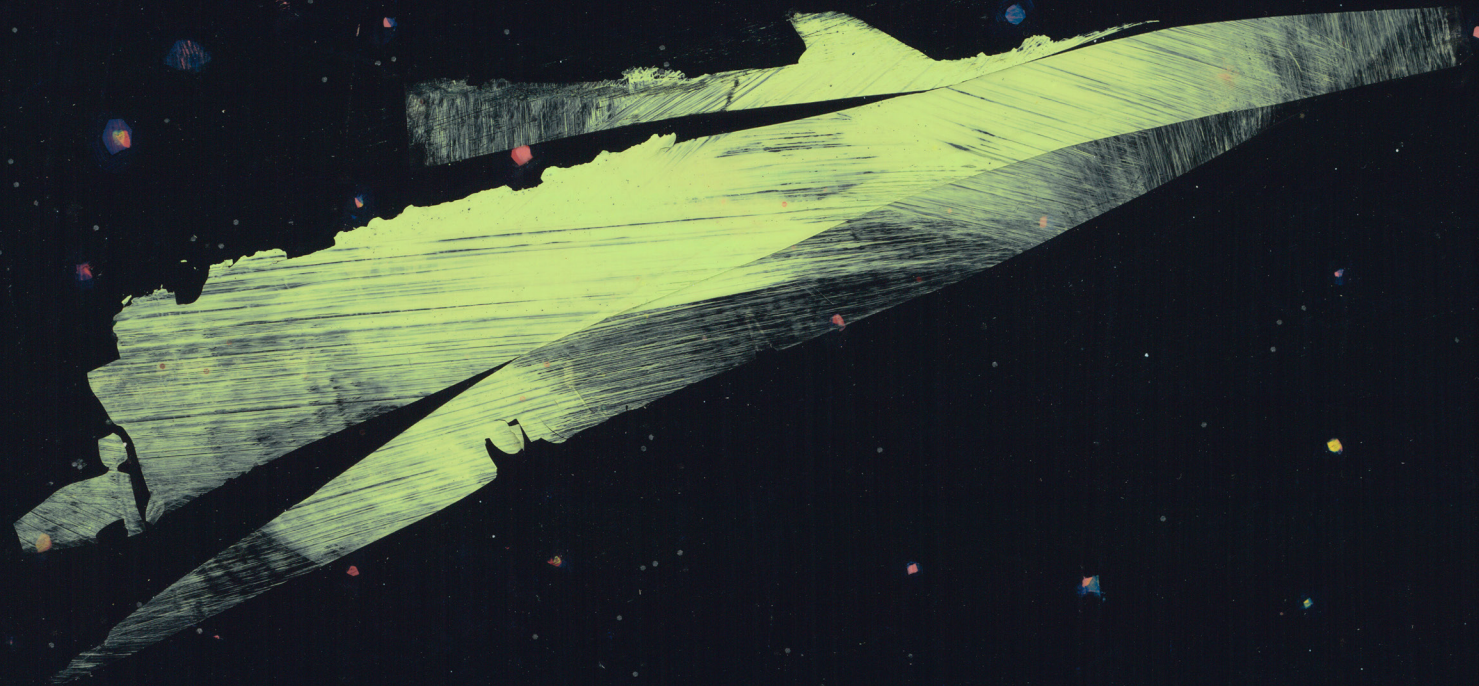


JOHN AYLWARD / KLANGFORUM WIEN



CELESTIAL FORMS AND STORIES



# CELESTIAL FORMS AND STORIES

1. **Daedalus** (2016) 9:39  
Vera Fischer, alto & bass flute  
Olivier Vivarès, clarinet & bass clarinet  
Sophie Schafleitner, violin  
Andreas Lindenbaum, cello
2. **Mercury** (2014) 8:42  
Vera Fischer, alto & bass flute  
Olivier Vivarès, clarinet & bass clarinet  
Sophie Schafleitner, violin  
Andreas Lindenbaum, cello
3. **Ephemera** (2014) 8:54  
Olivier Vivarès, bass clarinet  
Andreas Lindenbaum, cello
4. **Narcissus** (2018) 11:32  
Vera Fischer, flute, alto flute, & bass flute  
Markus Deuter, oboe  
Bernhard Zachhuber, clarinet & bass clarinet  
Sophie Schafleitner, violin  
Dimitrios Polisoidis, viola  
Andreas Lindenbaum, cello  
Björn Wilker, percussion
5. **Ananke** (2019) 15:10  
Vera Fischer, piccolo, flute, alto flute, & bass flute  
Markus Deuter, oboe  
Bernhard Zachhuber, clarinet & bass clarinet  
Sophie Schafleitner, violin  
Dimitrios Polisoidis, viola  
Andreas Lindenbaum, cello  
Florian Müller, piano.

Finnegan Downie Dear, conductor, tracks 1, 2, 4 & 5

Total Time: 54:00



# Lessons from Ovid

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* have long been a repository for artists. From Titian to G.B. Shaw, from Bernini to Picasso – sculptors, painters, playwrights have turned to the Roman retellings of Greek myths for tales of creation and changing fortunes, divine elevation or retribution, death and transfiguration. Early opera in the seventeenth century, peopled with Daphnes and Orpheuses, is unthinkable without Ovid's tales of gods and humans. But off the operatic stage, the *Metamorphoses* have only played a bit role in music: there is a smattering of works based on Ovid's characters by Karl von Dittersdorf, Benjamin Britten, Milton Babbitt, and that's about it. This dearth is surprising, given that the very idea of metamorphosis – transformation, change over time – is perfectly matched to the medium of music. If we accept this more abstract, technical notion, we could add Paul Hindemith and Richard Strauss to the list, who both composed metamorphoses during the final years of World War II. Still, it remains curious that so few composers over the centuries have grappled with this literary giant.

Aylward takes a fresh and different perspective on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Whereas artists have traditionally mined Ovid's overflowing imagination for subject matter for their art, Aylward is much more interested in the lessons on crafting stories that Ovid has to teach. His suite *Celestial Forms and Stories* builds on Ovidian narrative techniques – or more specifically, on Italo Calvino's careful analysis of Ovid's style. In Calvino's readings, which he expounds in his essay "Ovid and Universal Contiguity" (1979) and *Six Memos for the New Millennium*, his Norton Lectures at Harvard (1985), Ovid emerges as a master of lightness, quickness, and precision – virtues that Calvino, not coincidentally, prizes in writing more generally.

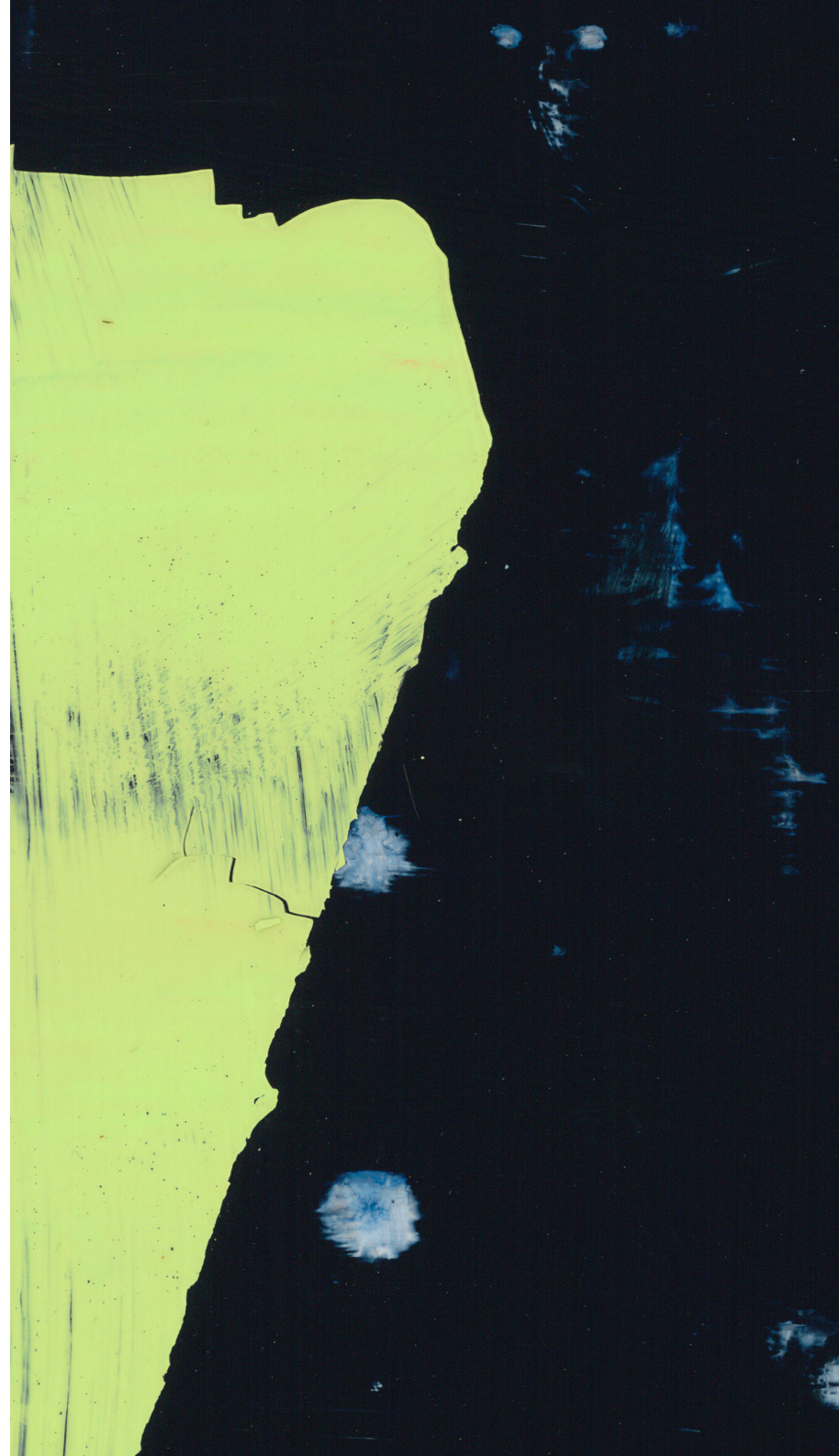
These same qualities are central to the musical storytelling of *Celestial Forms and Stories*. Three movements of the suite take their cue from figures in Ovid's tales: the provident quartets *Mercury* and *Daedalus*, as well as the more opulent *Narcissus*. Meanwhile, the more abstractly titled movements, *Ephemera* and *Ananke*, underscore that figurative content is not the only vector in Aylward's musical engagement with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. To be sure, we may hear the airy opening of *Mercury* as a characterization of the winged messenger, the percussive extended techniques of *Daedalus* in relation to the inventor's machinations, or the glassy surfaces of *Narcissus* as a programmatic element. We might even hear the buzzing of the short-lived mayfly, *ephemeroptera*, or the complex mythological makeup of Plato's spindle of necessity out of the two abstract movements. But it's less the "What?" than the "How?" that Aylward derives from his reading of Ovid. At its core lies the interplay of counterpoint and texture – these are the musical building blocks of Ovidian writerly virtues.

One of the lessons the *Metamorphoses* holds for the composer can be related to Ovid's habit of presenting his characters as pairs: Narcissus and Echo, Daedalus and Icarus, Mercury and Battus. Just as each character comes into focus thanks to its counterpart, so too do certain writerly traits only shine forth against the background of their opposites: the nimble, light-footed gestures of *Mercury* fully unfold their qualities only against the long, sustained notes that complete the texture.

Each of these movements is a masterclass on the strategies of musical storytelling. *Ephemera*, conceived as the earliest movement and placed at the center of the work, may be one of the shorter pieces in the suite, but its role is nonetheless foundational. It presents the seeds of the elemental materials, gestures and textures, that return in the other movements. The strings and woodwinds of the quartet movements explore timbral and textual qualities in different pairings; the pulsating chords that orbit around *Mercury* return with full force in *Ananke*. This final and most extensive movement performs its title – Necessity – with an obsessive focus on a recurring gesture, equivalent to the Beethovenian “Muss es sein?”, that returns in various guises, be it as ambient chords, as bristling sharp attacks, or violent piano clusters. It is a study in extremes.

Of the writerly lessons that Ovid offers in his effervescent *Metamorphoses*, none is more important than that this book is never quite closed. (Ovid's mythological narrative grinds to a halt by pulling the emergency brake, turning to the achievements of the Roman Empire and, finally, his own everlasting fame.) Aylward, too, is less interested in conclusions than in continuities. Even *Ananke*, the most monumental and driven movement, ends with a new, minimalist viola line that creeps up expectantly, cracking open a door that offers a glimpse onto fresh, unheard-of possibilities. The storytelling continues, even after the music is over.

– Alex Rehding







*Do you remember where you were when it happened? I do. I indeed remember the moment very clearly. It was a moment when a piece of music entered my whole being and awakened me by bringing light to every dark place. Do you remember where you were when it happened? I do.*

OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS, I have had the great privilege to perform, listen to, and talk about the music of John Aylward. John and his music have been a constant companion as I have navigated the many elements of what it means to be human, and each of his pieces has found my arrival at a different place. I would describe John's music as both deeply personal, imaginative, and metaphysical. A friend once remarked, "John's music is like Elliot Carter dreaming of Debussy."

I have had the opportunity to premiere, hear premiered, or see the many stages of revision and evolution of each piece on this album. For me, the thing that ties together all the works on this album is not the theme of transformation, but instead, a deep searching for an answer to the question: At which threshold am I now standing?

This language of "threshold" has been the subject that John and I have spoken, thought, and written about the most during our friendship. It is because we both believe that the language of "threshold" encapsulates our past (where we have been), our present (where we are), and our future (where we are going). However, we have observed that to cross the many thresholds of life, one must leave something(s) behind. As you read this, I would ask you: What are you afraid to leave behind to move forward? Where are you going?

While this album might not be able to answer these questions for you, it will, at its best, force you to go on the journey. So fellow traveler, if you shall need it, I give you permission – for the moment is now, and the road is long.

– Hassan Anderson



*Comparison does not imply irony or belittling. We are in a universe in which the forms densely pack the allotted space, constantly exchanging qualities and dimensions, and the flux of time is filled with a proliferation of stories and cycles of stories. Terrestrial forms and stories echo celestial forms and stories, but each entwines the other by turns in a double spiral.*

– Italo Calvino, from “Ovid and Universal Contiguity”

I GREW UP IN THE SONORAN DESERT, a vast, magnificent, and sometimes lonely part of the planet. Living for so long in this unique desert landscape contributed a great deal to how I think of the world. I read quite a lot in those days and I was often drawn to what my older siblings were reading. One of my brothers, studying to be a classical archaeologist, was reading Ovid, Virgil and Homer. He gave me copies of the books he had finished and I read them alongside my own fare of Tolkien and Le Guin. I became enraptured by the worlds these authors built: the fantastical landforms and plant life they were describing seemed so much like the magical landscape I was actually living in.

I was particularly fascinated by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and, as time passed, I revisited the poem many times, always asking what about it kept me so interested. Finally, I came upon a brilliant analysis of Ovid’s style by Italo Calvino. The article, “Ovid and Universal Conti-

guity,” is a look into some of the techniques Ovid uses in his storytelling. Calvino continued his analysis of these techniques, now applied to a variety of authors, in his “Six Memos for the Next Millennium,” the published edition of what were to be his Elliot Norton lectures at Harvard. Calvino’s insights into Ovid’s techniques are particularly brilliant because they come from a fellow practitioner’s perspective. Calvino is interested in how Ovid’s exact technical means produce certain emotional and psychological effects on the reader. Calvino shows how Ovid’s work is “the representation of the entire world as a system of elementary properties.” I found this observation to be transformative in both how I understood Ovid’s writing and also in providing a first step in thinking about building my own world in music. Just as Ovid reduces improbable and fantastical transformations down to simple processes, I thought perhaps there was a way to build a musical world from similarly simple musical materials.



I began assembling musical analogs to the techniques Calvino was describing and slowly, short studies began to take shape. Finally, works began to emerge that I felt shared the ‘elementary properties’ I was working with but allowed for the various transformations of those properties to be as vivid, or perhaps more vivid, than the materials themselves.

I put these works together in a series, beginning with *Ephemera* for clarinet and cello, which sets forth the ideas that are expanded and developed through the varied forms and differing stories in the works that follow. Textures, gestures, harmonies, and formal aspects recur across the pieces, aspects of them all sometimes visible, sometimes clouded, quickly passing or elongated under more mercurial material, always transformed to suit new circumstances but holding threads of their origin. The closing pulsations of *Ananke* draw the suite’s material into a circular magnetism or gravity that I hope evokes a final timelessness. The works stand alone, but played as a suite, one may best hear the way in which the very first musical gestures, textures, instrumental counterpoints and harmonies traverse the musical world.

The entire nexus of Greek mythology is in constant need of new analysis and artistic interpretation lest it become stale and unable to reflect the ‘universal contiguity’ Calvino so aptly recognizes. Even Ovid’s stories were not his own, but rather the myths of the day retold under his own artistic renderings. And so perhaps Ovid is one of the first to abide by the old adage that the act of writing is to rewrite the already written. I would like my *Celestial Forms and Stories* to be received also as an act of rewriting these myths that Ovid immortalized, in my own way, and through my own revelation of transformation.

– JA





"We hear brilliant energetic rhythmic figures...  
imaginative sonorities and harmonies that always  
move, always inflect. Also striking are the zones of  
suspended motion and otherworldly calm."

- American Academy of Arts and Letters

**J**OHN AYLWARD IS A PIANIST AND COMPOSER of solo works, chamber works, orchestral works, opera, and music for film and multimedia. He is a founder of the Ecce Ensemble and of the Etchings Festival. He has received awards from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, the Koussevitzky Commission from the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, MacDowell, Tanglewood, the Aspen Music School, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the International Society for Contemporary Music, and many other foundations and arts organizations. He lives in Northampton, Massachusetts with his wife Kate.







### **Vera Fischer, Flute**

Vera Fischer was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1973. From 1992 to 1998 she studied the flute with Günter Rumpel and Philippe Racine at the Zurich College of Music and received her orchestra and concert diploma with honors. She has played with various chamber music ensembles as well as with the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich – the orchestra of the Zurich Opera. Her interest in the various means of expression inherent in contemporary music already began during her formative years. Since then, she has played with formations such as

Ensemble Catrall, Collegium Novum Zurich, and the Basel Sinfonietta, participating in the world premières of solo and ensemble pieces. From 2003 to 2005 she completed a study course as an integrative voice trainer and has worked both as trainer and coach for instrumentalists ever since. In 2010, together with Muriel Zemp, she founded the chanson-duo Colette & Rose. For her work as flautist, she has received various prizes such as the Study Prize of the Migros-Genossenschafts-Bund as well as the Ernst Göhner-Stiftung. In 1999, the municipality of Riehen/Basle awarded her its Culture Prize. Since 2009, Vera has been teaching *Performance Practice in Contemporary Music* in the context of the master-course run by Klangforum Wien at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. Together with Björn Wilker, she also leads the project “Neighbors”, an educational music project initiated by the Klangforum Wien. She became a member of Klangforum Wien in 1999.

### **Markus Deuter, Oboe**

Markus Deuter was born in 1961 in Mülheim/Ruhr. Johann Baptist Schlee was his first oboe teacher; subsequently, he studied with Diethelm Jonas and Prof. W. Feist (Essen), Prof. H. Hücke (Cologne), and Prof. P. Dombrecht (Brussels). In addition, he studied Early



Music Performance Practice with Prof. H. Ruf (Cologne). He won the “Young Musicians Regional Competition” in 1975, 1977, 1979 and 1981 and was thrice awarded a scholarship by the “Oskar und Vera Ritter Foundation”. In 1978 he was the winner of the Culture Prize of the city of Mülheim/Ruhr. Markus Deuter is member of various chamber music ensembles such as the Sabine Meyer Wind Octet, the Zelenka Ensemble, and the Aulos Quintett; he performs with the Munich Chamber Orchestra and holds the position of First Oboist in several orchestras, predominantly in Germany,



such as the Robert Schumann Chamber Orchestra, the Stuttgarter Kammerorchester, the Kölner Kammerorchester, the Neues Orchester Köln, the Bach Collegium Stuttgart as well as the Gabrieli Consort and Players. From 1989 until 1993 he was a member of the ensemble musikFabrik conducted by Johannes Kalitzke. In addition, he participated in a great number of radio and CD productions. Markus Deuter became a member of Klangforum Wien in 1995.

### **Olivier Vivares, Clarinet**

Born in France, Olivier Vivarès studied clarinet with Claude Crousier in Marseille, with Jacques Di Donato in Lyon and with Chen Halevi in Trossingen. In particular, he specialised in playing bass clarinet, studying with Armand Angster and Jean-Marc Foltz in Strasbourg. In 2005, he was awarded the 2nd prize at the International Carl Nielsen Competition in Denmark, the prize for best interpretation for Caprice by A. Koppel, as well as the orchestra prize of the Odense Symphony Orchestra. At the centre of his work stands the interpretation and communication of contemporary music. He performs regularly with Ensemble MusikFabrik and the Ascolta Ensemble. Olivier Vivarès joined Klangforum Wien in 2007. He regularly ap-



pears at festivals such as Ars Musica Brussels, the Salzburg and the Lucerne Festival, the Venice Biennale, Klangspuren, Märzmusik Berlin, the Berlin Festival, the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik, the Donaueschinger Musiktage, the Aldeburgh Festival, Wien Modern, and the Wiener Festwochen, both as a soloist and as an ensemble player. Olivier Vivarès is in continuous collaboration with composers such as Georges Aperghis, Beat Furrer, Bernhard Gander, Bernhard Lang and Alberto Posadas. He teaches clarinet at the University of Music, Graz (KUG) as a part of the study course Practice and Performance in

Contemporary Music and at the University of Music Vienna (mdw) as a part of its focus on New Music – Instrumental Techniques and Artistic Practice. He is also a lecturer at ISA, the International Summer Academy of the mdw.

### **Bernhard Zachhuber, Clarinet**

Bernhard Zachhuber was born in Linz in 1965. From 1983, he studied concert clarinet with Peter Schmidl and Johann Hindler at the University of Music in Vienna. Bernhard Zachhuber was awarded a diploma in instrumental performance (Appreciation Award by the Ministry of Education and Arts) and received a degree in Instrumental Education in 1990. He also took part in a master class conducted by Hans Deinzer. His career as a professional musician took off with a series of intense experiences with various orchestras. His involvement with Ensemble Aktuell, a symphony orchestra affiliated to the high school in Linz, brought about his first encounter with Franz Welser Möst; this was followed by an invitation to several tours with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra, which had just been founded by Claudio Abbado, and a phase, lasting several years, as guest musician of the orchestra of the Vienna State Opera as well as the Vienna Philharmon-





ic where he was able to work with a number of exceptional conductors. His interest in contemporary composers which are still active – or at any rate not long deceased – had already been established for some time; it was further kindled by his participation in performances of Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*, Zimmermann’s *Die Soldaten* at the Vienna State Opera and Messiaen’s *Saint Francois d’Assise* at the Salzburg Festival as well as repeated engagements with *die reihe* and the Ensemble XXth Century, before he became a member of Klangforum Wien in 1994. Apart from forays into the classical realm such as

the chamber music festival Lockenhaus or the Mozartwoche, both in Salzburg and in Tokyo, where his performances included works like Mozart’s serenades for winds, Schubert’s octet or the sonatas and clarinet quintet by Brahms, Klangforum Wien has become his artistic “native country”. Here, Bernhard Zachhuber has worked with artists of the most diverse fields – such as Christoph Marthaler in productions of *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* presented at the Salzburg Festival and at the Guggenheim-Foundation, New York; but also with choreographer Meg Stuart, and filmmaker Bady Minck from Luxembourg, with whom he conceived the production *Free Radicals*, which combines miniatures both in film and music and was shown in Venice, Hamburg, Vienna, Brussels, Luxembourg and New York. In 2008 he started to teach as part of the professorial appointment of the whole ensemble at the University of Music, Graz, and at the summer academy Vienna – Prague – Budapest, passing on some of the special techniques and practices he has acquired over the years.

### **Sophie Schafleitner, Violin**

Sophie Schafleitner was born in Salzburg in 1974. Following her training with Irmgard



Gahl at the Salzburg Mozarteum, she completed her violin studies with Gerhard Schulz at the University of Music Vienna. Sophie Schafleitner joined Klangforum Wien in 1997. In addition to her work as an ensemble musician and soloist, she is also active in various other chamber music formations such as the Schrammelquartett Attensam, or the music group Knoedel. Composers such as Aureliano Cattaneo, Liza Lim, Hannes Kerschbaumer, and Ying Wang have dedicated solo-pieces to her. Recent highlights include the Austrian première of Brice Pauset’s violin concerto as well as concerto appearances with



the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Warsaw and Katowice where she performed violin-concertos by Alban Berg and Aureliano Cattaneo. In 2014, she started a close artistic collaboration with Christoph Marthaler and as a result has appeared as soloist in various music theatre productions. Sophie Schafleitner is also active in the context of Klangforum Wien's professorship, participating in the master programme for New Music PPCM at the University of Music in Graz.

### **Dimitrios Polisoidis, Viola**

Dimitrios Polisoidis was born in Thessaloniki, Greece in 1961. He studied the violin with Dany Dossiou in his home town and later attended the University of Music Graz where he studied with Christos Poyzoides and also studied the viola with Herbert Blendinger. From 1990 to 1993 he was the principal viola player of the Philharmonic Orchestra Graz, and in 1993 became a member of Klangforum Wien. Dimitrios Polisoidis has devoted himself mainly to new music and to performing with experimental improvisation groups. He was an artistic collaborator in several live electronic projects at the Electronic Institute of the University of Music Graz, (IEM Graz). He has performed internationally and worked with many renowned compos-

ers such as Peter Ablinger, Georg Friedrich Haas, Bernhard Lang, Klaus Lang, Gösta Neuwirth, Olga Neuwirth, and George Lopez, who wrote works especially for him. In 2012, the federal state of Styria awarded him the "Karl Böhm Interpreter's Prize." He teaches at the University of Music Graz and at the Impuls Academy as well as at the International Summer Courses in Darmstadt.



His CD recordings have been released by the labels hatART (Basle), Kairos (Vienna), Klangschnitte (Graz), mode records (NY), and Lyra (Athens).



### **Andreas Lindenbaum, Violoncello**

Andreas Lindenbaum was born in 1963 in Detmold, Germany. He studied cello and composition at the Detmold Academy of Music. In 1986 he received a scholarship from the "International Rotary-Foundation" which allowed him to pursue his studies at the School of Music in Bloomington, USA, where he was a student of Janos Starker. He also trained as an actor and worked with an independent theatre group in Germany for a year. From 1990 to 1999 he held a position as professor at the Conservatory of the City of Vienna. He has appeared as a soloist and with



chamber music ensembles at the Salzburg Festival, the Bregenz Festival, Warsaw Autumn, and the Akiyoshidai Festival and has recorded for the radio as well as on CD both as a soloist and as a member of the Tetras-Quartett. In 1989 he moved to Vienna and became a member of Klangforum Wien.



### **Florian Müller, Piano**

Florian Müller was born in Immenstadt, Germany. He studied piano and composition in Munich and Vienna. He is one of the central interpreters of contemporary music in Aus-

tria and has appeared as a soloist at important festivals such as Wien Modern and the Salzburg Festival. He is a regular guest at international festivals in Europe and has also toured the USA, Canada, Japan, Argentina and Israel with the Klangforum Wien. Florian Müller played with the SWR Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the MDR Orchestra and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, among others. He worked with well-known conductors such as Emilio Pomàrico, Sylvain Cambreling, Hans Zender, Fabio Luisi, Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Peter Eötvös. He took part in theater works with Jerome Bel, Alain Platel, Christoph Marthaler and Jewgenij Sepochin, among others. Florian Müller has taught master classes at the Venice Biennale and the ISA Vienna-Prague-Budapest and is a professor of *Performance Practice in Contemporary Music* at the University of Music, Graz. His CD recordings include Beat Furrer's *Nuun*, Clemens Gadenstätter's *comic sense* and Friedrich Cerha's *relazioni fragili*. Florian Müller became a member of Klangforum Wien in 1993.

### **Björn Wilker, Percussion**

Björn Wilker was born in Gelsenkirchen-Buer, Germany, in 1968. He studied percussion at the Academy of the Arts Berlin and at



the College of Music in Freiburg im Breisgau with Robyn Schulkowsky, Bernhard Wulff and Isao Nakamura. After extensively performing as a freelance percussionist in new music, he became a member of Klangforum Wien in 1993. From 1998 to 2000 he took a period of leave in order to study composition with Helmut Lachenmann at the Stuttgart College of Music. In addition to playing with Klangforum Wien, Björn Wilker is active as a soloist and composer.

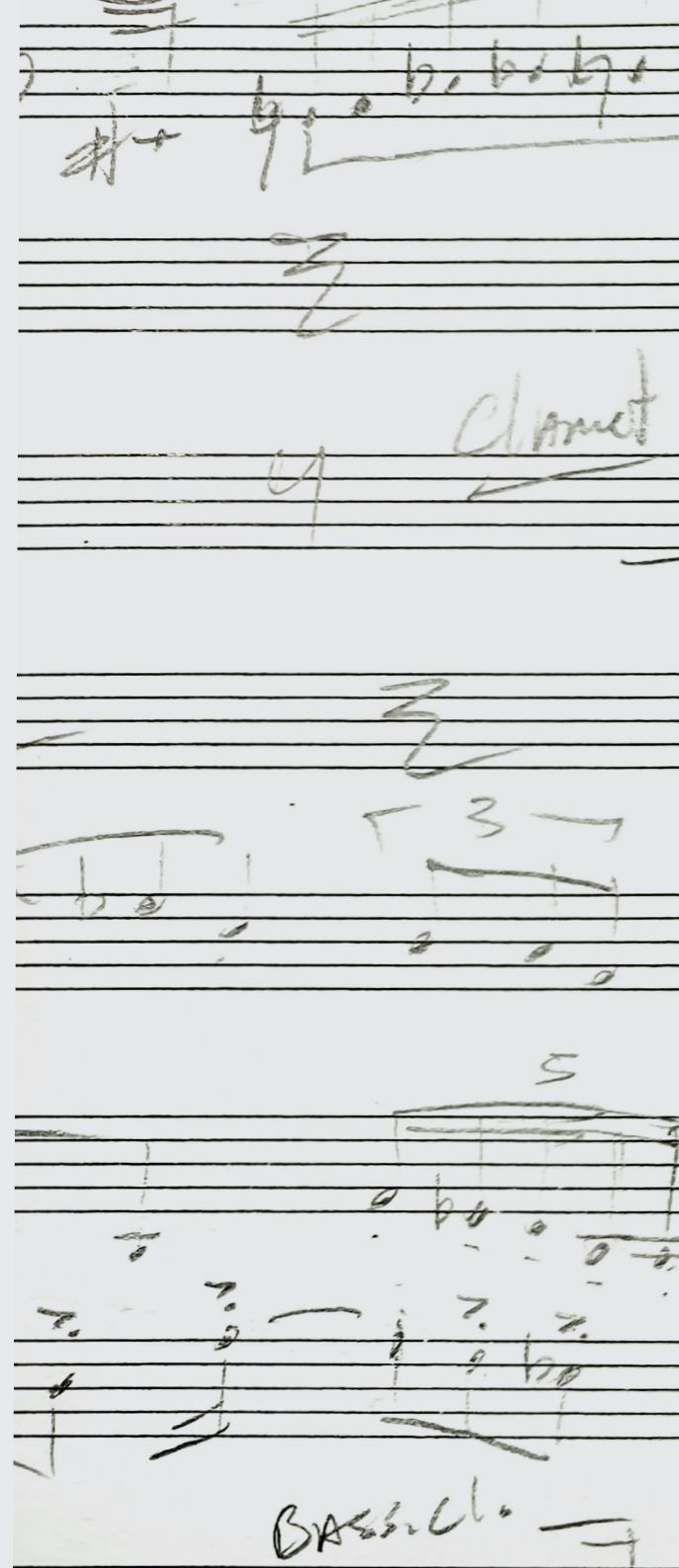




## Finnegan Downie Dear, conductor

Finnegan Downie Dear studied musicology at Cambridge University and piano at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was subsequently awarded the Lucille Graham and Hodgson Memorial Fellowships before being elected an Associate (ARAM) in 2017. He

went on to work as a pianist and assistant at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Salzburger Festspiele, before coming to international attention as the winner of the the Bamberger Symphoniker's International Mahler Conducting Competition in 2020. As music director of the award-winning UK company Shadwell Opera and Ensemble, he collaborates with the UK's finest young singers and instrumentalists, commissioning new operas and bringing stagings of seminal twentieth-century and contemporary works to new audiences. Shadwell's performances have received consistent acclaim in the national and international press; he has also led the company on tours to Russia and Germany. He enjoys a close relationship with Klangforum Wien, and leads projects with orchestras across the globe including the London Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, DSO Berlin, Bamberger Symphoniker, Gothenburg Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Melbourne Symphony and Korean Symphony, and with opera houses including Royal Opera House, the Staatsoper Berlin, the Royal Swedish Opera and Theater an der Wien.











Roberta Aylward. *Nightlight*. 2015.  
Acrylic on birch panel.  
In the collection of the artist.



# klangforum Wien

Peter Paul Kainrath, Artistic Director  
Bettina Mirus, Head of Artistic Administration  
Christine Weitzer, Communications and Library  
Alexej Solowjow, Project & Tour management  
Alex Steininger, Stage Manager

Recording Engineers: Kristaps Auster & Christoph Walder  
Editing, mixing & mastering: Joel Gordon

Recorded at Tonzauber Recording Studio in Wiener Konzerthaus, Vienna, Austria, November 28th, 29th and 30th, 2020.

Design: Marc Wolf, [marcjwolf.com](http://marcjwolf.com)

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Back cover image: Aylward, Roberta. *Flare*. 2015. Acrylic on birch panel. In the collection of the artist.

John Aylward photo: Kate Soper  
Klangforum member photographs: Tina Herzl  
Finnegan Downie Dear photo: Frank Bloedhorn

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