

CHANGES / JOURNEYS

WILLIAM BYRD
1540-1623

the first pavane
the galliard to the first pavane

PHILIP GLASS
1937-

metamorphosis 2

BYRD

the burying of the dead

JOHN ADAMS
1947-

china gates

BYRD

the ninth pavane

"passing measures"
the galliard to the ninth pavane

JOHN LUNN
1956-

damaged

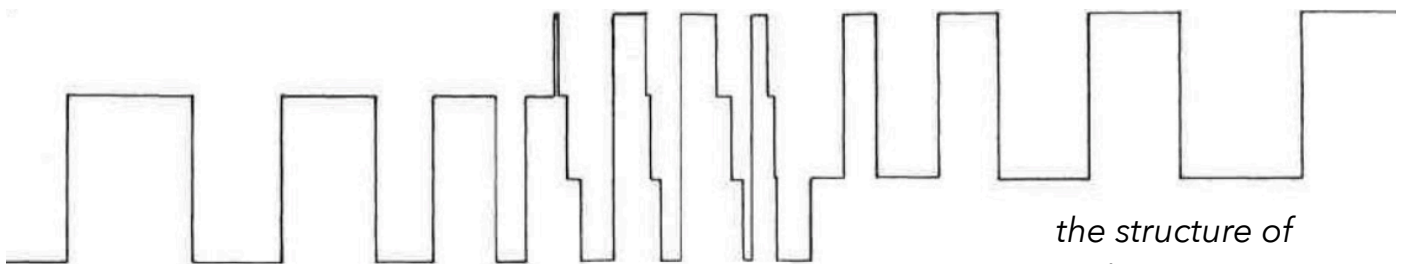
INTERVAL

JOHN ADAMS

phrygian gates

HAROLD ARLEN
1905-86

over the rainbow
as played by KEITH JARRETT 1945-



*the structure of
China Gates*

Music, uniquely among the arts, is both completely abstract and profoundly emotional. It has no power to represent anything particular or external, but it has a unique power to express inner states or feelings. Music can pierce the heart directly; it needs no mediation ... and there is, finally, a deep and mysterious paradox here, for while such music makes one experience pain and grief more intensely, it brings solace and consolation at the same time.

Oliver Sacks, neurologist & writer

Welcome to my concert! It feels very special to be writing these words — it's the beginning of July and I am staying in London at the house of some very dear friends whilst I work for an opera company for the month, my first big project since the pandemic began.

The working life of a freelance musician is often unpredictable and yet always tinged with excitement about what might come along next; and so while it was very difficult to have that sense of anticipation taken away I began looking forward to the time when we could all go to concerts again. I started to plan a programme which I am extremely happy to share with you all tonight. I began thinking about aspects of my daily life in lockdown which would resonate with an audience — change, self-reflection, small journeys, box sets, grief, gratitude — and I've chosen some wonderful old and new music which I hope encapsulates those aspects in some way.

The five pieces tonight by the genius **William Byrd** were written in the 1580s to be played at home on the virginals (a harpsichord-like instrument), and form part of the collection dedicated to his friend Lady Mary Nevell. Byrd, a Roman Catholic, lived in a time of momentous change: the church had split from Rome and Catholics were now widely persecuted. As a favourite of Elizabeth I he was afforded some protection but his movements were often still restricted. The *Pavane* was a fashionable and stately court dance and was always coupled with a more robust *Galliard*. Note how much Byrd extends the usual treatment of the pavane form in his grand ninth and final pair of dances. *The Burying of the Dead* is from *The Battle* – the first known suite of descriptive (or narrative) music and alludes to one of the Irish Rebellions at the time. The stillness and reverence the composer creates here simply with repetition is both magical and unprecedented.

The American **Philip Glass** describes himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures” – and the five *Metamorphoses* epitomise his minimalist period of writing at the end of the 1980s. The predictability of the structure enables an audience to connect completely with the music: one can sense what is about to happen and, when it does, it brings a sense of fulfilment. Feel free to drift off and reflect.

Whereas Glass doesn't stray at all harmonically, his fellow countryman **John Adams** takes us on a radically different minimalist journey in his two companion pieces tonight, written in 1977-78. Both pieces make use of alternating *modes* – types of musical scale, a bit like major or minor, but each with their own far more individual musical colours. They are structurally quite different: *China Gates* (the shorter of the two) is a musical palindrome with a rapidly shifting central section

and the constant rhythm of rainfall. *Phrygian Gates* is much longer and shows Adams' desire to move away from previous styles of minimalism. He takes us on an epic journey through half the keys throughout the almost 30-minute duration, starting in A Lydian (four sharps), followed by A Phrygian (one flat), then E Lydian (five sharps) and E Phrygian (no flats), and so on. In this way the piece shifts following the circle of fifths, alternating between the Lydian and Phrygian modes of each key. Gradually, the amount of time spent in the Lydian shortens and shifts more to the Phrygian. Time seems to stand still in the central section, subtitled *A System of Weights & Measures*, and the changes of harmony are so nuanced as to be almost unnoticeable. "Gates" alludes to electronic devices, or software, used to control volume.

Many people hoovered up countless box sets during lockdown, and we were no exception. **John Lunn** is perhaps not a famous name, but his music for *Downton Abbey* is certainly well-known and much loved. *Damaged* is the music for the head valet Mr Bates, he with the limp, which you can hear in the high lilting right-hand motif. He has had quite a difficult time of it, but finally ends up happily with his true love Anna. Despite the apparent melancholy, the piece ends with a lasting and deep sense of optimism. Coincidentally my recent opera shows took place in Bampton, where the village and church scenes in *Downton* were filmed.

Finally to gratitude ... all those quiet, introspective days enabled us to reevaluate who and what we perhaps take for granted in our own lives, and to be more thankful for them. **Harold Arlen's** evergreen song from *The Wizard of Oz* became the anthem for the nation's thanks and I finish tonight with this intimate version improvised by **Keith Jarrett**, the legendary jazz crossover artist, in his 1995 concert at La Scala. He had also played an improvised concert in Cologne in 1975; a few years ago I was working in the theatre there and we happened to be using the very same piano that he had played. By then it had become a pretty terrible instrument but was still completely inspiring!

Applause is of course always welcome, but I thought that given the reflective nature of the concert, it would be best to save it for after the final piece in each half ... thank you so much for coming and listening, and if you want to hear about my future concerts on or off the island get in touch at jameslongford.com

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and Simon Bird for piano tuning • ronbirdandson.com

James was born here on the Island and trained at the Royal College of Music (winning the Tagore Gold Medal), at St.Martin-in-the-Fields, the Britten-Pears School and the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada. He is a laureate of several major competitions and a semi-finalist in the Dranoff International Two Piano Competition in Miami, and was delighted to be selected as a Steinway Artist in 2014.

A wide-ranging career as soloist, chamber musician and collaborative pianist has led to performances at Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Barbican, St David's Hall, Snape Maltings, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Saffron Hall, Latitude, Schauspiel Köln, Franz Liszt Hochschule für Musik Weimar, at festivals in Anghiari, Avignon and Tel Aviv, and on the high seas as a classical feature artist with Cunard Line.

In 2012 he founded the Galos Piano Trio, whose acclaimed recording of works by Clara Schumann and her contemporaries Agnes Zimmermann and Louise Lebeau was released in 2020 and is available on all streaming platforms.

He works with the Royal Opera House & Royal Ballet, English National Opera, BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus, Opera North, London Concert Choir, Kokoro, Synergy Vocals, The Grange Festival, Heritage Orchestra, Royal Marines School of Music, Birmingham Opera Company, Garsington Opera, Bampton Classical Opera, Bregenzer Festspiele and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. Closer to home, he is a passionate educator and works with a number of local community choirs, music festivals and education projects in the south of England.

Forthcoming projects include music supervisor for *The Wolf at the Door*, a new children's opera which premieres in Lisbon in 2022, before touring Europe.