

# ENSEMBLE 360

Friday 22 October 2021

7.15pm

Crucible Studio Theatre, Sheffield

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MARTINŮ Nonet

VITKAUSKAITĖ NANGA (world premiere)

DVOŘÁK Piano Quintet No.2

*no interval*

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JULIETTE BAUSOR flute, EMILY PAILTHORPE oboe, ROBERT PLANE clarinet, LOIS AU bassoon, NAOMI ATHERON horn, TIM HORTON piano, BENJAMIN NABARRO violin, CLAUDIA AJMONE-MARSAN violin, RACHEL ROBERTS viola, GEMMA ROSEFIELD cello, RONAN DUNNE double bass

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## BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890–1959)

### Nonet

Poco allegro

Andante

Allegretto

This work dates from the last year of Martinů's life and he wrote it with a specific ensemble in mind: the Czech Nonet. The Nonet is one of his most fluent and skilful late chamber works and in the outer movements Martinů's music suggests something akin to the joyful music-making of a group of Czech folk musicians. The heart of the work is the lyrical central Andante. Martinů was far from home (he spent his last years in Switzerland) and in this movement he seems to bid a fond farewell to the Czech homeland that he knew he would never see again. The first performance was given by the Czech Nonet at the Salzburg Festival on 27 July 1959 and Martinů died a month later, on 28 August.

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## RŪTA VITKAUSKAITĖ

### NANGA (world premiere)

*Commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society for Music in the Round and Ensemble 360*

I started writing NANGA in autumn 2020 during long walks through rainy fields, and continued into the tired winter nights, through spring, with bursting energy of slowly returning post-lockdown traffic, and completing it finally in the generously sunny summer. It has been a strange year, with long periods of

isolation, very little social life, prolonged moments of stillness and refection, while I was living a very active inner life of ideas, thoughts, memories, creative flow and frustrations. All of that sank into the musical landscape of this composition: a record of a crisp delicacy of the first frost, sentimental afternoon memories provoked by scattered sunbeam, the burst of thoughts in the deep, dark Scottish winter nights.

Overall, NANGA is a very active piece. I imagined it as a wave of energy, an unrelenting force embodying the constant change from ever-passing time. The wave returns in its cycle three times, finally being taken over by a cello cadenza (co-written with Gemma Rosefield), and settling onto the long rumbling Coda in the lowest register of the instrument.

I have chosen the title NANGA for its sound rather than meaning. The sound of this word can be found in a variety of cultures: it will mean the highest compliment in one language, and an insult in another; a musical instrument on one part of the planet, and a mountain on another. For me, nanga sounds like a soft but strong jump forwards, an assertive start with strong and direct aim, a peaceful pool of water dropping into a powerful waterfall on its end. It is very versatile; it can unlock many contradictory meanings within the piece - all of them united, however, by the flow of one musical stream aiming towards the grounded finale.

© Ruta Vitkauskaite

## ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

### Piano Quintet No.2 in A Op.81

Allegro, ma non tanto

Dumka. Andante con moto – Vivace – Andante con moto

Scherzo. Furiant - Molto vivace

Finale. Allegro

Dvořák composed his great A major Piano Quintet in 1887 (a much earlier quintet from 1872 is in the same key) and has been described as one of "the most delightful and successful works" in the whole chamber music repertoire. From the spacious cello theme that opens the Quintet, Dvořák shows the seemingly effortless spontaneity of a composer at the height of his powers. The second theme turns the mood more wistful, and the music oscillates between melancholy and warmth, culminating in a jubilant climax. The second movement is a 'Dumka', a form of Polish or Ukrainian ballad, characterised by a predominantly sad or plaintive tone contrasted with a central celebratory section. Here the slow outer sections and quick central section are derived from the same musical idea. The Scherzo – described by Dvořák as a 'Furiant', a fast and fiery Bohemian dance – begins with one of his most enchanting quick melodies and this is followed by two more: an undulating tune and another of folk-like simplicity, before the opening idea returns. The central Trio provides an oasis – a tune in long notes over which Dvořák introduces fragments of the main theme. The opening melody of the Finale dominates much of what follows. Near the close, a brief fugal section leads to a moment of tranquillity before the final dash to the end.

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***This concert is celebrating the life of David Megginson, past Chair & Lifetime Patron of Music in the Round, who played a crucial part, with Peter Cropper, in creating Ensemble 360 in 2005.***

## ENSEMBLE 360

Ensemble 360 has gained an enviable reputation across the UK not only for the quality and integrity of its playing, but also for its ability to communicate the music to a range of different audiences. Formed in 2005, 11 musicians of international standing came together to take up residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, establishing a versatile group of five string players, five wind players and a pianist. The musicians believe that concerts should be informal, friendly and relaxed occasions, and perform 'in the round' wherever possible.

## MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Music in the Round is the leading national promoter of chamber music. For over 35 years we have been bringing people and music closer together through our friendly and informative style of 'in the round' performances, touring to numerous venues around the country as well as presenting two concert series and the Sheffield Chamber Music Festival each year at our home venue, the Crucible Studio. Our concerts are characterised by passion, excellence and proximity, and even in these challenging times of a global pandemic we are striving to connect people through music by presenting socially-distanced live concerts and creating films featuring our musicians to enjoy online.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Your generosity in the last year has made it possible for us to continue with our aim to bring people closer to music, despite all the challenges of the last 20 months. It is thanks to you, our Friends, supporters and audiences, that we are able to bring you such a full programme this season.

These programmes are produced by Music in the Round. Your donations towards the cost of the commissioning high quality programme notes are very gratefully received, especially given the challenges of recent times.

**You can text 'Programme 1' to 70085 to donate £1.**

\*This costs you £1 plus standard message rate.