

Rush Hour Concert: New Music Ensemble

Wednesday 29th April 5:45pm, Firth Hall

PERFORMANCE
VENUES
CONCERTS

Bethany Rowley - Turn of the Seasons

Flute - Becky Ptacek

Violin - Gabriela Garcia Rodriguez

Cello - Chris Gbeckor-Delgado

Thomas Williams - Coracle

Flute - Becky Ptacek

Violin - Gabriela Garcia Rodriguez

Cello - Chris Gbeckor-Delgado

Edward Laycock - Eighty-Six

Flute - Jack Wheatley

Trombone - Magnus Green

Cello - Chris Gbeckor-Delgado

Sophie Ireland - Dyspnea

Flute - Acina Genc

Clarinet - Mia Henderson

Violin - Abigail Kulemeka

Cello - Beverley Chan

Thomas Stearn - Where Light is a Thought

Texts by Katharine Towers

Mezzo-Soprano - Teresa Mckendrick

Cello - Iris Rea

Harp - Alley Bridge-York

Turn of the Seasons - Bethany Rowley

Turn of the Seasons is inspired by the changing seasons and the quiet, cyclical nature of the natural world. Rather than depicting specific events, the music reflects gradual transformation and continuous motion, mirroring how seasonal change often occurs almost imperceptibly. The work opens with a solo flute, whose calm, reflective character evokes a sense of beginnings and renewal. This material returns towards the end of the piece, reinforcing the idea of a cycle and suggesting that endings and beginnings are closely connected. Throughout the piece, repeating gestures and overlapping textures represent natural processes such as falling leaves and shifting winds, where small individual movements combine to create a larger unbroken flow. A more contrasting section suggests the harsher winds of the winter, briefly disrupting the prevailing calm before the music settles again, as the piece unfolds in a single continuous movement.

Coracle - Thomas Williams

A Coracle is a small traditional boat that was commonly found on rivers across Britain. It is lightweight, which makes it able to move serenely across the water, but also means that it is at the mercy of the elements, and is likely to sink if the boat capsizes or is punctured. This piece explores a juxtaposition along these lines.

We begin with calm, tranquil melodies traded between the flute and violin, backed up by consonant glissandi on the violin and cello. After a quiet period of reflection, we then gradually move into an irregular, cacophonous storm, beginning with inconspicuous pizzicato strings in the relative minor key, until our piece is overwhelmed by fortissimo, staccato chords across the instruments that threaten to pierce our Coracle's fragile hull. The storm eventually passes and we revisit our tranquil scene again, but quiet allusions to what just happened remain.

Eighty-Six - Edward Laycock

Inspired by regular bus journeys between my home and the University of Sheffield (England, UK) and works composed by twentieth-century composers, Benjamin Britten and Igor Stravinsky, Eighty-Six explores a synthesis and seamless transition between two different environments. Eighty-Six combines three contrasting instruments, from three different instrument families, reminiscent of diversity seen in society: flute, trombone and cello. Emerging from a sense of calm, the opening section, represents my experience aboard the bus with an increase in anxiety as the 'hustle and bustle' and busyness of the bus becomes more prominent. Following a transition, getting off the bus, the second section depicts my feeling of positivity and contentment to be in a calmer and more ordered environment. Eighty-Six concludes with an 'airy' and 'breath-like' idea portraying my sense of relief, following the feeling of unease. Eighty-Six is a single movement work, approximately 2 minutes and 45 seconds in duration, and it is recommended that this piece is performed in a spacious, reverberant venue. The listener is invited upon my bus journeys through Sheffield, a city that I love and call home.

Dyspnea - Sophie Ireland

Dyspnea takes the idea of breathing and translates it into a textural exploration for woodwinds and strings. It focuses on creating an organic sense of expansion and retraction, as though taking a breath. Unfolding slowly, the music creates a sense of stasis that mimics a slow and deliberate inhale.

Where Light is a Thought - Thomas Stearn

The five poems in 'Where Light is a Thought' tell the story of a lone figure who walks from darkness into light. She leaves her home during the night and walks through woods and then onward into fields, encountering a holly tree and a robin. As dawn arrives the world slowly appears, each of its details acquiring colour and shape and, in some way, becoming real.

The musical settings of the poems immerse the listener in the journey of the lone figure as she walks,

stopping at various points to observe, listen and think. The harp delicately expresses her soft footsteps, while the voice and cello create atmosphere and emotional depth, floating effortlessly, describing her senses and thoughts as she eventually journeys into the dawn.

1 - Who comes to the dark woods

Who comes to the woods before dawn?
Who walks across long wet fields,
past heavy mounds of cows asleep,
to stand at the door of the woods' dark room?

Who walks unshadowed, unfollowed
by her own life, which she has left at home?

Who is it tripping over tree roots,
bumping into trees –
too dark to see your own hand almost –
falling into the deep blue clutches of ferns?

Imagine the chilly cry of an owl –
an owl would be a sort of charm.

A pity there's no moon. No, a pity
to think of any source of light
in the dark, in the woods
where she's no one and finds herself alone.

2 - The Holly Tree

The darkest dark is in the holly tree,
beneath its dome of shiny inky green.
The blackbird sleeps and dreams his melody
of this year's love among the prickled leaves

Always ask the holly tree
if it will spare
its pure-white twigs for thee!

Walk to the dim-lit middle of the wood
and find the deep-green holly stoutly stood.
It's made of secrets and of childhood.
It's made for hiding in and solitude.

Always ask the holly tree
if it will spare
its pure-white twigs for thee!

The darkest dark is in the holly tree.
The deepest secrets live amid the leaves.
Stay here inside its home of inky green
with sleep and dreaming birds for company.

3 - The idea of light before dawn

Who walks where there is not light
but there is a thought of light?

After the woods there are fields, fields
like an old dim photograph of fields.

There is a vague shape of drystone wall.

She walks in a pale grey photograph –
less real than the wall, less real than the path;
her feet are cold and wet in the wet grass.

She thinks of the detail of grass,
the unoriginal green of grass in the dawn.
She pictures the wall in its mosses and inks.

She walks alone where there is not light
but where light is a thought, thought
by the dark before the making of morning.

4 - The Robin

Pip-pip, pip-pip-pip!
Here is a bird
with a morsel of light in its beak.
Light is like this high sharp song,
a quicksilver knife.

Here is the new day's cutlery
which must be polished to glinting.
Robin is always first
to mention the morning.
Pip-pip-pip! or be quick before it is gone –

5 - Light like rain

Light cannot choose, so blindly falls
on everything the same, like rain –
falls upon the woods and fields and walls

light adds turquoise to the pool
adds yellow to the bird's foot trefoil
adds orange to the fox and cubs

light adds ochre to the blackbird's beak
adds pink to the goose's V-shaped feet
adds creases to the origami of the leaves

light adds brown to the bouncing wren
adds golden to the age-old lichen
adds weeping to the willow by the stream

Without a thought light falls,
as everyday and old as rain.
Light falls on woods, on fields and walls the same.

Coming up next

We've got loads of great events coming up, you can visit our website for full details - www.performancevenues.group.shef.ac.uk

Louise Thomson & Anne-Marie O'Farrell: Stratos Harp Duo

Thursday 30th April 2026 - 7:30pm

£10-£17

Firth Hall

A mesmerising evening of music from two of classical music's leading harpists

Two world leading harpists come together in the Stratos Harp duo, joining their passions for the expansion of pedal harp repertoire for one innovative programme.

Louise Thomson and Anne-Marie O'Farrell first came together as part of the inaugural Manchester Harp Festival where they gave the world premiere of O'Farrell's arrangement of Schubert's iconic Fantasie in F Minor, originally for piano duet, now written for two pedal harps. They share a passion and curiosity for expanding pedal harp repertoire, which has led to their highly innovative and attractive programming, featuring works by Damase, Debussy, Philip Hammond and Caroline Lizotte.

Free Concerts on campus

Throughout term time we run free informal recitals and events in Firth Hall, including visiting guests and the performances from the talented students from the Department of Music.

These events are free to attend and are performed at lunch time and rush hour, which we believe make the events accessible for everyone to enjoy. To find out more about these events and to reserve your ticket, head to our website.

Wednesday 6th May	Rush Hour Concert - Pop & Jazz Ensembles	Mappin Hall	17:45
Monday 11th May	Lunchtime Concert - MA Ensembles	Firth Hall	13:10
Wednesday 13th May	Rush hour Concert - Final Year Pop & Jazz Ensembles	Firth Hall	17:45