

Lilith Ensemble presents album featuring works by female composers on Odaline de la Martínez' LORELT Label



Thursday 29 February

**Disc release: *Cuban Dances*
Disc number LNT148**

Helen Caddick *We are here*
Sílvia Lanao *Elgdans*
Mary Jane Leach *Whirlwind*
Qingye Wu *Whispers of nature*
Chloe Knibbs *Innisfree*
Tatev Amiryan *Elegy*
Marlies Hollevoet *Kwartet*
Maya Verlaak *Bee*
Odaline de la Martinez *Cuban Dances*
Frieda Gustavs *Ikga op reis*

Lilith Ensemble
Pascale van Os, Lucas van Vlierberghe Conductors

"My piece 'We Are Here' is dedicated to women and acts as a shout for female composers across the world to stand firm in our fight to have our works championed where international programming by major ensembles predominantly still favours works by men."

Helen Caddick, Composer

Lilith Ensemble, the first contemporary chamber music ensemble performing only works written by female composers, release their debut album on Odaline de la Martínez's record label **LORELT** on **Thursday 29 February**.

As Lilith Ensemble explains,

"The idea for the creation of this CD was to commission 10 pieces by female composers from all over the world in order to provide a wide contemporary music overview. The composers, both emerging and well established, come from Armenia, England, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, USA, Catalonia, Cuba and China. Moreover, Lilith wanted to give the composers the freedom to compose for the instrumentation they wanted and the ensemble would provide the necessary instruments and players."

The disc opens with ***We are here*** by **Helen Caddick**, and is inspired by a banner that the brave women of Afghanistan were carrying in their protests against the Taliban, demanding equal rights to work and education. As morse code taps out 'we are here', speech rhythms state 'we will continue to fight', whilst a child's spinning top sounds as a call to future generations. *We are Here* is dedicated to the women of the world. Born in London, **Helen Caddick** is a unique composer with a distinctive compositional style and loves to stretch the possibilities of live performance, taking a host of stimuli to spark ideas.

The second piece, ***Elgdans***, means moose dance in Norwegian as every instrument in the piece represents a character that interacts in a way that it seems as if they are dancing. The Spanish composer of the *Elgdans*, **Sílvia Lanao**, is a specialist in contemporary art-music and has written for various musical formats including solo instruments, chamber music, big ensembles, symphonic orchestra, and opera.

Whirlwind, by American composer **Mary Jane Leach**, is an octet for woodwinds, using pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons. Leach is a composer/performer whose work reveals a fascination with the physicality of sound, its acoustic properties and how they interact with space. Critics have commented on her ability to *"offer a spiritual recharge without the banalities of the new mysticism"*, Detroit Free Press, evoking *"a visionary quest for inner peace"*, Vice Versa Magazine, and *"an iridescent lingering sense of suspended time"*, Musicworks Magazine.

Chinese Composer **Qingye Wu's** work ***Whispers of Nature*** utilizes the text from five poems from **Rabindranath Tagore's *Stray Birds***. The imagery in these poems reflects a sensitivity to nature and the wisdom of life. **Wu** received BM and MM degree in composition from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and DMA in composition from College-Conservatory of Music in University of Cincinnati. ***Whispers of Nature*** is one of over 30 works which she has composed, including symphonies, chamber music, vocal pieces, solo instrumental works, electronic music, and film music.

Innisfree by British composer **Chloe Knibbs** is an art song for soprano, viola, cello and double bass, which was inspired by the composer's grandmother and her love for **William Yeats'** poem ***The Isle of Innisfree***, due to its evocative atmosphere and sense of mystery. The work itself explores the interplay between low counter-melodies in the strings and the vocal melody, oscillating between moments of frustration and vulnerability before finding a sense of calm and self-acceptance. **Knibbs** is a composer and sound artist motivated by lyricism and vulnerability, whose work seeks to hold space to explore and reframe societal issues. Informed by feminism and interdisciplinary approaches, her work encompasses opera, theatre, choral and chamber works, installations and song-writing. Her music has been described to have the *"unmistakable ring of authenticity"* by Musical Opinion and *"an anguished tender quality"* by The Telegraph.

Elegy by **Tatev Amiryan** is inspired by **Babajanian's *Piano Trio in F-sharp minor***, and is written in commemoration of his 100th birthday anniversary. **Dr. Tatev Amiryan** is an

Armenian-American award-winning composer, pianist and music educator. Her music has been performed in many countries by renowned ensembles and performers such as German Chamber Philharmonic of Bremen, National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia, and London International Piano Symposium.

Kwartet by **Marlies Hollevoet** is inspired by the unique combination of the instruments; Flute, Clarinet, Violoncello, and Double Bass, and how their sounds can blend as a real "Quartet", hence the name of the piece. **Hollevoet** is a Belgian composer currently residing in the USA, whose music has been performed by numerous ensembles and musicians, including the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, the Virago Symphonic Orchestra, and Brightwork Ensemble. Hollevoet was recently awarded with the prestigious B.A.E.F Music Fellowship 2022-2023 to pursue music studies in the U.S.

Bee by **Maya Verlaak** comprises of 5 different bee-sounds whereby each 'bee' directs the individual members of the ensemble towards individual paths, chaos or togetherness. Belgium composer **Maya Verlaak**, is an active performer, curator and teacher. Maya's works have been commissioned and performed by diverse ensembles such as Ensemble Klang (NL), IEMA – Ensemble Modern (DE), Apartment House (UK), Ensemble Interface (DE), LCollective (USA), New European Ensemble (NL), London Sinfonietta (UK), An Assembly (UK), ensemble x.y (UK) and many others.

Cuban Dances, composed by **Odaline de la Martínez** is about her memories as a child in Cuba and is influenced by dance rhythms she heard as a young girl there. Celebrating her 75th birthday in October 2024, conductor-composer Odaline de la Martínez was born in Cuba and brought up in the USA. Martínez is now based in the UK where she has become a formidable force on today's classical music scene, pursuing a busy career as an award-winning composer, conductor, record producer and event curator. She has acquired an illustrious reputation for her versatile and eclectic vision, with a longstanding special commitment to contemporary music, women composers and American composers in particular. Amongst her many achievements, Martínez was the first woman to conduct a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in 1984. Tulane University, of which Martínez is an alumnus, has recently honoured the conductor as a *Tulane Trailblazer*.

The final piece on the album is **Frieda Gustavs' Ik ga op reis en ik neem mee...** which is a game. One person starts and chooses something to bring along on their journey. The second person has to remember the previous and add a second. The third has to remember the previous two and also adds one. This way the game goes on until someone is unable to remember everything that came before. This piece was written by **Frieda Gustavs** who holds a Bachelor and Master in Composition at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. She has composed progressive and lauded music for the Opera Forward Festival, the Holland Festival, Orgelpark Amsterdam, Gaudeamus Muziekweek, British Film Institute Festival, Diamantfabriek, Nederlands Studenten Kamerkoor, Utrechtse Studenten Cantorij, NEON choir for new music and Nieuw Vocaal Amsterdam.

Lilith Ensemble

Lilith Ensemble was started by four young musicians studying and working in Amsterdam and Antwerp, and their passion was to perform contemporary music. While curating a list of pieces to perform, they realised that the majority of them were written by male composers. After digging deeper on the subject, they found there was a huge "gap" in the performance of works by female and male composers. That is when the four founding members kept exploring the idea of exclusively performing pieces by female composers.

Lilith Ensemble's belief is that female composers should have an equal exposure in the music industry. That is why they exclusively work with female composers.

Lilith wants to be the catalyst to ensure a bigger representation in the future of music and empower female contemporary composers through direct collaborations, as well as to encourage future generations.

To ensure their vision of equality is also represented on stage, Lilith has **fifty-fifty gender representation** within the ensemble, which wants to be a platform for composers as well as for musicians.

<https://lilithensembleofficial.com/>

LORELT

LORELT (Lontano Records Ltd) is the first independent classical record label in the UK to offer its own MP3 downloads. It was formed in **1992** by the composer and conductor **Odaline de la Martínez**, to promote recordings of important repertoire neglected by major record labels. The three main areas covered were 20th and 21st Century Composers, Latin American Classical music and Women Composers of all periods. Although originally the principal recording artist was to be the music ensemble Lontano, as the label grew other excellent performers were acquired.

<https://www.lorelt.co.uk/>

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