



Inspirations and Contrasts

Ella Hodgson-Laws, violin; Catherine Laws, piano.

Jessie Montgomery: *Peace* (2020)

Montgomery describes this beautiful meditation as part of a process of making peace with sadness: Montgomery notes that it was part of a shift to recognising sadness “as it comes and goes like any other emotion ... not as a negative emotion, but as a necessary dynamic to the human experience”. For us (and aside from this original context), the reflective character and the use of instrumental sonorities simply seemed ideal for our opening, especially in this space.

Tim Brooks: *Three Dances for Violin and Piano* (2022)

Three Dances for Violin and Piano was written partly as something for myself and my wife, Em, to play for fun at home (she learned violin at school to a good standard but had played little since) and also partly as an exercise for myself to write something as quickly as possible – i.e. in a day rather than weeks! The result, whilst perhaps not totally original, is reminiscent of a collection of eastern European dance tunes or folksongs that Bartok might have collected - hence the title. (TB)

Amy Beach: *Romance* Op. 23 (1893)

Amy Beach wrote her *Romance* for the American virtuoso violinist Maud Powell. Beach and Powell were born within two weeks of one another and both were child prodigies (Beach on the piano), each winning recognition in the male-dominated profession. Powell was involved in organizing the 1893 Women’s Musical Congress in Chicago, and she premiered the *Romance* with Beach at this event.

Billy Ainsworth: *attention to detail, or* (2025: premiere)

I wrote *attention to detail, or* to reflect on my own experiences of playing the violin. It has always amazed me quite how many things you must keep in mind at once to control your sound: bow speed, pressure, and position on the string; intonation and relative hand position; speed of vibrato. It amazes me equally that these parameters can become so instinctive that people can channel them to play musically. ‘attention to detail, or’ explores the player’s relationship with their instrument, using hyper-specific notation to create an impenetrable soundworld. From this, melody begins to emerge, blossoming and then unraveling as the player loses control and the piece collapses back into itself. (BA)

Tina Davidson: *Bar None* (2007)

This little piece, written for Guy Livingston and his ‘60 Seconds for the Piano’ programme, uses the ‘whole’ piano. (TD)

Lili Boulanger: *Nocturne* (1911)

Lili Boulanger was the first woman to win the Prix de Rome prize for composition (in 1913, at the age of 20). She wrote this *Nocturne* two years earlier, its maturity perhaps not quite so surprising when we consider that from the age of 5 she had accompanied her older sister, Nadia, (who also became a composer and a hugely influential composition teacher) to lessons at the Paris Conservatoire. The piece seems perfectly balanced between moments of intensity and reflection. At the end we hear a little quotation from Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un Faune*, but I have always been convinced that Ravel, in turn, quotes from a tiny moment in the piece in his G Major Piano Concerto. (CL)

Carlos Zamora: *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (2024: premiere)

This Violin Sonata was composed in 2024, with funding provided by the Chilean Cultural Secretary. It has three movements (fast-slow-fast), and all of them are musically based on traditional folk music from northern Chile and northwest Argentina. The first movement is a Zamba, the second a Baguala, and the third a Chacarera. In the three movements, the piano part is intended to imitate the drum part from the folk music, and the violin part is meant to represent the lyrical part. However, both instruments have similar musical treatments, respecting their idiomatic techniques. (CZ)

Ella Hodgson-Laws is currently studying violin with Jennifer Pike at the Royal College of Music. She grew up in York, taking lessons with Valerie Pearson and then with Catherine Yates at the Junior Royal Northern College of Music, where in her final year she was awarded the Rohi Gazder Prize for Violin and the Director's Prize. As a soloist she has performed several concerti, including Mozart's 4th Violin Concerto in D major on tour in Germany last summer. She won the title of East Coast Young Musician of the Year in 2024, and was selected for the filmed rounds of BBC Young Musician 2024. Ella also enjoys ensemble playing and has been a member of both the National Youth String Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra, with whom she was a string leader in her final year, performing in venues including the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Barbican Centre, and Bridgewater Hall.

Catherine Laws is a pianist specialising in new music, often working in close collaboration with composers but also other artists: writers, theatre makers and film makers. She is Professor of Music at the University of York and a Senior Artistic Research Fellow at the Orpheus Institute, Ghent.

www.york.ac.uk/arts-creative-technologies/people/catherine-laws/

Billy Ainsworth is a composer based in York and London, studying the first year of his bachelors' degree at the Royal Academy of Music with Morgan Hayes and Rubens Askenar. His music aims to explore sound on a fundamental level through both acoustic and electronic media, and has been played by members of the Riot Ensemble. He previously studied at Yorkshire Young Musicians and then the Junior Royal Northern College of Music, where he won the Steve Becker prize for creativity.

Tim Brooks studied music at the University of York and education, as a postgraduate, at the University of Leeds. He was a founder member of the contemporary music groups Soundpool and Cambridge Circus, is the keyboard player and composer with contemporary music ensemble SPELK, and has worked widely as a composer, performer and educator. He was managing director of York Arts Education from 2004 until 2023. His music continues to furnish a wide range of projects, from large-scale community performance to small ensemble and solo pieces; from contemporary dance scores to electronic music and installations.

timbrooksccomposer.com

Carlos Zamora graduated with a degree in music education from the University of Concepción. Subsequently, he earned a Master of Arts in composition from the University of Chile, and later received his PhD from the University of York. He has composed more than 120 works for all types of instrumental ensembles, most of which have been premiered, and more than 30 have been recorded on CDs by independent artists, university labels, and Naxos. His works have been performed on five continents by leading soloists, ensembles, and orchestras, and he is currently one of the most frequently programmed Chilean composers, both in Chile and abroad. Zamora has also specialised in orchestral conducting and works continuously in management, having founded the Chilean National Music Publishing House and the Sinfonía Austral Agency. Currently, he works at the Composition and Contemporary Music Department at the Royal Academy of Music in London and conducts the South Bank Singers in York, where he lives.

sinfoniaustral.com/carlos-zamora/