

**Press Release Embargoed: 10am, 22 October, 2020**

## **Scottish Ensemble launch extraordinary new autumn/winter season of collaboration and connection featuring online concerts and cutting-edge digital experiences, as it starts to change the filmic language of classical music on your screen**



### **Overview**

**Scottish Ensemble (SE) is thrilled to announce its 2020 autumn/winter season, spanning October to December 2020. Characterised by collaboration and a focus on connection, this new season embraces digital formats and demonstrates the power of music to increase wellbeing.**

Founded in 1969, SE has established a reputation as the **UK's leading string orchestra**, and is today known for exploring the imaginative and innovative ways in which classical music can be presented and shared. Since the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, this innovation has enabled SE to embrace the digital sphere and present a programme of online collaborations and digitally immersive audience participation pieces.

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Despite the challenges faced by all across the arts and culture sector, SE continue to create imaginative, meaningful ways to bring music to people who might not otherwise be able to experience it. This season sees SE turn the reliance on digital from a necessity into an opportunity, as its versatile musicians and team focus on finding a new filmic language for classical music on screen.

Alongside ground-breaking collaborations with young musicians, established classical music stars, scientific experts, charities and more, SE will also deliver an integrated programme of bespoke participatory events and workshops in partnership with schools and Maggie's Centres, utilising online tools such as Zoom, that have become part of everyone's day-to-day communication.

## **SE Artistic Director Jonathan Morton said:**

*“In these strange and challenging times, we feel incredibly lucky to be in a position to continue doing what we do, albeit in a slightly different way. Like everyone, we've had to adapt to digital and online technologies to an unprecedented extent, but we have always been committed to finding new ways of sharing our music and passion with our audiences and we feel we've risen to this particular challenge.*

*This autumn/winter season is defined by a desire to bring people together, to celebrate our connection with each other, even when we cannot be together physically.*

*In the films we're releasing in the coming months, we hope people can get to know our orchestra a little more. We'll share insights into the creative process, and chats with our players backstage, but we'll also be able to put our audiences right in amongst us on stage, where you can really feel every muscle, moment of eye contact and breath that make a performance come to life.*

*As we can't be with people in the same room, we hope to create a different type of intense connection through a bold filmic style and that we will allow our audiences to delve into lots of new creative ideas with us, even if it is through the medium of a screen.”*

## **Season Summary**

### **Schools' Concerts**

Kicking off the season, in keeping with their longstanding commitment to both mindfulness and inspiring young people to explore classical music, this month SE launch a series of free online lunchtime concerts for all schoolchildren in Scotland. Having previously offered direct musical coaching for developing young musicians, as well as interactive workshops and performances to take music outside of the music department and across the school, SE felt that the impact and constraints of the pandemic called for something more wide-reaching and accessible to all.

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Beginning on **30 October**, each concert will last around 30 minutes and will comprise a selection of music to calm and uplift, performed by some of country's very best musicians. With both primary-school and secondary-school editions, the performances will, where appropriate, include guided listening that employs mindfulness techniques as well as creating time for young people to take a break from the new pressures of school life, relax and listen to music.

Having already fostered a close relationship with a number of partner schools across Scotland, including a 'HomeSchool' partnership with Glasgow's Hillhead High School and its three feeder primaries, and at a time in which going to school has never been more difficult and uncertain, SE wanted to widen its offer of support to include every school and use its music-making to enhance wellbeing for all.

## **Musical Book Club**

Back by popular demand, SE's Musical Book Club returns on **4 November** with a whole host of new themes, music and expert guests. Each session will offer a relaxing space in which people can come together and discuss powerful works of music, in much the same way that they might have previously over a few post-performance drinks.

This season's Musical Book Club guests include Scottish composer **Craig Armstrong** OBE, BBC broadcaster **Tom Service** and award-winning composer **Dobrinka Tabakova**, alongside members of Scottish Ensemble.

Suitable for anyone, regardless of musical knowledge, Musical Book Club is a fantastic opportunity for both new and existing audiences to join a conversation around iconic pieces of music, hosted by leaders in the fields of composition, performance and research.

## **Songs for Life with Karen Cargill**

Not only is **Karen Cargill** an internationally in-demand mezzo-soprano, she is a passionate, infectious communicator and on **13 November** she joins Scottish Ensemble for a cosy evening of music and conversation. At a time of great reflection across the world Cargill, in collaboration with SE, explores Songs for Life: from lullabies to love songs, songs of celebration to laments, and she invites audiences to join from the comfort of their own homes.

Interspersed with moments of discussion with Karen and members of the ensemble, this hour-long programme explores the role music plays in each of our day-to-day lives and will encompass works from a wide range of composers including Purcell, Mahler, Beethoven, Janáček and Caroline Shaw. Karen will share stories and discussion around the role of music in her daily life, tales of being a professional musician, and the human element that exists behind every musical performance.

## **Philip Glass: Symphony No.3**

Later in the year, SE is set to release a music video featuring their players and senior members of the **National Youth Orchestras of Scotland** and focusing on the final two movements of **Philip Glass' Symphony No. 3**.

In this 15-minute music video, set aboard a train, the pulsing throb of Philip Glass's Symphony No. 3 subsumes the rhythm of the train-tracks.

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With super close-up shots, and a journey through the night, this intense unfolding of Glass's work for strings will take audiences to another world, while highlighting the technical skill, virtuosity and athleticism of each of the players who fuel this musical train.

With their original live performance plans cancelled due to Covid-19, SE and National Youth Orchestras of Scotland were delighted to join forces once again to perform these two movements as part of a series of SE projects focused on finding a new filmic language for classical music on screen.

Scottish Ensemble has a longstanding passion for supporting the next generation of professional string players. This collaboration with NYOS gave seven young players the opportunity to experience the process of creating a short film and to be part of cutting-edge digital work in a professional setting.

## **Music, Mindfulness & Maggie's Centres**

Since 2016, SE has been developing relationships with Maggie's Centres – who provide emotional and logistical support for people affected by cancer diagnoses, and their families, across Scotland. This year, SE will partner with Maggie's once again to deliver Music & Mindfulness sessions for Maggie's service users, but this time entirely remotely via digital broadcast. Maggie's service users are especially affected by the pandemic since, for many, their diagnosis means they are part of the designated 'shielding' group, resulting in increased isolation.

Following pilots in early autumn, a new set of performances from early November will see a quartet of SE musicians perform live one-hour concerts from a safe rehearsal space which will be broadcast, in real time, to service users in their home. These sessions will be led by individuals from the Maggie's team - qualified mindfulness practitioners - who will use the live music as the focus for the group's mindful exercises. After each piece, the group and musicians will share their responses to what they heard and felt while the music was being performed.

Not only do SE hope to bring some comfort to Maggie's service users through this blend of music and mindfulness, but by working closely with Maggie's Centres to document the effects of these sessions, SE aim to build a unique, robust body of qualitative and quantitative evidence showing the potential of music to increase well-being when used in this capacity.

From November, SE will deliver eight digital Music & Mindfulness sessions for Maggie's Centres across the country, from Glasgow up to Inverness, with 20 people per session and reaching up to 160 individuals.

## **Solo Collaborations #2**

Hot on the heels of their partnership with Scottish Dance Theatre and acclaimed first Solo Collaboration, SE step into the world of visual art and in December bring together artist **Jyll Bradley**, composer **Anna Clyne** and **Jane Atkins** (SE's principal viola player) for the second in the innovative Solo Collaborations series.

Born out of lockdown and in direct response to the world 'shutting down', each Solo Collaboration aims to capture the ensemble's approach to imaginative cross-artform collaborations, bringing together creatives to produce a new work together, entirely remotely.

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## Concerts by Candlelight

And finally, to celebrate the festive season in true traditional style, SE return in December with **Concerts by Candlelight**, which will this year be shared online (though live versions may be announced if restrictions change). SE's December concerts have become a highlight in Scotland's cultural calendar, offering an evening of musical discovery, reflection and emotional inspiration.

At the end of a year that has felt out of balance, this year's candlelit concert brings comfort through a sense of symmetry. Patterns, reflections and partnerships will feature in conversational concerti for multiple instruments, intertwining canons and partitas, and music by J.S. Bach, Anna Clyne, Arvo Pärt, Edmund Finnis and George Crumb. The full programme will be announced in November.

**Jenny Jamison, Chief Executive at Scottish Ensemble, said:** *“These continue to be difficult times for everyone across the music, arts and culture industries and we are deeply saddened at not being able to welcome our audiences for in-person performances this year. Creating deep connections between performers and audiences through the digital sphere is challenging but in exploring innovative ways to achieve this, we hope we will, in time, inspire and reach many more people with our work.*

*We have always championed the power of music to improve well-being, and this feels like an ever-more urgent mission just now – so we hope all our work on film and online, for audiences and for particularly vulnerable groups, will offer accessible ways for people to explore how music can bring positive moments into their own lives.*

*We cannot thank everyone enough for their continued and unwavering support and we look forward to keeping you entertained over the next few months.”*

## Listings

### Schools' Concerts

Friday 30 October + dates in December and early 2021 TBA

Free

### Musical Book Club

Every second Wednesday from 4 November

Tickets from £5 (+b/f)

### Songs for Life with Karen Cargill

Premieres 13 November and available to watch again

Tickets from £10 (+b/f)

### Philip Glass: Symphony No. 3

Film released in late-November

### Solo Collaborations #2

Released in December

Free

### Concerts by Candlelight

Premieres 11 December and available to watch again

Tickets from £10 (+b/f)

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## About Scottish Ensemble

Scottish Ensemble (SE) is the UK's leading string orchestra; a core of outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director **Jonathan Morton**. Based in Glasgow, Scotland, SE inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences, crossing genres, styles, musical periods and artistic forms to offer fresh perspectives on classical music.

SE regularly **collaborates with high-profile guest artists**, from trumpeter Alison Balsom and mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly to cellist Pieter Wispelwey and violinists Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Nicola Benedetti. SE is also becoming increasingly known for its **international collaborations with artists from other disciplines**, from dance and theatre companies to visual artists. Starting in 2014, their series of annual cross-artform collaborations has so far included immersive projects with **visual artist Toby Paterson**; Swedish contemporary dance company **Andersson Dance**; electronic-classical crossover composer **Anna Meredith** and visual artist **Eleanor Meredith**; and, Scottish theatre company **Vanishing Point**.

Alongside performances across Scotland, SE presents concerts across the UK, London and the globe. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Taiwan, China, Brazil, the USA and across Europe, performing at prestigious venues from the **Shanghai Concert Hall** (China) and the **John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts** (USA) as well as festivals including the Edinburgh International, Edinburgh Fringe and Thuringia Bach Festivals.

SE is also **committed to expanding the string repertoire**, with recent commissions including new works from John Tavener, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling and Anna Meredith.

## Media

**Photography of Scottish Ensemble**

[HERE](#)

**Photography of Karen Cargill**

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## Contact

**Company enquiries**

Alison Lewis / [alison.lewis@scottishensemble.co.uk](mailto:alison.lewis@scottishensemble.co.uk)

**Press enquiries**

Sarah Drummond / [sarah@thecornershoppr.com](mailto:sarah@thecornershoppr.com) / 077 4131 6934