UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | University Music & Concerts



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King Edward's School and King Edward VI High School for Girls

Wednesday 4 November 1.10–2pm
Barber Guest Concert
Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building

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BARBER CONCERTS

Programme

String Octet in D, Op.5, 1st Movement (7 mins) — Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)

Allegro Moderato

Priyamavada Agarwal, **Khai Yang**, **Clarice Ngo, Hilary Cheng** violins
Siyao Ou, Siyuan Ou violas
Joshua Wei, Aran Murugananthan cellos

Divertimento for Wind Trio, Op.37 (9 mins) — Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006)

Allegro energico
Languido
Vivace
Andantino
Maestoso
Piacevole

Connie Zhang flute, **Esmee Raghavan** oboe, **Yilin Chen** clarinet

Piano Trio No.3 in C minor, Op.101, 1st Movement (8 mins) — Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

Allegro energico

Li Wan violin, **Ming Jiang** cello, **Aidan Zhang** piano

Barber Concerts are funded by the Henry Barber Trust and form part of The Barber Institute of Fine Arts programme of public events to 'encourage the study and enjoyment of art and music' in accordance with the deeds of the Trust.

Programme Notes

String Octet in D, Op.5
I. Allegro Moderato
Reinhold Glière

Composed in 1900, Reinhold Glière's String Octet in D major is an ambitious and richly expressive work from the early career of a composer who would become a prominent figure in Russian music. Written while Glière was completing his studies at the Moscow Conservatory, the Octet was dedicated to his violin teacher, Jan Hřímalý, and received its first performance in Moscow in January 1901. It was met with immediate success at its premiere, and has since earned recognition as one of the finest works in the string octet repertoire. The piece offers an early glimpse into the idiomatic and vivid writing that would become hallmarks of Glière's style.

Wilhelm Altmann, perhaps the most celebrated of all chamber music critics, captures the essence of the work when he writes: "It is shot through and through with magnificent melody, all of the parts are grateful to play, and it sounds very good." His words perfectly describe the Octet's melodic generosity and the care with which each instrumental part is written. These qualities are especially apparent in the first movement, which showcases the expressive possibilities of all eight instruments.

The first movement, Allegro moderato, opens with the optimistic main theme played in unison, establishing an immediate sense of momentum. A calmer, equally memorable second theme soon provides a lyrical contrast, its warmth unmistakably Russian in character. Glière moves effortlessly between these contrasting moods, balancing exuberant, full ensemble passages with more intimate exchanges in which individual voices emerge from the rich string texture.

The result is a work that combines the spontaneity of chamber music with the breadth of a small string orchestra.

Priyamvada Agarwal, Upper Sixths

Divertimento for Flute, Oboe and Clarinet Op.37
I. Allegro energico
II. Languido
III. Vivace
IV. Andantino
V. Maestoso
VI. Piacevole
Malcolm Arnold

Sir Malcolm Henry Arnold was a British composer, conductor and trumpet player. Widely regarded as one of Britain's most versatile composers of the 20th century, he wrote works ranging from symphonies to works for brass and wind bands, as well as scoring more than a hundred films, earning an Oscar for his work for T**he Bridge on the River Kwai** (1957). His overall musical style is built from tonal harmony and known for its brilliant rhythms and orchestration, though he does explore so many numerous different other areas and styles throughout his composing career.

His **Divertimento for Flute, Oboe and Clarinet, Op. 37** is a light-hearted, witty showcase of Arnold's memorable melodic writing, as well as his distinctive, 'brilliant' nature. Throughout the six movements he retains each instrument's individuality in their timbre and roles within the movements while keeping the music conversational and flowing.

The work begins, literally, in a fast and energetic manner. The clarinet opens with the theme before it is traded between the instruments, resulting in a bright-spirited opening to the piece.

Please turn quietly

It is then immediately contrasted by a soft, dreamy 'languido' movement, which states its theme in a more open, inviting way between the flute and oboe. The clarinet takes an accompanying role in this movement, before taking the show in the third 'vivace', as the playful tune throws itself up and down, makes its way through the instruments before ending back on the clarinet, which races to the end.

The star of the fourth is undoubtedly the oboe, where the clarinet and flute begin by establishing a rhythmic and harmonic base for the tune to be played over the top. This movement is gentle, offering a moment of calm for the listener. The fifth, in contrast, is a grand, stately movement. It offers a very heavily rhythmically defined structure which gives it strong ceremonial, fanfare-esque qualities. It features a lot more melodic as well as rhythmic unison compared to the other movements, as well as bold polyrhythms in places. The movement ends with a sudden 'prestissimo' burst, which immediately subsides into the 'piacevole' (pleasant) movement. This final has a charming quality to it, be it the sweet melody or the continuation of the unison between the instruments, allowing the piece to finish in a more than suitable fashion.

Yilin Chen, Divisions

Piano Trio No.3 in C minor, Op.101

I. Allegro energico

Johannes Brahms

Brahms's Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor is one of his most passionate chamber works. The first movement, marked 'Allegro energico', combines dramatic intensity with the structural discipline characteristic of Brahms's mature compositional style. Scored for piano, violin and cello, the movement explores the expressive possibilities of the ensemble through closely integrated thematic material and a powerful interplay between the instruments.

The movement opens with a commanding four-note motto in the piano's left hand, immediately establishing a turbulent atmosphere. Brief, staccato interjections from the strings punctuate the piano's statement, creating tension and rhythmic urgency. This compact musical idea becomes the movement's principal generative cell, reappearing in transformed forms throughout. The violin and cello subsequently introduce more lyrical material, which is exchanged between all three instruments, creating a closely interwoven musical texture.

Throughout the exposition, Brahms incorporates the opening motto into transitional passages and the second thematic group, demonstrating his mastery of motivic development. Rather than introducing numerous unrelated ideas, he derives much of the movement's complexity from transforming a small amount of musical material, creating thematic cohesion.

The development section is concise yet intense. Brahms subjects the motto to further transformation, exploiting rhythmic counterplay between the piano and strings to heighten tension. This concentrated approach maintains the movement's relentless momentum without sacrificing structural clarity.

The recapitulation is notably compressed, avoiding a complete restatement of the opening material. This structural economy sustains the forward drive, while a short, dramatic coda concludes the movement with emphatic C minor chords.

Ultimately, Brahms unites rhythmic instability, thematic economy and Romantic expression within sonata form. The movement's intricate chamber interplay and tightly controlled construction create a compelling musical drama characterised by urgency, intensity and structural precision.

Li Wan, Upper Fifths

Biographies

Priyamavada Agarwal violin

Priyamvada Agarwal is 17 years old and has played the violin since age 4 and piano since age 6. She achieved her Violin ARSM Diploma at 14, Grade 8 Piano at 13 and Grade 8 Viola and Grade 7 Organ at 16. She is now pursuing the Violin LRSM Diploma under Sarah Murphy, as well as the Piano LRSM Diploma and Grade 8 Organ. She is concertmaster of the KES/KEHS Symphony Orchestra, leads the KEHS Chamber Orchestra, having performed as the violin soloist of Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 (1st movement) on tour with them, and has been a member of the CBSO Youth Orchestra since 2023, alongside numerous other ensembles. Studying Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Computer Science and Music at A-Level, she hopes to read Computer Science at university.

Khai Yang violin

Khai Yang, aged 15, began learning piano at the age of five with Rosie Cross and violin at eight with Charlotte Beresford. He currently studies piano with Kate Thompson and violin with Peter Campbell-Kelly. In 2025, Khai achieved ABRSM Grade 8 with Distinction in both piano and violin and is currently working towards his piano diploma. He is a member of NYO Inspire and serves as Principal First Violin of the KES/KEHS Symphony Orchestra. Actively involved in chamber music, he is also a member of the Chamber Choir. Most recently, he won the Instrumental Ensemble events at the Northfield Festival. Beyond music, Khai enjoys swimming and exploring his creativity through drawing and the visual arts.

Clarice Ngo violin

Clarice has studied music at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Junior Conservatoire since the age of five. Clarice is a member of the National Youth Orchestra (NYO) and also Violin 1 Principal of CBSO Youth at the age of 13. She was the youngest member of NYO in 2026 and had been a member of the National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain (NCO) from the age of seven. She was also elected for the ABRSM Youth Board in 2025 and is currently a member of its Senior Board. Her achievements include being named Young Soloist with Sutton Coldfield Orchestra in 2025 and 2026, winning third place in the Brasenose Violin Competition 2026, and receiving the Helen Goodworth Young Musician of the Year Award after winning the Under-18 Concerto class at the 2024 Oxford Music Festival. Clarice is also a recipient of the CBSO James Langley Memorial Trust Scholarship. Her orchestral leadership experience includes serving as leader of the Junior Conservatoire Strings Orchestra, violin 2 leader of the Symphony Orchestra and Principal of the Chamber Orchestra. Alongside her violin studies, she has achieved ABRSM Grade 8 in piano, Grade 8 in Music Theory and Grade 7 in oboe, as well as RAD Grade 7 in ballet.

Hilary Cheng violin

Hilary Cheng is 17 years old and began playing the violin at the age of 6 at the Takako Nishizaki Violin Studio in Hong Kong. She now studies with Peter Campbell-Kelly and is principal violin I in the KES/KEHS Symphony Orchestra. Hilary takes chemistry, biology, psychology and music A-level and aims to pursue a career in maxillofacial surgery.

Siyao Ou viola

Siyao Ou has been playing the viola since the age of 8 initially under the guidance of Carol Millward then achieving a grade 8 distinction under the guidance of Sam Mason. Following on, she began studying the violin in addition to the viola,

achieving a grade 8 distinction in violin in less than a year of learning it before beginning her academic journey here in KEHS with 3 instruments (piano, viola and violin) at post-grade 8 level standard. Her love for viola has only grown through the many orchestras that she has been in (Birmingham Schools Symphony Orchestra, CBSO remix, CBSO Youth Orchestra, National Children's Orchestra: weekend projects & Main Orchestra, NYO inspire, the school's Symphony Orchestra) where she has made many life-long friends and increased experience of leading sections as principal violist in concerts across UK concert halls and touring to various places. Aside from her musical pursuits, she is also an experienced chess player - competing for England, Warwickshire county, for her school as well as individually, achieving top places in numerous tournaments. Additionally, she enjoys spending her free time doing handcrafts out of different medias, playing badminton, photography and reading books.

Siyuan Ou viola

Siyuan Ou is currently 16 years old and began learning the viola since the age of 8 under the guidance of Carol Millward. Now, she has achieved her LTCL Diploma and is currently taught by Sam Mason. Over the past years, she has been part of the National Children's Orchestra as principal violist, played in the CBSO Youth Orchestra as well as performed in the Royal Albert Hall with the BSSO as part of the Music for Youth Proms. Recently, she has been playing with NYO Inspire, having done a Schools' Tour in Devon to spread her love for music with other children. In addition to viola, Siyuan also plays the piano, achieving first place prize in her age category in the Birmingham Piano Music Festival 2022. She also plays the violin, which she started learning in Year 5, passing her Grade 8 with distinction at the start of Year 7. Apart from music, Siyuan is also a very keen chess player, having played for England this Summer in the Glorney Gilbert International where her team was awarded third place. On an individual level, she has qualified for the final stage, the Terafinals, of the UK Chess Challenge 2026, the largest national junior chess competition held annually. She has also been invited to represent England in the European Youth Chess Championships in Greece this year!

Joshua Wei cello

Josh Wei is 15 years of age and started learning the cello at the age of 6. He currently goes to the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire learning the cello under Nick Trygstad and he also has led the conservatoire's cello section in their chamber and symphony orchestras while he also participates in the school's symphony orchestra. He also has participated in NCO and will participate in NYO this year. Away from playing music, Josh enjoys exploring relationships between composers especially Stravinsky and Debussy.

Aran Murugananthan cello

Aran Murugananthan is 15 years old and started studying the cello when he was 6 years old with Emma Barron, who continues to teach him currently. He recently completed his Diploma in the past summer. He also plays both the saxophone and the piano and completed his saxophone diploma with distinction in the summer and his piano grade 8 as well. Outside of music, Aran enjoys road cycling as well as coaching and playing hockey in his free time.

Connie Zhang flute

Connie Zhang is 17 years old and first began playing the flute at 6 years old. She is currently studying with Jimena de Vicente Alvarez, after 10 years of playing under Sandy Hay, and has passed both her ARSM (in 2023) and her LTCL Diploma (in June 2025). In addition to the flute, she also plays the piano and the Chinese

zither (guzheng) and is principal flute in her school's Symphony Orchestra. She is currently studying Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry and History at A Level. Aside from academics, her hobbies include reading and travelling.

Esmee Raghavan oboe

Esmee Raghavan has been playing oboe for nearly 3 years, studying under Laura Ashton at Birmingham Junior Conservatoire. They also study cello at the Conservatoire under Elaine Ackers and are playing at diploma level, and play the piano, studying under Salome Chitaia. They have performed with the National Children's Orchestra, both in the Under-13s Orchestra and Main Orchestra and have also played with the National Youth String Orchestra, NYO Inspire, and the English Symphony Orchestra. In the holidays they attended Cadenza, an international summer course run by John Thwaites who is Head of Keyboard Studies at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, for the second time where they were tutored by renowned cellists including Robert Max and famous pianists such as Julian Jacobsen. They also attended EYSM, an international course, where they played varied orchestral repertoire such as Berlioz's Symphony Fantastique. Beyond performance, Esmee also enjoys astrophysics as well as creative activities, such as art.

Yilin Chen clarinet

Yilin Chen is 16 years old and began playing the piano with Rosie Cross at the age of 6. He now studies with Sarah Daniels. Yilin has also played the clarinet since he was 7 and learns with Rela Spyrou. He is principal clarinet in the schools' Symphony Orchestra, and first clarinet in BSSO. Outside of music, he enjoys table tennis.

Li Wan violin

Li Wan is 15 years old and has been playing the violin since the age of 6. She was taught by Lucy Akehurst for 6 years, where she achieved violin grade 8 distinction in Year 7, and now she studies under Peter Campbell-Kelly. She has led the school symphony orchestra and has performed in multiple musical ensembles. Apart from music, Li is currently studying for her GSCEs and enjoys playing hockey and baking.

Ming Jiang cello

Ming Jiang is 17 years old and started studying the guitar when he was 7 years old. He's taught by John Gerighty. He did his DipABRSM in 2021 for the guitar along with the piano where he is taught by Mike Adams. He also began studying the cello at the age of 7 with Mark Walkem, and passed grade 8 with distinction five years later. Now he receives tuition from Emma Barron. Outside of music, Ming enjoys playing rugby and golf in his free time and is planning to study medicine in university.

Aidan Zhang piano

Aidan is 17 years old and he studies piano with Robert Markham. Aidan attained Grade 8 distinction in piano, cello (under Elaine Heinen) and violin (under Sam Mason) when he was at Bluecoat School. He achieved the LTCL Licentiate Diploma in piano performance when he was 12 and has won several music competitions. Aidan made his concerto debut in 2023, performing Mozart's piano concerto No. 24, and more recently performing Beethoven's piano concerto No. 3 and Tchaikovsky's piano concerto No.1. Outside music, Aidan enjoys playing badminton and admiring oysters.

Forthcoming concerts



Wednesday 27 January 7.30-9.30pm
Barber Evening Concert
Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall

Borodin Quartet

£22.50-£6



Wednesday 10 February 7.30-9.30pm
Barber Evening Concert
Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall

Paul Lewis piano

£22.50-£6

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Friday 6 November 1-1.50pm
Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall

Lachrimae: The Lute Music of John Dowland and JS Bach

Samrat Majumder classical guitar

ycat



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