasting Corporation under licence to DivineArt Ltd

Musical supervision for *Gymel B* and *Triad V*: Peter Sheppard Skaerved

Cover and disc inlay back photos: David Waldner

Cover design & artwork: James Cardell-Oliver, Divine Art

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