

Saturday 24 May 2025
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Refuge

Rouzbeh Parsa

Concerto for Kamancheh & Orchestra

Béla Bartók

Concerto for Orchestra

Jonathan Dove

Odyssey



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Concerto for Orchestra

Interval

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Odyssey

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Francesca Chiejina *soprano*

John Gyeantey *tenor*

Rouzbeh Parsa *Kamancheh*

Supporting Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign

Concerto for Kamancheh and Orchestra

Rouzbeh Parsa (Orchestrated by Jonathan Brigg)

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.

This first line from Rudyard Kipling's 1889 *Ballad of East and West* has become emblematic of what we now generally refer to as the 'culture clash'. Yet, a couple of lines further on in the poem, comes a thought-provoking rider:

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,

*When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of
the earth.*

Replace 'men' with 'musician(s)' and you have the essence of cross-cultural musical projects such as this evening's: music as a bridge, music that dissolves barriers, music that connects and heals.

Can music really transcend borders? Can musicians? Let me share a snippet of my own experience as a migrant musician. Growing up in post-revolutionary Iran, and faced with draconian Khomeini-driven controls on music and music-making, especially for women, I had to leave my country of birth if I was to pursue musical studies. Arriving as a teenager at the Kyiv Conservatoire (Ukraine being one of the few countries to accept Iranians at the time), and far from being a 'strong man', I was faced with cultural barriers and general xenophobia, into which music could make few, if any, inroads. Unbending cultural and educational values felt like an impenetrable wall for those like me with radically different backgrounds. It was our duty to assimilate, to catch up or be left out – as many were. When, following my final piano recital, a Ukrainian classmate told me 'you are now one of us', I took that as the greatest accomplishment. But that feeling quickly evaporated as my teacher made sure to remind me that 'thankfully they didn't compare you to *our* students'. As with many, my journey in search of belonging has since taken me to many countries, in my case to Canada, France, England, and most recently back to Canada. Finally, after decades of resistance, I have found solace in acceptance: accepting that Iran, my Iran, is an inseparable part of me, and that music, my music, is my Refuge.

The development of music in Iran

While archaeological findings attest to the presence of music in Iran dating back to the third millennium BC, it is not until the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 AD) that concrete information survives about music and music-making in the Persian Empire. It is now reckoned that some of the melodic modes of this time became the foundation for the systems of dastgah and maqam which

are the basis of the music of Iran and much of the Middle East. In particular, it was during the Golden Age of Islam (8th to 13th centuries) that theories of music and aesthetics were developed in Iran, notably by Avicenna and Al-Farabi, whose theories still feature in global studies of music theory. But the formation and formulation of the system of Persian traditional music as we know it today had to wait until the 19th century and the Qajar dynasty (1789-1925).

It was during this time, especially thanks to the fascination with the West of the fourth King, Nasser al-Din Shah, 1848 to 1896, that modernisation and westernisation gained momentum. The role of the military was crucial. Following the same pattern as Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, and especially as a result of humiliating losses of land to Russia, Iran embarked on a European-style modernisation of its armed forces. Part of this process was a transformation of education under the supervision of European experts, resulting in the emergence of a new elite with knowledge of foreign languages (French in particular) and Western cultures.

The influence of Europe resulted in a drastic change in the visual arts, as the Persian 'miniature' genre was abandoned in favour of large-format oil painting, encouraged by royal patronage. In the field of music, inspired by the French military bands during a visit to Paris, Nasser-al-Din Shah hired Alfred Lemaire, a bandmaster and graduate of Paris Conservatoire, to replace the traditional trumpet-and-drum ensemble (naqqareh-khani) with European instruments. Lemaire, who was also commissioned to compose Iran's first national anthem, introduced Western instruments and techniques, along with Western-style musical notation and theory.

Outside the military milieu, it took longer for European music to make headway. Even in the Qajar court, despite its encouragement and generous remuneration of foreign musicians, it was indigenous music and instruments that continued to be supported by the Shahs and the cultural elites. It would take until the Pahlavi regime (1925-1979), and especially the reign of Mohammad-Reza Shah (from 1941), for Westernisation campaigns to achieve decisive breakthroughs. The culmination of these trends, at least for music and dance, came with the inauguration of the Roudaki Hall (now renamed Vahdat Hall), the country's first modern concert hall, in 1967, to coincide with the Shah's coronation. Under royal patronage, classical musicians and ballet dancers suddenly enjoyed elite status, both socially and financially. But this came at the expense of an increasing social divide and poverty, as well as subjugation to Western influence.

With the 1979 Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic regime, cultural activities came to a grinding, though thankfully temporary, halt, with Western popular music being particularly targeted by Khomeini's controls. Following Khomeini's death in 1989, the more moderate presidencies of Rafsanjani, and especially Khatami, allowed greater contact with the West, both politically and culturally. Since then, and despite the regime's continued oppressive controls, especially regarding female performance and solo singing, shifting cultural policies have allowed loopholes to appear. These in turn have resulted in creative solutions that continue to enrich a new musical scene. Orchestras, conservatoires and Western-style composition have all made tentative returns. At the same time, the regime's national impulses, and suppression of light entertainment music (*motrebi*), especially during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, led to a greater emphasis on the more serious traditional music (known, somewhat confusingly, as classical).

Iranian music

The above-mentioned pre-modern texts about music and aesthetics do not label genres or styles of music. Terminology such as 'Persian traditional music' (*musighi-ye sonnati*) or 'Persian authentic music' (*musighi-e asil-e Irani*) only date from the 19th century. Yet this music's confluence with Persian classical poetry, in particular that of Hafez and Rumi (medievalists by Western chronology), confirms its deep historical roots. Today, if you refer in Farsi to a musical style as 'classical', you need to distinguish between Iranian (that is, Persian traditional music) or 'World' (*Jahani*), which is (again confusingly) in effect Western art/Classical music.

To these one needs to add the numerous, intersecting regional and folk traditions, as well as the axis of elite-versus-popular. In this context, 'popular' again covers a wide range: from entertainment-designated Persian traditional music (*motrebi*) to Western-influenced popular music. This latter itself includes such genres as pre-revolutionary vaudeville-style music (*musighi Irooni*), by the likes of the wildly popular female singer Googoosh (who, following a twenty-year silence, restarted her international tours since Khatami's presidency, performing her Euro-synth songs to great acclaim in the West), which has been perpetuated by the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles (known as *Tehran-jelesy*). At the same time, post-Revolutionary regime-sanctioned pop music, with heavily controlled ideological messages, rubs shoulders with 'progressive' underground music that often includes elements of protest and resistance.

Stylistically, the recent history of music in Iran is caught between the opposing forces of modernisation (in effect Westernisation) and traditionalist purism. The conflict deepens as the two systems of music (Persian-traditional and Western-art) have very different grammars and syntaxes. Iran's traditional music is based on *radiff*: a collection of traditional melodies passed down through generations. These melodies are grouped into modal systems called *dastgahs*, each with its own emotional character and musical structure – similar to the modes or scales in Western music, but not based on the tempered intervals of the modern piano. Each *dastgah* contains smaller melodic units called *gusheh*, which musicians use as a foundation for improvisation. Rather than being performed rigidly, the *radif* and *dastgah* systems guide expressive and personal interpretation, in somewhat similar fashion to jazz standards.

While Persian traditional music was long preserved through oral transmission, the early twentieth century saw attempts, especially by the composer and former military colonel Ali-Naqi Vaziri (1887-1979), at the modernisation of its format and infrastructure, through western-style notation and theorisation, including the introduction, in the 1920s, of *sori* and *koron* signs to indicate microtonal alterations – pitches that fall between the notes of the Western equal-tempered scale. At the same time, in trying to blend Western-style polyphony with Persian music, Vaziri attempted a tempered equivalent of the Persian modal system, dividing the octave into 24 equal intervals. Later attempts at systematisation of this music include Mehdi Barkeshli's 22-tone model, based on the Pythagorean tuning principles, in the 1940s, and finally Hormoz Farhat's 'Five-Interval Framework', which, while rejecting previous models, takes into account the music's modal- and melody-based nature as well as its orality and flexibility.

Vaziri himself was behind some of the first works that either gave a Persian sound to Western instruments or combined Persian instruments, notably the three-stringed, lute-like *setar*, with the Western orchestra. Other composers and musicians, such as Loris Tjeknovarian (best known as a conductor), Hossein Alizadeh, Kayhan Kalhor, and the New York-based Reza Vali, have strikingly blended Persian traditional instruments and musical systems with Western ones. The fusion often requires various levels of negotiation and adjustment, be it, as in Reza Vali's 2003 *Concerto for Ney* (an end-blown flute) and *Orchestra* giving the instruments their own time and space, or, as in this evening's *Concerto for Kamancheh and Orchestra*, by opting for the compromise of equal-temperament tuning of the Persian instrument.

The Kamancheh

The first time I heard the kamancheh was also my first ever experience of attending a concert. It was in the Tehran of the 1980s, where live performances were gradually making their way back to concert halls. My family had mainly taken me to hear Beethoven's *Symphony No 8*, but the first half of the concert included a *Concerto for Kamancheh and Orchestra*, if memory serves, by Ardeshir Kamkar. Having grown up accustomed to the Western-style concert repertoire, albeit only on videos, I was surprised to see a small Persian carpet on the stage in front of the orchestra, and the soloist wearing no shoes, sitting in a lotus-like position behind a delicate-looking instrument. The kamancheh (literally meaning 'little bow') is a traditional, Persian, bowed string instrument with a long neck and bowl-shaped body, of ancient origin.

I remember sitting in the hall, struck by the intimacy and humility of the soloist, set against the backdrop of formally-dressed, orchestral musicians, and by the soulful and expressive soundworld of the instrument. It was like nothing I had heard before, and yet was like a sound from within, close to the essence of our being, the sound of home and belonging.

Rouzbeh Parsa's *Concerto for Kamancheh and Orchestra*

"The idea of composing this concerto shaped in May 2024 when Harry Sever, composer, pianist and musical director of the Cambridge Philharmonic Society, suggested that I should compose a piece for the Refuge Festival", the composer tells me. Before this meeting, Rouzbeh (himself a kamancheh exponent) and Harry knew each other, not only through their chats about music, but also thanks to a 20-minute improvisation concert in April 2023 in Cambridge. During the year that Rouzbeh worked on the composition, he tried out various melodies and dastgahs of Persian music, finally settling on Chahargah, considered an epic mode and known for its emotional range from introvert thoughtfulness to thrilling exhilaration.

A practical obstacle concerned blending the sori and koron intervals of microtonal Persian music with the well-tempered intervals of Western instruments and harmonies. "After some discussions with Harry and the orchestrator, Jonathan Brigg, it was decided that I would equalise the microtonal Persian intervals, offering a well-tempered version of Chahargah", Rouzbeh explains. Deciding to forego any use of actual folk music, he cast the concerto in two contrasting movements. The first is quiet and lyrical, with improvisatory elements at the beginning and middle, while the second is infused with vigorous and vibrant rhythmical energy, showcasing the kamancheh's range of technical possibilities.

One of Rouzbeh's principal concerns over the years has been to find a way of taking Persian music to a wider and more international audience, in the hope of using it precisely as a bridge to connect and heal. He is grateful for the opportunity the Cambridge Philharmonic has provided him to put into practice his ideas regarding the fusion of Persian traditional music and Western Art Music. Along with the centuries-old efforts of other Iranian musicians, his works have indeed proved that the twain may meet.

By Michelle Assay

Michelle Assay is a Marie Curie/UKRI Global Fellow at the Universities of Toronto and King's College London, working on Women and Western Art Music in Iran (www.Womusiran.com). Born in Iran, she holds a Magisteratura degree in piano performance from the Kyiv Conservatoire and a PhD from the Sorbonne and University of Sheffield. She has been a Leverhulme Fellow at the University of Huddersfield and is the author of award-winning articles on Russian and Soviet music and on Shakespeare and music. She appears in concerts as a pianist and is a regular broadcaster for the BBC and contributor to Gramophone.

Concerto for Orchestra

Béla Bartók (1881-1946)

Introduzione: Andante non troppo – Allegro vivace; Giuoco delle coppie – Allegro scherzando; Elegia – Andante non troppo; Intermezzo interrotto – Allegretto; Finale – Presto

In 1940 Bartók emigrated from his native Hungary to the United States to escape the growing turmoil of war. It was not a happy time, especially as this meant leaving behind his roots, his family ties and his sources of income. He was also beginning to suffer from what would be an ultimately fatal illness, and in 1943, while lecturing on folk music at Harvard University, his health took a turn for the worse, to a point where it must have seemed doubtful whether he would work again. Yet by the end of the year he had finished the *Concerto for Orchestra*, his last completed work, and one that would finally establish him as one of the leading composers of the 20th century.

The concerto was written as a result of a commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra for a substantial new work, something which had been urged by Bartók's compatriots, the violinist Josef Szigeti and conductor Fritz Reiner. The conductor of the Boston Symphony, Serge Koussevitzky, visited Bartók, on his sick bed, to inform him of the award and to give him

a substantial down payment. This was partly a way of helping with Bartók's increasing financial problems, and there must have been real doubt in Koussevitzky's mind whether the work would actually be forthcoming. However the commission had an immediate re-energising effect on Bartók, who promptly transferred to a private sanatorium in upstate New York and set to work. As he wrote to his son, Peter: "I am working on the commissioned piece. I do not know whether there is any connection between this and the improvement in my health, but in any case I am very busy. Practically most of the day is taken up with it. It is a long work: five movements. But the first four are already finished."

The concerto was completed in less than two months. It is a remarkable work, full of the folk tunes that Bartók had researched all his life, a highly personal and compelling reflection of the times, of Hungary and of the war, but also of hope. As its title suggests, it demands great virtuosity from the orchestra, but it is at heart a symphonic work with its own narrative. As Bartók explained in the programme note for the first performance: "The title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a concertant or soloistic manner. The general mood of the work represents – apart from the jesting second movement – a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third movement to the life-assertion of the last one."

The first performance of the *Concerto for Orchestra* was given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in New York on 1 December 1944, with Koussevitzky conducting. It received both critical and public acclaim and has become a standard of the orchestral repertoire.

The five movements

1. Introduzione: Andante non troppo – Allegro vivace

The slow introduction, a rising and falling figure, followed by shimmering strings and a short flute commentary, is repeated twice in expanded form before the brass sound a lament. This is then taken up by the strings as the music moves forward into the *Allegro*. Bartók then follows classic sonata form – an exposition, development and recapitulation – with wistful folk melodies being interspersed with threatening militaristic-sounding outbursts, before a short coda brings the movement to an end.

2. *Giuoco delle coppie (Game of Pairs) – Allegro scherzando*

The second movement – the ‘Game of Pairs’ – is akin to a classic scherzo and trio, with the scherzo, introduced by a side drum, consisting of a series of five pairs of instruments playing an extended dance-like tune. The intervals between the pairs of instruments are varied as the tune progresses, with bassoons in minor sixths, oboes in minor thirds, clarinets in minor sevenths, flutes in fifths and muted trumpets in minor seconds, all helping to create different sound textures as the tune unfolds. The trio is a chorale-like interlude. The scherzo then returns, the pairs now being augmented by neighbouring instruments, until the side drum ends the movement as it began.

3. *Elegia – Andante non troppo*

The third movement is the emotional heart of the concerto, full of sadness and longing. It begins with an example of Bartók’s so-called night music, before calls in the woodwind and brass usher in a series of more troubled sections, reminders perhaps of Bartók’s homeland and its fate in the war. The night music then returns, followed by a more reflective section, before a lone flute brings the movement to a close.

4. *Intermezzo interrotto – Allegretto*

The *Intermezzo* starts with a folk tune, followed by a string section, before the first theme reappears. But then the whole process is rudely interrupted by a vulgarised march, said to be Bartók parodying the march from Shostakovich’s 7th Symphony, the ‘Leningrad’. This was used to bolster Russian morale at a critical time in the war and became very popular in the US – a great deal more than Bartók thought it merited. By way of contrast, Bartók then re-introduces the peaceful folk melodies as the *Intermezzo* returns.

5. *Finale – Presto*

After an opening statement from the horns, the strings set off on a frantic rush of notes, with the woodwind and brass later joining in the chase. The music then gradually slows, only to be followed by a wild dance tune, until finally we reach the development section. This then grows ever more urgent until the strings set off once more. There follows a reflective, transitional passage before the music begins to rebuild, after which there is a coda with its bold restatements of the theme, and a final flourish on the brass.

By Chris Fisher

Interval

***Odyssey* (2023)**

Jonathan Dove (b. 1959)

Drawing on first-hand accounts of refugees, *Odyssey* follows one person's harrowing flight from his homeland, leaving loved ones to travel alone, braving dangers and hardships on land, and make the desperate voyage across the Mediterranean in an overcrowded boat – the voyage that has cost so many lives. A journey through strange landscapes in unfamiliar countries, fearfully crossing borders and navigating the unknown.

The work celebrates the courage of those who make the perilous journey, and the complex fortunes of those who manage to make a life in a new country, yet always long for home.

The storytelling is shared between adult chorus, children's chorus, community chorus and soprano and tenor soloists, with symphony orchestra.

Odyssey has been written in such a way that it may be fully or partially staged. There are eight scenes. In the first, the Refugee tells us something of his home. In the second, we learn of the circumstances that force the Refugee to say goodbye to his Mother and leave home. He prepares for the journey. The next scene describes journeys in a lorry. The following scene involves journeys on foot, with various encounters. Finally, in the sixth scene, the Refugee reaches the sea. He has never seen the sea. The next scene is the longest, describing the journey by sea. In the last scene, the Refugee reaches his destination.

Odyssey took shape over several years. In 2016, Donald Reeves, Director of the Soul of Europe, asked if I would be interested in telling the story of refugees' experiences in their journey to Europe from home. He gave me copies of *The Lightless Sky*, Gulwali Passarlay's first-hand account of his journey from Afghanistan to England; and *The New Odyssey*, Patrick Kingsley's study of many migrants' journeys, including much first-hand detail. It was a privilege eventually to meet Gulwali and Patrick.

Conductor David Ogden had already expressed an interest in commissioning a new work for City of Bristol Choir, and was taken with the idea of a dramatic oratorio telling a refugee's story. Bristol Music Trust and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra co-commissioned the work together with the choir.

Bristol Music Trust helped to develop the piece, by organising workshops in which librettist Alasdair Middleton and I met refugees currently living in Bristol. Through John Barber, we met others who bravely told us of their

traumatic experiences. *Odyssey* reflects many first-hand accounts of refugees' journeys to the United Kingdom.

By Jonathan Dove (January 2024)

Text of Odyssey by Alasdair Middleton

SCENE 1

HIM

I was you.

Once.

Once I was you.

I have been running.

*I have been running away from this
for a long time.*

Can I show you?

I have some pictures.

Here.

This is home.

CHORUS (SATB/COMMUNITY)

Home.

HIM

*A little girl holding a dove in her
hands beside a well of clear water.*

This is home.

CHORUS

*There is bread in the oven,
White sheets on the bed,
And the sun sets behind a jar of
honey.*

MOTHER

Aisha! Aisha!

Ahmed!

Yousef!

CHILDREN

Your mother is calling you home.

MOTHER

Aisha!

HIM

*This is a picnic we had in the orchard.
Those are quinces.*

MOTHER

Dinner

Bed

Home

CHORUS

*The crescent moon above the trees.
The moon in the water.*

HIM

*This was my house.
They burned down the orchard.*

MOTHER

Aisha! Aisha!

HIM

A mother is calling her daughter.

ALL

Home.

SCENE 2

CHORUS

Opposition

Demonstrations

Insurrection

Reprisals

HIM

*Like smoke from the smouldering
orchard.*

Its started.

CHORUS

*Executions
Intervention
Revolution
Invasion*

MOTHER

*They round up the youth in the street,
Truck them off to the compound.
They tell the young girls to walk
through the minefields –
Young boys to carry the bombs.*

HIM

*That Block on the edge of the town
Young men go in
Smoke comes out.*

CHORUS

*Occupation
Intervention
Revolution
The Government
American
Taliban*

MOTHER

*Out in the orchard
They hand our sons spades
Tell them: dig your own graves.*

CHORUS

*Opposition etc
At Midnight they batter down the
doors
At Dawn they hose the blood from
the streets
At Noon they break the Children's
hands
At Sunset they torch the bodies in the
square.*

MOTHER

*Save yourself
This house cannot be your home
anymore
This bed not your rest.
This bread not your food.
Save yourself
These words cannot fit your tongue
anymore
This road be your way.
You must go.*

HIM

*No more
This woman my mother
No more
This child my son.
No more
This man my brother.
No more
This land my land.
No more*

CHORUS

*No child
No land
No home*

SCENE 3

MOTHER

You must go.

HIM

How?

CHORUS (small group)

*My uncle has a friend who has a
friend who knows somebody.*

HIM

Somebody?

CHORUS

Better you don't know

MOTHER

You must go

HIM

Go. Where?

CHORUS

*My cousin has a friend who has an
aunt who knows somebody
Who could get you away*

HIM

Away?

Where to?

CHORUS

*Anywhere
Better you don't know.*

HIM

Where?

MOTHER

There.

Europa!

CHORUS (SATB, COMMUNITY,
CHILDREN)

Europa!

Blonde hair

White breast

Security

Safety, Justice, Rest

MOTHER

Do you have all the money?

Have you got everything?

I.D.?

HIM

I'll come back when it's safe.

MOTHER

Passport?

HIM

I'll send for you when I'm settled.

MOTHER

Seasickness tablets?

HIM

It won't be forever.

MOTHER

My heart is bleeding

CHORUS (SATB, COMMUNITY,
CHILDREN)

Europa

Blue eyes

Wide table

Security

Plenty, harbour, hearth, and cradle

MOTHER

This bed not your rest.

This road not your way.

Here – take the key.

Now

*Go to that place on the outskirts of
town*

And wait.

SCENE 4

CHORUS (SATB)

Wait!

On the edge

The parched crust of town

Dust and thistles.

Perched on the kerb

Between nowhere and somewhere

HIM

Wait for the lorry

Hand the driver this paper

Don't look in his eyes.

CHORUS

Loads of us

Human litter

Packed in the black of the back of the truck

Shuddering

HIM

Off to my guttering future.

CHORUS

Minutes

Hours

Days

Of blackness and stink

Stop

Tumble

Bundled out of the darkness

Blinking blinded in light.

Wait

Some led off

Some join

Wait for a lorry

HIM

Hand the driver this paper

Don't look in his eyes.

CHORUS

Loaded back

Packed in the black of the back of the truck

Juddering

HIM

Over imaginary borders.

CHORUS

Stop

Out!

Bundled out of the darkness

Snarled in a tangle of languages

Wait for your guide.

HIM

From hereon you'll walk.

SCENE 5

CHORUS (SATB, COMMUNITY,
CHILDREN)

In the Name of God

The Merciful

The Compassionate

HIM

After Evening Prayers

The Moon rises

We set off

Silent

Unseen

Safe

So we think

In the starlight

We walk the dark track to a border

CHORUS

One step further

One step nearer

Europa the possible.

SEMICHORUS

Ssssh

HIM

Listen

SEMICHORUS

Lights out!

CHORUS

There in the woods

There are people

Soldiers – Bandits – Police?

Strangers with torches

Ssssh

HIM

Those strangers speak...

CHORUS

Brother?

Brother

Friend?

Friend

HIM

We are on the same journey

We sit for a while

In the starlight

Brew tea

Swap stories of hardship

And smile

And for a while

It's like

Home

Then on

CHORUS

In the Name of God

The Merciful

One step further

One step nearer

There in the mist

There are people.

Friends – Bandits – Police?

Strangers with weapons.

Guns, rifles, pistols, knives

Bandits surround us

Round them up

Herd them off to the compound

You have money?

Your people back home they have

money?

They will pay to keep you alive?

You'd better hope.

Trapped

Held

In

HIM

Arbitrary Cruelty

What shall I tell of the torture?

Which bits of me burned?

Or broke?

What exactly they cut in my brain?

Why?

I have no idea why

Arbitrary Cruelty

They got paid I suppose.

We set off

We walk the dark track to a border

CHORUS

One step further

One step nearer

Europa the possible.

CHORUS (men)

Police!

Border Police!

Don't move!

You're surrounded

You can't run away

Hands up!

Papers?

Where are your papers?

*Show us your passports – your
papers?*

Where are you from?

In the van!

All of you get in the van!

We're taking you back!

HIM

Back where we started

Back where they left us

*There
Where we started walking
They leave us.*

SCENE 6

CHORUS
*Somewhere along the way
The Black way
A coach stops
Men in black masks
Out!
We get out.
Blackness
Despair*

HIM
*A vast blankness before me
The moon smeared across it
This
They tell me
Is shore
That
Is sea
Sea
Shore
Never been on shore
Never seen the sea
Never heard
This sighing*

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea is uncertain*

HIM
What is certain is Death if I stay.

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea is merciless*

HIM
*Better to trust to the mercy of God
Than the mercy of men.*

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea is bitter*

HIM
*My life is a smouldering orchard
And they have sown my future with
salt.*

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea has drowned thousands*

HIM
*Sorrows have drowned me
And I am already dead.*

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea is darkness*

HIM
Beyond it lies light.

CHORUS
*Stay
This sea is despair*

HIM
*Hush
There is nothing in front of us
worse than what waits behind.*

CHORUS
*There
Under the moonlight
The boats!
Wade in the water
Clutching possessions
Something like hope in our hands.*

*Into the boats
Off
Over the sea.*

SCENE 7

HIM

*And there was one day
At sea*

MOTHER

Aa'ishah

HIM

*What I remember is her eyes
I can't show you a picture
Eyes to dive into
Everything was lost in her eyes
There on the boat for a while
The puking, the sickness, the squalor
Forgotten.
We smiled at each other
Human
I never knew her name
And there was one day we witnessed
a miracle.*

CHORUS

*Europa
Nearly there
We're nearly there
Europa
The sea
The sun
The sun setting
Beauty*

HIM

*Wait!
The sun sets in the west
But we're going away
Away from the sun
We're going back
Back*

CHORUS

*Back
No
Back
No
We can't
We won't
Go
Back*

SOLO (from Chorus, spoken with
loudhailer)

*Tough
We've had word
There's another thirty joining
We're heading back
Picking them up
Thirty
Sixty thousand dollars*

CHORUS

*We are too many
Already too many
No room
The sea is retching
Pitching the boat
Possessions scattered
People flung
Waves washing over us
Water!
We're letting in water
Lighter
We need to be lighter
What we have left
We throw in the guts of the sea.
The water wants more
Lifted
Flung
Dropped
The sea smacks us
Overboard*

HIM

Aa'ishah!

Hold on!

Her wrist

Her palm

Her fingers

Aa'ishah!

Your fingers

*Your fingers slipping through my
fingers*

Lost

Falling

Free

Down

Into the drowned orchard

*And a black shout rang around the
mountains*

Aa'ishah

Lost

This is not a song

This is a monument

To the fallen

CHORUS/COMMUNITY/CHILDREN

What will we say on that night?

*That wonderful night when we rise
from the fathomless deep*

*Sea-rotten flesh back on our
barnacled bones*

When the angel demands:

MOTHER

So many of you?

*How are there so many lost in the
depths of this sea?*

CHORUS/COMMUNITY/CHILDREN

What will we answer?

*"I held out my hand to my brother
But he would not take it.*

I stumbled in front of my father

But he would not lift me.

I called in the night to my mother

But she would not hear me.

I wept tears of blood by my sister

But she would not dry them."

What will we say on that night?

HIM

And there was one day when

CHORUS/COMMUNITY/CHILDREN

Europa!

Look

Europa!

HIM

And all of us

We clap

We sing

CHORUS/COMMUNITY/CHILDREN

All of us

Syrian

Iranian

Kurds

Pakistani

Eritrean

Yemeni

Afghan

Palestinian

Bulgarian

Albanian

My fathers

My mothers

My sisters

My brothers

My men

My women

My young

My old

My children

My grandparents

All of us

CHORUS

Look

Boats

Coastguards

SOLO (from Chorus, spoken with
loudhailer)

Stay still

Don't rock the boat

Keep your mouths shut

CHORUS

Throwing us lifelines

HIM

Our hands are empty

We grasp the ropes

Hold onto the lifelines

We climb onto the lifeboats.

SCENE 8

CHORUS (basses)

How did you get here?

Why did you come here?

Where are you from?

Who are you?

Passports?

Papers?

HIM

On the seacoast of Despair

The first of the thousand questions

CHILDREN

*If there were a thousand seas to
cross,*

*We would cross a thousand seas and
one sea*

If we had a thousand lives to lose,

We would lose a thousand lives and

one life

*If we were sent back a thousand
ways,*

*We would come back a thousand
ways and one way.*

*If there were a thousand nights to
wait,*

*We would wait a thousand nights and
one night*

If we had a thousand deaths to die,

*We would die a thousand deaths and
one death*

And

We will answer

*"This Hell is better than the Hell we
come from."*

CHORUS

Shunted Shifted Shoved Denied

Pushed about Penned in

Doubted Dismissed

Probed Processed

Rejections

Refusals

HIM

I have been running

*I have been running away from this
for a long time.*

My feet are weeping

This is arrival

Now I will sit down

CHORUS

Shunted, shifted etc

HIM

Sit down in a scorched orchard

Sit down by a sea of ash

And wait

For a thousand days

And a thousand days

And a thousand days

CHORUSES, CHILDREN

If there were a thousand seas etc

MOTHER

Where is my boy, my child?

Say – where is his grave?

By what black track is he buried?

Lost under what wave?

HIM

And one day I will be just like you

I'll have what you have

*A doorstep curved by my family's
feet*

I'll send for you when I'm settled

I'll send you some pictures.

We'll have a picnic in the orchard

Eat quinces

CHORUS

There is bread in the oven

White sheets on the bed

*And the sun sets behind a jar of
honey*

The crescent moon above the trees

The moon in the water

MOTHER

Aisha! Ahmed! Yousef!

CHORUSES, CHILDREN

Your mother is calling you

ALL

Home

Francesca Chiejina *soprano*



Nigerian-American soprano Francesca Chiejina is a graduate of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where her roles included Countess Ceprano *Rigoletto*, Lady-in-Waiting *Macbeth*, Voice from Heaven *Don Carlo*, and Ines *Il trovatore*. She is the winner of the 2023 UK Critics' Circle Young Talent (Voice) Award.

Highlights in the 2024/ 2025 season include the New Year's concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the reprisal of her role as the soprano soloist in Crystal Pite's *Light of Passage* with the Royal Ballet.

Recent operatic highlights include: Jo Ann *New Year* with Birmingham Opera Company; title role *Semele* with Blackheath Opera; High Priestess *Aida* at Royal Opera House; Lauretta *Il Trittico* with Scottish Opera; Mimì *La bohème* (Nevill Holt Opera, English Touring Opera); Melissa *Amadigi* (English Touring Opera); Miss Jessel *The Turn of the Screw* (OperaGlass Works); the title role in English Touring Opera's film of Elena Langer and Glyn Maxwell's *Ariadne*; Freia *Das Rheingold* (Birmingham Opera Company); Anne Trulove *The Rake's Progress* (Blackheath Halls Opera); her debut with Capella Cracoviensis as Aldimira *Sigismondo*; her house and role debut as Clara *Porgy and Bess* at Grange Park Opera; and her debut with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (Serena *Porgy and Bess*).

On the concert platform she has recently sung Strauss *Orchesterlieder* with the Orchestra of Opera North and the BBC Philharmonic, Berg's *Seven Early Songs* with the Sinfonia of London and John Wilson at the BBC Proms, Mozart's *Requiem* with Crouch End Festival Chorus, Bach's *St John Passion* with Huddersfield Choral Society and Manchester Camerata, Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the BBC Philharmonic and with the Royal Northern Sinfonia at the Sage Gateshead; Handel's *Messiah* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall; Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* at the Last Night of the BBC Proms; and Schubert's *Winterreise* in recital at Blackheath Halls.

John Gyeantey *tenor*



British tenor John Gyeantey is steadily gaining a reputation as a fine exponent of the *bel canto* repertoire. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Accademia Rossiniana, Pesaro, where he worked closely with Alberto Zedda, and began his training at the Royal College of Music and then the National Opera Studio as a Peter Moores Foundation Major Scholar.

On the concert platform, he is sought after as a sensitive and versatile artist with performances taking him across the UK, Europe and the Middle East. Appearances include the title roles in *Acis and Galatea*

(The Chapel Royal, St James's Palace) and Thomas Arne's *Judgment of Paris* (Wigmore Hall), *Carmina Burana*, *Messiah*, *St Matthew Passion* for Spanish TV, Mozart *Requiem* (RAH), Mahler *Das Klagende Lied* with the LPO under Vladimir Jurowski (RFH), Haydn *Creation* (Cairo Opera House) and Haydn *Stabat Mater* recorded for Luxembourg Radio. His Rossini roles include Ramiro *La Cenerentola* (Oper Schloss Hallwyl, covers for Glyndebourne and Opera North); Ruodi *Guillaume Tell* and Aronne *Mosè in Egitto* (covers for Welsh National Opera); Comte Ory *Le Comte Ory* (Opera South); Count Almaviva *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Festival Musique Cordiale, Diva Opera and Welsh National Opera); Zefirino *Il viaggio a Reims*, Adelberto (cover) *Adelaide di Borgogna* (both for the Rossini Opera Festival, Pesaro); Alberto *L'occasione fa il ladro* (OperaMinima); Gernando/Ubaldo *Armida* (St. John's, Smith Square); Norfolk *Elisabetta Regina d'Inghilterra* (English Touring Opera). Also for ETO, he has sung Belmonte *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Tigrane *Radamisto*, Arnalta *The Coronation of Poppea*, Egeus *Jason* by Cavalli, Arbace *Idomeneo*, Ghino *Pia de Tolomei* by Donizetti, Pylade *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Eumeus *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and Evangelist *St Matthew* and *St John Passions*. Other roles include Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni* (Mid-Wales Opera); Judge in Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane*, recorded for Virgin/EMI with the LPO; Camille de Rosillon *The Merry Widow* (Scottish Opera); Romeo *Romeo et Juliette*; Mime *Das Rheingold* (Birmingham Opera Company); and most recently Nemorino *L'elisir d'amore* (West Green House Opera and Anghiari Festival, Tuscany) and Police Buddy *Blue* for English National Opera.

Rouzbeh Parsa *kamancheh*



Rouzbeh Parsa is a Kamancheh player who graduated from Tehran University of Art and Architecture.

He has attended numerous festivals and has won awards for his exceptional skills as a Kamancheh player. He is also known for writing two critically-acclaimed books on Kamancheh history and traditions.

Rouzbeh writes: 'The Kamancheh is one of the oldest traditional instruments in Iranian music, and I've always wanted to write a concerto

for Kamancheh and orchestra.

I'm excited about blending Iranian music with other traditions. I listen to composers like Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Arvo Pärt - I feel such a connection to them and their folk roots.

I loved working with the Cambridge Philharmonic last year. It opened a new imagination in my mind, it was very inspiring for me. I felt so welcomed, and everyone was so supportive. I can't wait to work with them again on this project.'

Harry Sever *conductor*



BBC Music Magazine 'Rising Star' conductor Harry Sever studied at Oxford University and trained at the Guildhall School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. A finalist in both the LSO's Donatella Flick and the Athens International Conducting Competitions, recent and upcoming engagements include *Das Rheingold/Die Walküre* (Grange Park Opera), *Cavalleria Rusticana/Aleko/Carmen* and *The Big Opera Adventure* (Opera North), *Die Fledermaus* (Staatstheater

Meiningen), *Die Walküre/Siegfried/The Fairy Queen* (Longborough Festival Opera), *Siegfried* (Sønderjyllands Symfoniorkester/Den Ny Opera), *Fantasio* (Garsington), *La Traviata* (Opera Holland Park), concerts with the orchestra of Welsh National Opera and recordings with the orchestra of Opera North.

He is Music Director of the Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, and was formerly the Ring Cycle Conducting Fellow at Longborough Festival Opera.

As an assistant conductor and member of music staff, Harry has worked with the LPO, ENO, Scottish Opera, Kammerakademie Potsdam, The Royal Danish Opera, Den Jyske Opera, Garsington, Opera Holland Park, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the Grange Festival, and Britten Sinfonia at Sadler's Wells.

His education work has included projects with The Royal Opera House Covent Garden, The Royal Opera Academy in Copenhagen, British Youth Opera, Birmingham Conservatoire and Trinity Laban Conservatoire.

Freya Goldmark *guest leader*

Photo: York Tillyer



Freya Goldmark is a British violinist acclaimed for her dynamic career as a soloist, chamber musician, and artistic director.

She began playing at age four and made her concerto debut at 13 at the Rachmaninov Institute, later performing across the UK, Europe, and Asia. Highlights include appearances at the Barbican Centre, Cadogan Hall, Royal Albert Hall's Elgar Room, and Mansion House.

The 2024/25 season marks a significant chapter in Freya's career. She made her solo debut with the BBC Philharmonic, earning praise for her intensity and artistry, and gave her Barbican Centre concerto debut performing the world premiere of Erland Cooper's *Carve The Runes*. She also made her solo debut with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in a newly commissioned work for BBC Radio 3's 25 for 25 series, broadcast nationwide in early 2025. She has also recently been named one of 30 Classic FM 2025 *Rising Stars* under the age of 30.

In 2024, she toured three continents, performing in Bogotá, New York, Berlin, Paris, Barcelona, and beyond. Her upcoming season includes concertos by Mendelssohn, Brahms, Beethoven, Bruch, and Guirne Creith.

In 2022, Freya joined the Ligeti Quartet, an ensemble known for championing contemporary music. Highlights include appearances at the Southbank Centre, Aldeburgh Festival, and Bang on a Can's Long Play in New York. She has taught internationally at top institutions including Royal Academy of Music, Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá and the Royal Danish Academy.

Freya is the founder and director of Stamford International Music Festival, named a top UK summer festival three years running by BBC Music Magazine. She also regularly records for film and TV, and has collaborated with Pet Shop Boys, Pulp, Shirley Bassey, and more. Freya studied at the Royal College of Music and plays a 1740 Camilli of Mantua violin.

Cambridge Philharmonic Chorus

Soprano 1

Jane Cook
Eri Latorre-Chimoto
Jiayi Li
Nicola Lythgoe
Ros Mitchell
Jan Moore
Penny Mullock
Chessie Nour
Susan Randall
Mary Richards
Sheila Rushton
Anne Sales
Pat Sartori
Laura Simmons
Hannah Stephenson
Linda Stollwerck Bolton

Soprano 2

Cathy Ashbee
Rachael Churchill
Gertrud Hill
Clara Le Gargasson
Suzie McCave
Melissa Murray
Wren Stella
Sheila Stephens
Diana Sutton
Keren Turton
Catharine Warren

Alto 1

Julie Bergner
Alexandra Bolton
Caroline Courtney
Catherine Dixon
Denise Emery
Elaine Fulton
Masako Narita
Alison Russell
Sarah Upjohn
Alison Vinnicombe
Helen Wheatley
Anne Willitts
Susan Wilson

Alto 2

Jane Bower
Helen Cross
Elisabeth Crowe
Stephanie Gray
Hilary Jackson
Lynne McClure
Sue Purseglove
Chris Strachan
Joanna Womack
Kate Wootton

Tenor 1

Doug Addy
Chris Schaefer
Peter Scholten
John Williams

Tenor 2

Aidan Baker
Jeremy Baumberg
Ben Hetherington
Andy Pierce
Chris Price

Bass 1

Chris Coffin
Matt Freeman
Patrick Hall
Andrew Hodgson
Lewis Jones
David Lau
Roger McClure
Martin Scutt

Bass 2

Richard Birkett
Philip Parker
Tom Wale

Chorus Master

Tom Primrose

Children's Chorus

Pupils of North Cambridge Academy

Malin
Sakine
Jolene
Luna
Kritika
Hallie
Alana
Rosa

Alicia
Seren
Mia
John
Rosha
Vanessa
Saiha
Thandi

Supported by
Evie Perfect and Zoe
Gunasekera of Clare
College, Cambridge

Community Chorus

Anastasiya Timoshyna
Anna Kvit
Crystal Wong
Daisy Chiu
Daniel Rizzi
Dzhenifer Okafor Ifeoma
Elizabeth Leech
Katerina Oliynyk

Ken Leung
Liliia Koldaieva
Liuda Dovgan
Oksana Terpelivaya
Olesia Gagaeiva
Shan (Sandy) Ip Po
Svitlana Piven

Supporting musicians

We are grateful to the following, mainly from Clare College, for supporting the Community Chorus, and to six singers from Cambridge Philharmonic listed elsewhere in the programme:

Cheryl Jeyakumar
Daniel Liu
Patrick Tweedie
Sophie Meredith
Sylvia Hearn

We thank Anne Sales, Elisabeth Crowe and Jonathan Brigg for their administration and leadership of the Community Chorus rehearsals.

We also gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Clare College and Cambridge City Council.

Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra

Violin 1

Freya Goldmark (leader)
Kate Clow (co leader)
Anne McAleer
John Byrne
Margaret Scourse
Sarah Ridley
Nichola Roe
John Richards
Hilary Crooks
Stuart Holder

Violin 2

Robert McFall
Emma Lawrence
Naomi Hilton
Anne Hewitt
Roz Chalmers
Christen Lee
Joyce Yu
Amelie Roper
Abigail Tan
Manon Couvignou

Viola

Lucy Prichard
Peter Conlon
Edna Murphy
Jeremy Harmer
David Yadin
Emma McCaughan
Xavier Salazar
Robyn Sorenson
Dominic de Cogan

Cello

Daniel Coldridge
Anna Edwards
Angela Bennett
Lucy O'Brien
Isabel Groves
Helen Davies
Jess Llewellyn
Catherine Wilson
Helen Hills
David Brown
Clare Gilmour

Double Bass

Tony Scholl
Susan Sparrow
Alan Blackwell

Flute

Adrienne Kelly Jackson
Sarah Blazeby
Louise Wells

Piccolo

Sarah Blazeby

Oboe

Rachael Dunlop
Katy Shorttle
Kate Molloy

Cor Anglais

Kate Molloy

Clarinet

Graham Dolby
Zenta Henkhuzens
David Hayton

Bass Clarinet

David Hayton

Bassoon

Neil Greenham
Jenny Warburton
Phil Evans

Contra Bassoon

Phil Evans

Horn

Caroline Prozesky
Tim Rausch
Gareth Edwards
Chris Wykes

Trumpets

Alex McLean
Christian Overhead
Laureen Hodge

Trombone

Ryan Higgin
Denise Hayles

Bass Trombone

Gary Davison

Tuba

Robin Norman

Timpani

Dave Ellis

Percussion

Derek Scull
Nick Cowling
Ryan Hepburn

Harp

Nicolette Chin
Esther Beyer



CAMBRIDGE
PHILHARMONIC

Tonight's concert will support awareness and the work of local charity 'Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign'

There will be a bucket collection in the foyer at the end of the concert, or if you'd like to donate online please scan the QR code below.



CRRC is a registered charity for the purpose of supporting the resettlement of refugees in the Cambridge area. Volunteer-run, they provide a wide range of practical support to resettled refugee families and work closely with the Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils and other local stakeholders. They advocate on behalf of our service-users for their wellbeing, assistance with housing, healthcare and education.

Key Activities:

- Sourcing items of furniture, household equipment, tech or bikes
- Helping new families to settle in by tidying gardens and equipping homes
- Chaperoning at medical appointments and offering a doula service for expectant mothers
- Running English for Speakers of other Languages classes with childcare
- Organising programmes of outings and activities & social events
- Assisting with translation, counselling, advice and educational opportunities
- Offering hardship grants to families in distress alongside costs for driving lessons or dentistry
- Giving talks and presentations about refugee issues, particularly at local schools.

MORE INFORMATION

www.cambridgerefugees.org

**Donate online here
using Kindlink**



Cambridge Philharmonic Next Concert

Saturday 5 July 2025 at 4pm

Britten *Peter Grimes*

Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

With British Youth Opera

Second performance at Cadogan Hall, London on 6 July at 4pm

Tickets: cadoganhall.com

To book tickets, become a Philharmonic Friend
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www.cambridgephilharmonic.com

Enjoyed tonight's concert?

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We are very grateful to **The Pye Foundation** and the **Garfield Weston Foundation** for their generous support this season. We also warmly thank the following Friends and Supporters: Charles Chadwyck-Healey, Christine Halstead, Nicolas Leduc, Nick McCave, Sophie Prett, Caroline Shepherd, Helen Wylie, Trinity College, Fellows of Selwyn College, Churchill College, Emmanuel College, Pembroke College and other donors who wish to remain anonymous.

For details of ways to support Cambridge Philharmonic, including how to access the benefits of our Friends supporter scheme see:
www.cambridgephilharmonic.com/support-us

