



ABO Announces Fifth Year of ‘Sirens’ Grants to Promote Music of Historical Women

Today (Wednesday 13 October 2021), the ABO has announced the fifth round of grants from the **Sirens Fund** awarded to orchestras performing music by historic women composers from around the world.

This year, funds have been awarded to six orchestras – **The Hallé, Nevis Ensemble, Royal College of Music, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, National Orchestra for All** and **Ulster Orchestra**. The composers championed through these grant-winning organisations include **Florence Price, Grace Williams, Mary Lou Williams, Grażyna Bacewicz** and **Augusta Holmés**.

The Hallé – ‘Ethiopia’s Shadow in America’ by Florence Price

Tantalising mystery surrounds the Hallé and Florence Price, the first African-American woman to gain recognition as a symphonic composer. In 1951, Sir John Barbirolli commissioned her to write for the Orchestra, but no evidence of any finished piece survives. 70 years later, The Hallé will perform Ethiopia’s Shadow in America, which combines melodies of pure beauty with an evocative musical language drawn from the spirituals of African-American slaves. The third movement of this work will be featured in **Hallé for Youth** in March 2022 and will also form part of the schools’ project that accompanies each concert, in which children will create their own musical responses to the piece, and choreograph in dance workshops led by **Northern Ballet**.

Performances: Performed as part of three ‘Opus One’ concerts on 13, 14 and 17 October 2021 at the Bridgewater Hall as well on tour to Sheffield City Hall on the evening of 15 October.

Nevis Ensemble – ‘Sea Sketches’ by Grace Williams

Sea Sketches, by Grace Williams is a five-movement work for string orchestra depicting different moods of the sea, possibly reflecting on memories of Williams’ hometown of Barry in south Wales, where she returned to live soon after. As Williams herself said: ‘I don’t want to stay in London - I just long to get home and live in comfort by the sea.’ Nevis Ensemble’s performances of *Sea Sketches* will take this water-inspired music around the islands of the Inner Hebrides, to schools, community spaces, social care and health care settings as part of an extensive tour of free participatory performances.

Performances: Public and social venues around the islands of Iona, Mull, Rùm, Eigg and Skye 13 – 19 June 2022.

Royal College of Music – ‘Zodiac Suite’ by Mary Lou Williams arranged by Laura Jurd

Mary Lou Williams (1910–1981) is often described as the first female jazz composer. A musical prodigy, she played piano with Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington. Written in 1945, *Zodiac Suite* is a 12-piece work with each movement representing a zodiac sign and dedicated to musicians Williams performed with. In addition, the concerts for schools on 12 October 2021 will be based around a theme that stems from the *Zodiac Suite*.

Performances: Wednesday 13 October 2021, 19.30 Britten Theatre, Royal College of Music

RCM Jazz Orchestra directed by **Mark Armstrong** with guest soloist **Zoe Rahman**. This performance will also be streamed live and available online. The schools’ concerts are on Tuesday 12 October 11:30 and 13:15, also in the Britten Theatre.

Royal Scottish National Orchestra – ‘Divertimento for Strings’ by Grażyna Bacewicz

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra’s performances of Grażyna Bacewicz’s *Divertimento for Strings* on 3 March (Caird Hall, Dundee), 4 March (Usher Hall, Edinburgh), and 5 March 2022 (Glasgow Royal Concert Hall) will mark the Scottish premieres of this piece. Conducted by Elim Chan, the performance will also be available online.

National Orchestra for All (NOFA) ‘Andromède’ by Augusta Holmes

The Augusta Holmès composition *Andromède* forms part of a series of pieces that National Orchestra for All will be rehearsing throughout its residential activity and online courses in 2022 and will be performed at the end of each course, including at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and University of Warwick.

Performances: Online sessions: 5-6 March 2022, online via Zoom; Spring course: 11-14 April 2022, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire; Summer course: 26-29 July 2022, University of Warwick.

Ulster Orchestra - La Nuit et L’amour (Night and Love) by Augusta Holmès

The Ulster Orchestra is delighted to be performing *La Nuit et L’amour* by the French-Irish composer Augusta Holmès. Holmès flouted the conventions of the late 19th century to not just write music, but write music that was intense, powerful and political – her boldness deserves this celebration of her work.

Performance: Tuesday 25 March 2022, live in Belfast. Separate digital recording (audio/visual) available as online resource after the live performance.

Diana Ambache, founder of the Sirens Fund said: ‘The recipients of this year’s Sirens Fund awards certainly offer rich discoveries for many people with the two Holmes pieces, Williams’s *Zodiac*,

Price's *Ethiopia*, gutsy Bacewicz, and *Sea Sketches* for the Scottish Islanders - plenty to engage and be stirred by.'

ABOUT SIRENS

The ABO Trust received a generous gift from Diana Ambache in 2016 to run a new fund, Sirens, which aims to raise awareness and appreciation of the music written by historical women from around the world. Annual grants will be allocated according to the range and value of each project. Each year over 10 years up to £19,000 will be shared between 4 to 5 projects for concerts, tours, recordings and education work deemed to be doing most to advance and promote the understanding of music by women. To date the scheme has supported performances of works by Germaine Tailleferre, Cécile Chaminade, Dorothy Howell and Maria Antonia Walpurgis. Orchestras are encouraged to use The Women of Note website as a resource, which lists orchestral music by historical women composers. The awards panel for the current round comprised Diana Ambache, Helen Wallace, Kings Place, Edwina Wolstencroft, BBC Radio 3, Gillian Moore, Southbank Centre, and Fiona Harvey, ABO.

For further information about the ABO visit www.abo.org.uk.

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