

Not-the-L8Nite Performance

Caprice Reimagined

Finding new voices for the natural horn through new commissions and exploring their relationships with old instrument and repertoire

In 1835, Jacques-François Gallay, regarded by Fétis as the ‘last great hand horn virtuoso in France’, composed *Douze Grands Caprices* which embody the capabilities of the instrument in its most virtuosic form. In the past few decades, as ‘Early Music’ develops, there is a renewed interest in hand horn playing, with an increasing number of horn players now pursuing historical horns as a specialisation. A new generation of players have also emerged who are capable of pushing beyond the boundaries and perceived capabilities encapsulated by Gallay in his *Douze Grands Caprices*. This project aims to create an extension of the hand horn playing tradition, reflecting the capabilities and aesthetics of our time: a set of 12 new works for solo hand horn are being commissioned from 12 living composers.

It is important to mention that composing for the hand horn is no longer a novelty. There have been a series of works composed for the Bad Marzburg International Natural Horn Competition in the 1980s, to more recent works by John Croft and Pip Eastop. However, almost all the composers are horn players themselves, or have intimate knowledge of the instrument from a performer’s perspective. This in turn leads to two problems; a lack of substantial and diverse repertoire that truly reflects the current capabilities of the instrument and its players, and a lack of an outsider’s perspective on its potentials, be it technical, musical, sonic or otherwise. This project engages with composers who have no previous relationship or background with the hand horn, and aims to invite the wider musical communities to engage and explore the hand horn in the modern context.

Moreover, the field of historical performance, in particular hand horn playing, has undergone significant advancement in performance technique and shift in musical aesthetics that is reflected in the practice of music making. The absence of substantial works that truly reflect the capabilities of the instrument and its players since the “Early Music” Revival Movement also reflects a lack of documentation in performance practice. This project serves to generate a new benchmark and a reference point for what could be possible now for hand horn playing, and what could be standard practice in the foreseeable future. The proposed repertoire showcases some of the new works that have been generated and how they responded to and relate with the Gallay Caprices.

Proposed Repertoire:

Selections from Gallay’s *Douze Grands Caprices*, Op. 32 and *Preludés mesurés et nonmesurés*, Op. 27

Georgia Scott: *The Ghost in the Machine* (2024) – World Premiere (TBC, electronic component TBC)

Lloyd Coleman: *Sgraffito* (2023)

Grace Evangeline Mason: *In the Garden of a Museum* (2022)

Video Links:

**AEC European Platform for Artistic Research in Music (EPARM) 2024
Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana (Ljubljana, Slovenia)**

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Dai Fujikura: *Ele* (2021) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXy1YWLEZyA>

Jacques-François Gallay: *Douze Grands Caprices Op. 32, No. 2* (1835) -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAobuf04-EU>



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Based in London, Isaac Shieh is a New Zealand musician of Chinese minority ethnic background. Described as a ‘natural horn virtuoso’, his work takes him around the globe; exploring repertoire and instruments from early 18th Century through to the present day.

Formerly the Co-Principal Horn of The Melbourne Sinfonia, Isaac is currently Co-Principal Horn of Oxford Bach Soloists, and member of Paraorchestra and Bath Festival Orchestra. In addition, Isaac works regularly with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Chineke! Orchestra amongst others. He has also performed as a soloist at the British Horn Society Festival Gala Concert, in front of HRH Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall at Llwynywermod, and with the London Chamber Orchestra. Passionate about new music, Isaac is currently commissioning 12 new works by 12 composers for the natural horn that reflect the capabilities and aesthetics of our time.

