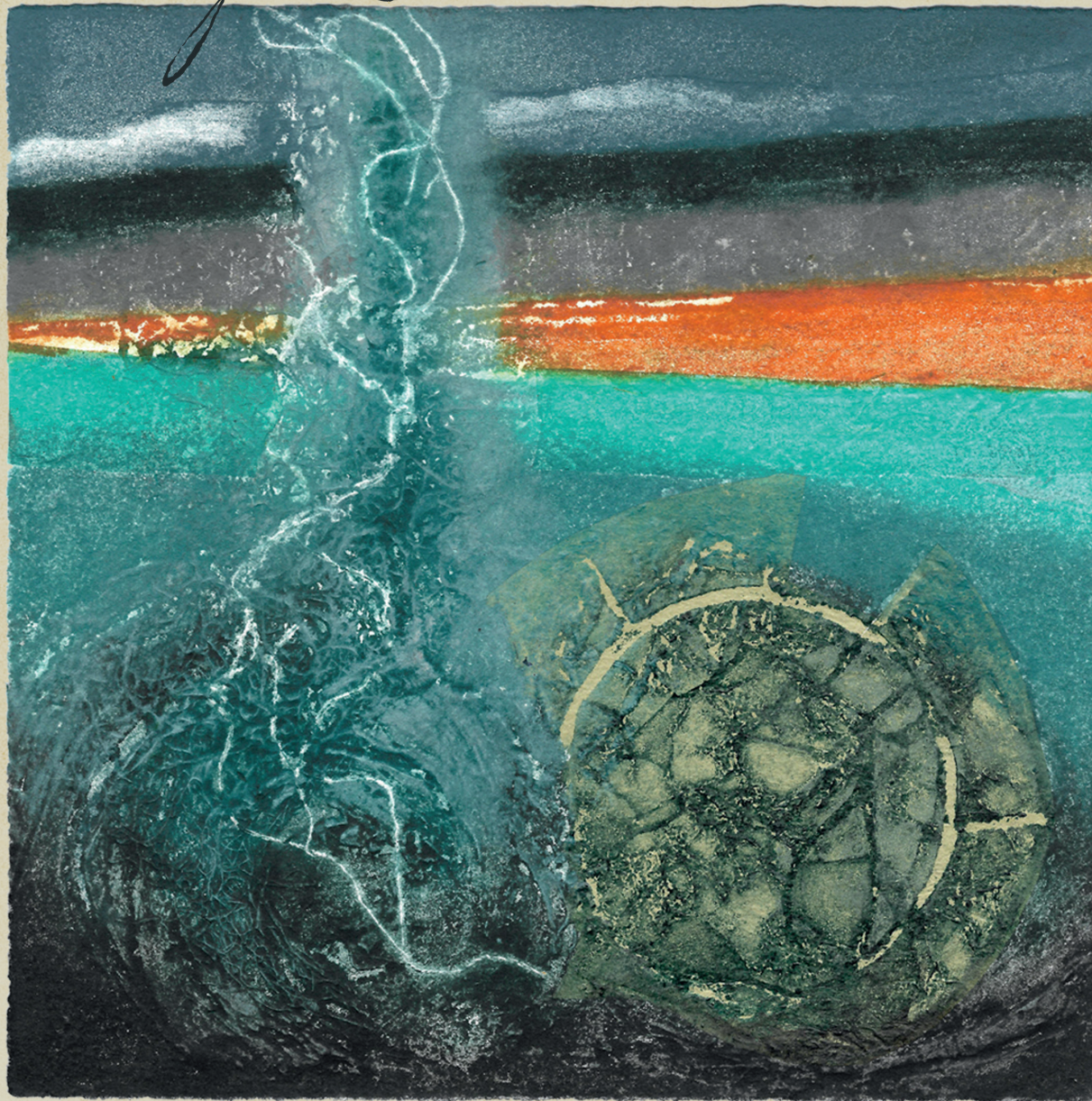




*The path above the dunes*



métier

intangible classics

Chamber music by Nicola LeFanu | Performed by Gemini

# *the path above the dunes*

Chamber music by Nicola LeFanu | Performed by Gemini

	<b>The Same Day Dawns (1974)</b>	20:58
1.	I.	1:41
2.	II.	1:00
3.	III.	0:50
4.	IV.	0:51
5.	V.	1:48
6.	VI.	0:37
7.	VII.	0:32
8.	VIII	1:00
9.	IX.	1:54
10.	X.	2:00
11.	XI.	1:34
12.	XII.	0:52
13.	XIII.	1:14
14.	XIV.	1:37
15.	XV.	0:46
16.	XVI.	0:57
17.	XVII.	1:38
18.	<b>Sextet (1996)</b>	19:32
19.	<b>Piano Trio (2003)</b>	19:15
20.	<b>The Moth-Ghost (2020)</b>	11:14
	<b>Total duration</b>	<b>71:07</b>

# Foreword

Gemini was formed in 1974 by Peter Wiegold following the success of his quartet *Gemini* for two clarinets and two percussion. A number of commissions and enjoyable concerts followed. However, with a relatively limited repertoire for such a line-up (of which I was one of the clarinetists), unsurprisingly the ensemble expanded to include variously, flute, violin, cello, piano, and female voice, the core of an ensemble



that was becoming popular amongst composers thanks mainly to the success of The Pierrot Players who morphed into The Fires of London: effectively this was the *Pierrot Lunaire* line-up used by Schoenberg, plus percussion.

Through David Lumsdaine, Peter's composition teacher at Durham University, Gemini became friendly with Nicola LeFanu and familiar with her music. (Incidentally, independent of Gemini, I was booked by The New Opera Company in 1977 to play in *Dawnpath*, Nicola's first opera). In 1979 with resources from the expanded Gemini Nicola conducted us in a recording for Chandos of *The Same Day Dawns*, released on LP in 1979 long before CDs emerged. We are

delighted to have the opportunity to re-record the work for this CD. Soon after that initial recording Peter commissioned Nicola, resulting in *Trio II: Song for Peter* (the

Peter in question was both her new-born son and Peter Wiegold). Peter W moved on from Gemini in around 1985 to set up an exciting new project at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, further developing his ground-breaking education work. I took over the reins of the group and was more than happy to continue musical relationships with composers that Peter had developed: Nicola, David Lumsdaine and Helen Roe among them. It is rewarding on many levels to develop long-term relationships with composers. We have continued to do so with Philip Grange, Sadie Harrison, John White, Howard Skempton and others. One begins to 'get inside' the music beyond the notes – seeing into the musical mind. The composer becomes familiar with the way the performers play; the players begin to understand how to approach the composer's music, and friendships develop too, helping the music to blossom on a personal level. Several times one of our composer friends has said to me that 'I heard [x] playing that line as I wrote it'.

We have previously recorded several of Nicola's works. However, this project is the first time we have focused solely on her music and it has been enormously rewarding. The four major chamber works are presented chronologically, spanning nigh on fifty years of composing, and it has been fascinating to reflect on this while working closely with her throughout the rehearsals and recording period. (Nicola addresses this further in her introduction.)

It has been a privilege for all of us to undertake the project, which could not have taken place without the wonderful philanthropy of Terry Holmes. When I asked if he wished to remain anonymous his reply was: 'I am happy to be mentioned, if only to encourage others to think what a good idea it is to ensure that such pieces become available to a wider audience.'

Ian Mitchell

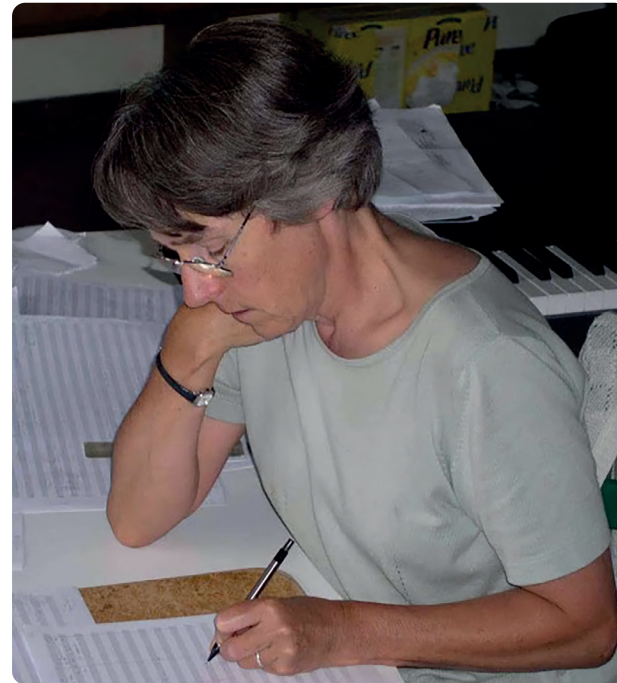
## Nicola introduces the recording

It is just fifty years since I began composing *The Same Day Dawns* for soprano and small ensemble. It is strange to think that I have been composing for so long, and it is special to think that this recording will almost cover those fifty years from 1974 to *The Moth-Ghost* written in 2020.

Inevitably people ask me how my music has changed, and it is hard for me to say. I certainly believe in evolution, but I am not sure that I believe in progress. Perhaps it is a question, not of feeling that one work is better than another, rather that works move into a different area – a different sound world.

Between *The Same Day Dawns* and the Sextet, for example, composed over twenty years later, I composed five operas which have all been staged, some with multiple productions. So there was a huge range of musical experience for me between the two works and I think that is very audible in both the Sextet (1996) and the Piano Trio (2003).

The final work on the CD, *The Moth-Ghost* for soprano and piano, clearly reflects the operatic experience that I have had; it is quite a dramatic work. The text is by the Irish poet James Harpur, and the subject is Thetis, a Greek goddess, mourning the death of her son Achilles. It relates to the major work, *The Crimson Bird*, that I wrote for soprano



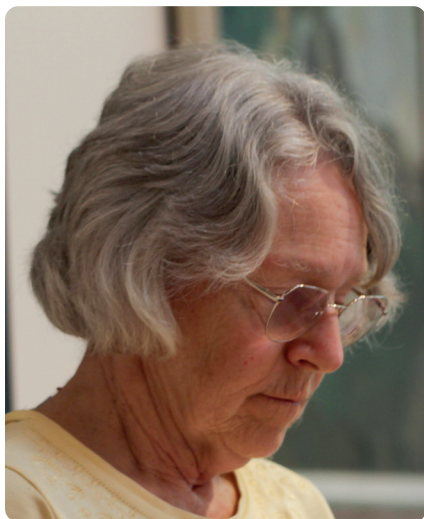
and orchestra to John Fuller's poem *Siege*. This looks at conflict and whether people describe the young men who take part as heroes or as terrorists.

Both *The Crimson Bird* and *The Moth-Ghost* are concerned with how we move on from the violence in our society. However, my music is not music with a message. Inevitably it reflects my feelings and the world I live in, how could it not; but I do not think the music carries a message other than its own self.

The other thing that is special for me in this disc which covers, like a retrospective, my fifty years of composing, is that it is over forty years that I have been working with the musicians of Gemini. This is precious for a composer: having the kind of relationship with players where you know each other very well and they in turn know one's music so well. It is a real blessing to be in that position, and I feel very fortunate.

## The Music

Four chamber works composed between 1974 & 2020



***The Same Day Dawns*** Fragments from a book of songs (1974)

for soprano, flute/alto flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, percussion, violin, cello

*The Same Day Dawns* - fragments from a book of songs - is a collection of miniatures to Oriental texts. The words are of love and longing, of loneliness, distance and death. Despite their disparate origins the poems share many common images. Drawn mainly from the natural world, they are images of great intensity for which I had to find an

equally vivid music. I have always admired the concentration of Chinese and Japanese art: an art apparently simple, yet rich in implicit meanings. A few brush strokes can conjure up a magical landscape for us. It was towards this economy and intensity that I aspired in the music for *The Same Day Dawns*.

The idiom is lyrical: each song is a monody shared between the soprano and the instrumentalists, who are as much individual soloists as she is. The line is articulated by the voice, with one or more of the instruments creating a commentary around it and adding its own colour. For each poem there is a different instrumental combination and a particular musical character; yet the songs also have a kinship which binds them into a continuous whole.

Many of my works are directed forwards to one main goal and climax, but this is not the case in *The Same Day Dawns*. As the title suggests, the work has a circling or spiralling form: songs return, some varied, others unchanged by what has happened in between. Time may seem to move forward, but this is our illusion: as the cycle ends, we are back in the dream-world of the opening... 'The still drone of the time past midnight...'

*The Same Day Dawns* was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation and first performed in Cambridge, Mass., in November 1974, with Diana Hoagland, soprano, and players from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer.

O my lord jasmine  
O mango tree  
O moonlight  
O swarm of bees  
O Ko-il bird  
Call out and show him to me  
My lord white as jasmine

Horses, blown by the whirlwind  
Tread the clouds  
A thousand miles of moonlight  
The waves are huge as mountains  
A thousand miles have whirled away in the wind  
There is no way back

Joy . . .

How can one ever know?  
My thoughts this morning  
Are as tangled as my hair?

The time I went to see my brother  
Whom I loved unendurably  
The winter night's river wind was so cold  
that the sanderlings were crying

When will there be an end  
Of old and new?

The still drone of the time past midnight  
All words put out  
Men are sunk Into the sweetness of sleep  
Even the farflung world  
Has put aside its rages for sleep  
Only I am awake

Less than a day  
In paradise  
And a thousand years  
Have passed  
Among men

---

The still drone of the time past midnight  
All words put out  
Men are sunk Into the sweetness of sleep  
Even the farflung world  
Has put aside its rages for sleep  
Only I am awake

Ah . . .

The time I went to see my brother  
Whom I loved unendurably  
The winter night's river wind was so cold  
that the sanderlings were crying

Who is your mother?  
I am she  
Who is your sister?  
I am she  
The same da dawns  
For you and me  
This is the same day  
We shall see

Green, gold  
Fly white sky  
Fraying, fluttercatching  
Peck, proud finch

The wind sleeps  
To lullabies of sky  
Spaces drowns  
Infinity gives it suck  
From her breast  
The sky is silent  
The lullaby is over

Joy in the oriole's flight

O my lord jasmine  
O mango tree  
O moonlight  
O swarm of bees  
O Ko-il bird  
Call out and show him to me  
My lord white as jasmine





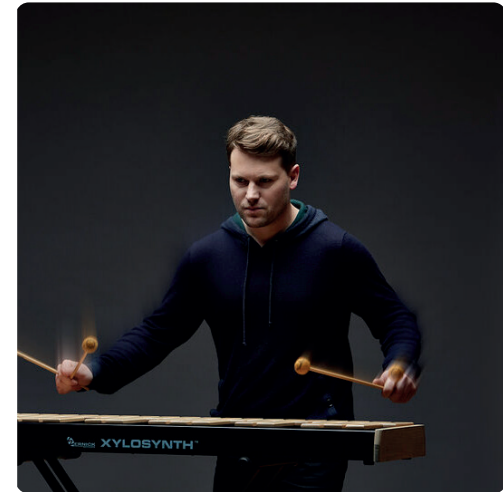
**Sextet - *a wild garden – fásach* (1996)**

for flute/picc/alto, clarinet/b clt, percussion, piano, violin, cello

My sextet was written for Jane O'Leary and the members of the Irish ensemble Concorde, whose music-making I have enjoyed on many occasions. The piece consists of a dozen or so sections which are fused together to play as one continuous whole. The colours and textures are contrasting: there are solos and duos as often as there are larger groupings. There are also ideas that can be heard recurring, either specifically, like the quick rhythms of the bongos, or more generally, like the spacious harmonies that open and close the work.

As I wrote the sextet, I had in my mind images of some of my favourite wild places in Ireland: Roundstone bog and the Connemara coast, for example. To the outsider they must seem bare and empty, but if you explore them, they are teeming with luxuriant growth. In particular, the wild flowers on the cliffs at Kilbaha in Co. Clare were in my thoughts: my cousin Rachel Burrows spoke of her 'wild garden' there, and it became the sub-title of the piece.

The premiere was given at The Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin in April 1997 by Concorde (Director, Jane O'Leary).



Left to right:

Catriona Scott, clarinet/bass clarinet; Aleksander Szram, piano; Iliana Ruhemann, flute/piccolo/alto flute; Caroline Balding, violin; Sophie Harris, cello; Joby Burgess, percussion; Ian Mitchell, Director

## **Piano Trio (2003) for violin, cello and piano**

My piano trio is a lyric work written in a single movement. It opens with very high harmonics and *tremolandi*: from these and the ideas immediately following, all



the material in the piece is developed. The music is created through transformations of melodic and rhythmic shapes, textures, characteristic harmonies. These transformations are sometimes close, sometimes remote, but the harmonies underlying the piece create a unifying resonance so that the disparate ideas cohere.



The first two thirds of the work are predominantly fast, vigorous, often discontinuous, though including more reflective passages. There is a turbulent culmination, with strings high and piano in its lowest register. Quiet harmonics make a transition to the final third of the piece. This is slower and essentially melodic: flowing string lines, freely canonic, with a gentle piano accompaniment, resolve the fractured shapes and textures of before. In the coda, the music gradually ascends, dissolves and cadences.

Gemini: Aleksander Szram, piano; Caroline Balding, violin; Sophie Harris, cello

The Piano Trio was written for Ian Munro who gave the first performance at an Australia Ensemble concert in Sydney in May 2003.

***The Moth-Ghost*** (2003) for soprano and piano

*The Moth-Ghost* is a dramatic *scena* for soprano and piano. It sets a poem written by James Harpur especially for this commission. Thetis, a sea goddess of Greek mythology, knew that her son Achilles must die however she might try to protect him. In the poem, she is a grief-stricken mother, mourning his death in the Trojan war. He has died young, where she, an immortal, will live for ever, haunted by her memories. The imagery of both the poem and music is of the sea: the sonority of its turbulence, the rhythms of its tides.

*The Moth-Ghost* was written for Gabriella Di Laccio, who commissioned it with funds provided by the PRS. The first performance was given by Gabriella Di Laccio, soprano and Clélia Iruzun, piano, at St James Church, Sussex Gardens, London, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

NL



Nicola Lefanu, composer, Aleksander Szram, piano, Clara Barbier Serrano, soprano

# The Moth-Ghost

The sea goddess Thetis mourns her son, Achilles

Now you cannot see the seaweed on the sand  
the path above the dunes where you would stroll,  
the cave that came to life with flitting wings.

The waves that roll from my mouth in a roar  
my teeth suck back with a hiss.

Nothing, my son, prepared me  
for the flames on your bones,  
the scent of burning oil,  
the choral wailing of men  
that drifted on the wind  
across the wind-dark plain of Troy.

Throughout those days I knew  
you'd die before your time;  
and how I waited for the signs! –  
the drifting carcass of a dolphin,  
a seagull's sudden cry  
like the flash of an arrow.

And now you cannot see the seaweed on the sand,  
the path above the dunes where you would stroll,  
the cave that came to life with flitting wings.

The waves that roll from my mouth in a roar  
my teeth suck back with a hiss.

Nothing dies in my embrace:  
my images are like the fish  
that cross the currents of my being –  
each day I try to shed them,  
but still they swarm: your birth,  
your shining shock of hair,  
the aquamarine of your eyes  
and, now your moth-ghost  
sniffing for blood in Hades.

I've long outgrown a world  
without you, dear Achilles,  
and you so young, but dead,  
and I alive and never old,  
memories encrusting me  
like barnacles, anemones,  
my eyes forever pinned

on the seaweed on the sand,  
the path above the dunes where you would stroll,  
the cave that came to life with flitting wings.

The waves that roll from my mouth in a roar  
my teeth suck back with a hiss.

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## The Composer

Nicola LeFanu has composed over a hundred works which have been widely played and broadcast: her music is published by Novello and by Edition Peters Ltd. She has been commissioned by the BBC, by festivals in UK and beyond, and by leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists. Many works are available on CD, including music for strings (Naxos), 'Amores' Horn Concerto (NMC), Saxophone Concerto (NEOS) and four orchestral works (NMC).

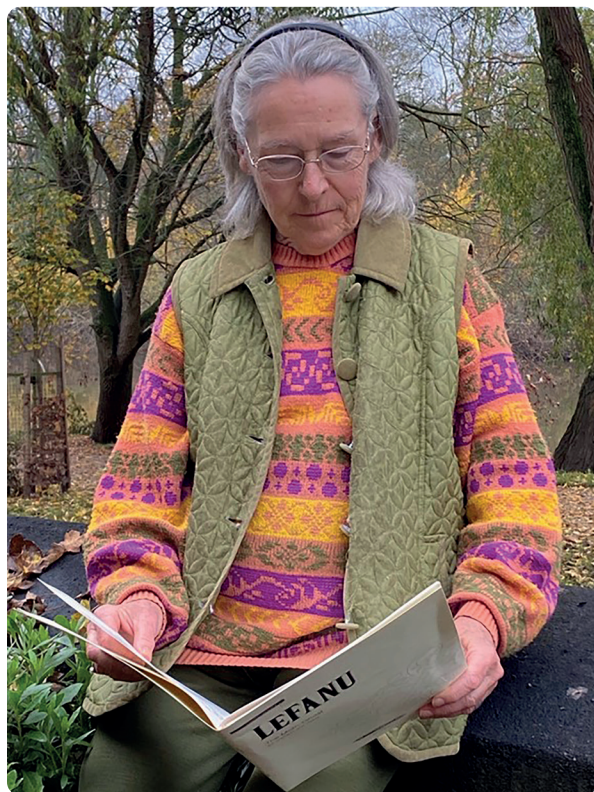
She has a particular affinity for vocal music and has composed eight operas: *Dawnpath* (New Opera Company, London, 1977), *The Story of Mary O'Neill*, a radio opera, libretto Sally McInerney (BBC, 1987), *The Green Children*, a children's opera, libretto Kevin Crossley-Holland (King's Lynn Festival, 1990), *Blood Wedding*, libretto Deborah Levy (WPT, London 1992), *The Wildman*, libretto Crossley-Holland (Aldeburgh Festival, 1995), *Light Passing*, libretto John Edmonds (BBC/NCEM, York, 2004), *Dream Hunter*, libretto John Fuller (Lontano, Wales 2011, London 2012) and *Tokaido Road*, a Journey after Hiroshige, libretto Nancy Gaffield (Okeanos, Cheltenham Festival, July 2014).



She is active in many aspects of the musical profession, as composer, teacher, director and as a member of various public boards and new music organisations. From 1994–2008 she was Professor of Music at the University of York; previously she taught

composition at King's College, London. In the 1970s she directed Morley College Music Theatre.

In April 2017 Nicola celebrated her seventieth birthday and was BBC Radio 3 'Composer of the Week'. 2017 also saw premieres of five new works, including *The Crimson Bird* (Commissioned by the RPS for BBCSO with Rachel Nicholls, soprano). Her cantata *St Hilda of Whitby*, to a text by Wendy Cope, was premiered in Oxford in February 2018. In 2020 a CD with four of her major orchestral pieces was released by NMC, supported by a grant from the PRSF. It features the RTE NSO and the BBCSO.



*Bird* (Commissioned by the RPS for BBCSO with Rachel Nicholls, soprano). Her cantata *St Hilda of Whitby*, to a text by Wendy Cope, was premiered in Oxford in February 2018. In 2020 a CD with four of her major orchestral pieces was released by NMC, supported by a grant from the PRSF. It features the RTE NSO and the BBCSO.

Since then, compositions have included solo pieces (piano, clavichord), chamber works and two choral works. *Quintet for Strings*, and *Triptych* for baritone and chamber orchestra (text, Rowan Williams) were completed during the pandemic and premiered in 2021/22. *In The Forests of the Night* for saxophone ensemble was premiered in New York and String Quartet no.5 in Canada (Lafayette Quartet).

Nicola LeFanu was born in England in 1947, the daughter of Irish parents: her mother was the composer Elizabeth Maconchy and her father William LeFanu was from an Irish literary family. She studied at Oxford, The Royal College of Music and, as a Harkness Fellow, at Harvard. She has honorary doctorates from the universities of Durham, Aberdeen, and The Open University, is an Honorary Fellow of St Hilda's College, Oxford, and is FRCM and FTCL. She is married to the Australian composer David Lumsdaine.

<https://www.nicolalefanu.com>



## The Performers

**Gemini** (Director, Ian Mitchell) has performed extensively throughout the UK and abroad (Austria, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Oman, Taiwan); given frequent radio and television broadcasts; has recorded music by Peter Maxwell Davies (Sunday Times Contemporary CD of the Year); John White -



*Fashion Music (our tribute to Tchaikovsky Year '93)* (nominated by BBC Music Magazine as a Top Forty CD of the Year); Philip Grange (3 CDs, two chosen as a Critic's Choice of the Year by Gramophone magazine, one the winner of *The Art Lounge* (USA) 'What a Performance!' awards for the best classical and jazz CDs of 2019); Nicola

LeFanu (3 discs); David Lumsdaine (3 CDs); Geoffrey Poole; Lindsay Cooper; Howard Skempton; Stephen Goss; Camden Reeves; Giles Easterbrook, Tim Ewers and others and recorded Douglas Young's music for the video of Beatrix Potter's *The Tailor of Gloucester*, shown worldwide on television. A DVD of Maxwell Davies's music theatre work *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* and other works was launched at the Singapore Festival. UK festival appearances include Aldeburgh, Bath, Brighton, Chester, Guildford, Huddersfield, King's Lynn, Lichfield, St Magnus, Spitalfields, Three Choirs, Warwick & Leamington; and there have been concerts and workshops abroad for the British Council and others.

The ensemble was a prizewinner in the music category of the Prudential Awards for the Arts and has been the recipient of an Arts Council Incentive Award.

Since its formation by Peter Wiegold in 1974 Gemini has presented a richly varied repertoire, incorporating standard eighteenth- and nineteenth-century chamber music, twentieth-century and new music, music theatre, music and dance plus much music by neglected composers. Community and school concerts feature music from the eleventh to the twenty-first century, folk music from around the world, and music by children and young people.

Gemini was one of the instigators of the festival *Hidden Sounds* – a celebration of women’s music – at London’s South Bank Centre, out of which grew the influential organization Women in Music. The ensemble has commissioned or premiered over forty works by women composers.

A pioneer in the field of professional performers in education, with the twin activities of performance and education having developed hand in hand, the ensemble has been regularly engaged for residencies combining the two. During these the ensemble has helped students and pupils to compose their own music for performance by them and/or Gemini as part of a public concert.

Gemini has been Ensemble-in-Residence at Bristol (2005-13), Surrey (2003-10) and London (Goldsmiths College, 1998-2000) universities, and was Ensemble-in-Association with the Department of Music at the University of Exeter from 1996 to 2007.

[www.gemini-ensemble.com](http://www.gemini-ensemble.com)

**Soprano Clara Barbier Serrano** was born in Montpellier, played the violin, and studied music theory and languages before specialising in singing. She completed her Bachelor in Vocal Performance at the Hochschule für Musik in Leipzig; graduated from the International Opera Studio (studying with Alison Wells) of the Royal College of Music, London, where she received the first Andrea Bocelli Foundation – Community Jameel Scholarship and on graduating from The RCM went on to undertake the Artist Diploma in Contemporary Music and Creation at the Conservatoire de Paris.

Clara is an Oxford Lieder Young Artist and a laureate of the Concours de Béziers and Concours de Gordes. She has also taken part in the Académie Jaroussky's *Jeunes Talents* scheme. She gained an award in the Vrienden van het Lied International Lied Duo competition and was a prize winner in the Lies Askonas competition.

Her passion for art song has led to recitals in venues such as the Amsterdam Opera Foyer, the Life Victoria Barcelona Festival, Oxford Lieder, Britten Pears Festival, Schumannhaus Leipzig, Peter de Grote Festival, Bloomsbury Festival and the London Song Festival. She has shared the stage with Andrea Bocelli for a number of concerts since 2020, including performances at the Teatro Regio in Parma and the Teatro del Silenzio, Sferisterio in Macerata.

Forthcoming operatic engagements include appearances with Opéra de Montpellier,



Opéra de Nice and IRCAM in Paris. Previous opera roles include *Taumännchen* (Oper Leipzig and RCM Opera Studio), *Papagena* (Verbier Festival Academy), *Rodelinda* (RCM), *Queen of the Night* (RCM, Oxford Opera Company), *Controller* (RCM, Jonathan Dove's *Flight*), *Olympia* (Theatre du Passage, Neuchâtel), *Autonoe* (cover, Opéra de Montpellier).

Interdisciplinary projects and contemporary repertoire play an important part in Clara's ongoing musical journey: she has premiered works by Fojan Garibnejad, Rhona Clarke, Lise Borel and others and was part of the dance and interdisciplinary artists company Juliette Rahon & Co for *La Dernière Sarabande*, a project mixing Bach music and contemporary dance. She regularly devises her own creative projects and programmes, including *Pierrot XXI*, a performance of *Pierrot Lunaire* in random order led by Tarot Cards.

[clarabarbierserrano.com](http://clarabarbierserrano.com)



**Pianist Aleksander Szram** specialises in performing music of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He has released several albums on the Prima Facie label, including the Piano Concerto by Daryl Runswick, *Inner Landscapes* (Douglas Finch), *A Land so Luminous* (Kenneth Hesketh), an album of music by Janet Graham, and the album *Aztec Dances* with

the recorder player Jill Kemp. He has recorded for Nimbus with flautist Wissam Boustany, and given premieres of works by Frederic Rzewski, Dai Fujikura, Haris Kittos, Edward Gregson, Nicola LeFanu, Sam Hayden and David Bedford, among others.

As pianist in the ensemble Gemini, he has recorded three albums with Métier, including works by Jonathan Harvey, Sadie Harrison, Huw Watkins, Philip Grange, and the first recording of *Mandala 3* by David Lumsdaine.

As well as Gemini, Aleks works with Lontano, rarescale and the Continuum Ensemble. He has performed in more than forty countries over six continents, on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, Channel 4, and Colombian and Lebanese television. Aleksander is Director of Music at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

[www.trinitylaban.ac.uk](http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk)

## Acknowledgements

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And to Pamela Knight whose specially commissioned art work is used as the cover image of this booklet. Collagraph print after '*The Moth-Ghost*' copyright © Pamela Knight [www.pamelaknight.net](http://www.pamelaknight.net)

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Nicola LeFanu (in her introduction) and 'studying' a score: David Lumsdaine, [www.davidlumsdaine.org.uk](http://www.davidlumsdaine.org.uk)

Clara Barbier Serrano, Aleksander Szram and Nicola LeFanu: David Lefeber

Joby Burgess: Nick White [www.nickwhite.uk](http://www.nickwhite.uk)

Clara Barbier Serrano: Hayy Jameel [www.hayyjameel.org](http://www.hayyjameel.org)

Aleksander Szram: Matt Jamie [www.mattjamie1.wixsite.com](http://www.mattjamie1.wixsite.com)

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### **Music Publishers**

*The Same Day Dawns* & Sextet: Novello & Co.  
Piano Trio & *The Moth-Ghost*: Edition Peters

### **Details of recordings**

Producer/engineer David Lefeber  
Editor Susanne Stanzeleit.

Recording sessions were at St John the Evangelist, Sylvan Rd, Upper Norwood, London SE19 2RX:

11<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 Sextet - *a wild garden - fásach*; *The Same Day Dawns*

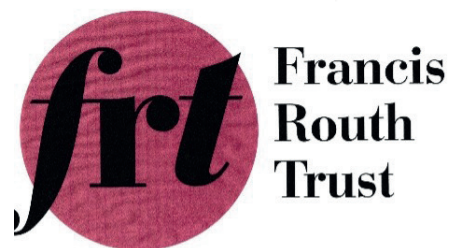
12<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 Piano Trio; *The Moth-Ghost*

*The Same Day Dawns* was released by Chandos on LP in 1979 with Jane Manning and Gemini conducted by the composer. All other works are first recordings.

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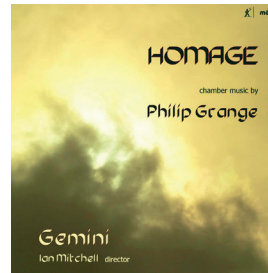
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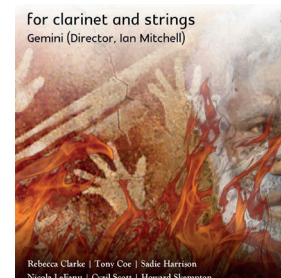
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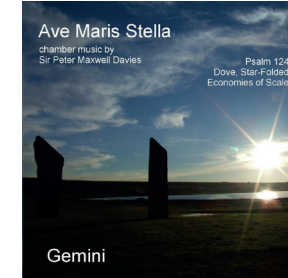
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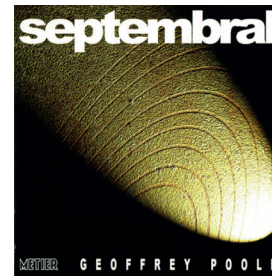
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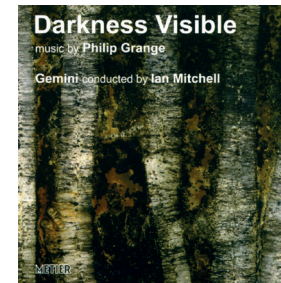
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