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**2022-23**



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## The Festival Lecture-Recital 2022



### LEARMONT DRYSDALE AND HIS MUSIC REDISCOVERED

**Speaker:** Robert England  
**Musicians:** Gina McCormack (violin)  
 Rebekah Lesan (cello)  
 Marianna Abrahamyan (piano)  
 Charlotte Bateman (mezzo-soprano)  
 James McIntyre (tenor)

Eastgate Theatre, Peebles  
 Sunday 4 September 2022 at 7.30 pm

This project has been made possible thanks to financial support from Scottish Borders Council Neighbourhood Support Fund





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Music in Peebles is grateful for funding received from the Hugh Fraser Foundation in support of the 2022/23 season

**The Hugh Fraser Foundation**



PROGRAMME

Approx.  
duration  
(minutes)

**Learmont Drysdale and his Music Rediscovered**

An illustrated talk on the life and work of the composer  
by Robert England

20

**Learmont Drysdale (1866-1909)**

A recital of selected works from Drysdale's extensive output, curated by  
Marianna Abrahamyan, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

**Songs for mezzo-soprano**

Spring Song (1896) [Text: Ercil Doune \*] 3

Lock the door, Lariston [Text: James Hogg] 5

**Songs for tenor**

Where shall the lover rest? [text: Walter Scott] 4

Mally Lee (arr. Learmont Drysdale) [Text: Robert Chambers] 2

**Songs for mezzo-soprano**

Cradle song [Text: Ercil Doune \*] 4

Were na' my Heart Licht [Text: Lady Grizel Baillie] 4

Will he come? [Text: Ercil Doune \*] 4

**Songs for tenor**

Snowdrops (1896) [Text: Ercil Doune \*] 3

The Troubadour (1889) [Text: Walter Scott] 5

**INTERVAL (20 minutes)**

**Music for solo piano**

Sonatina (ca.1888) 5

White Heather (1895) 5

**Music for violin and piano**

Reverie (1907) 4

Ballade (1892) 5

**Music for piano trio**

Trio in F for piano, violin & cello: Allegro ma non troppo (1889) 12

\* 'Ercil Doune' was the pseudonym used by Drysdale's sister, Janey, and is derived from the ancient name of Earlston in Berwickshire, birthplace of Sir Thomas Learmouth (Learmont) de Ercildoune, better known as 'Thomas the Rhymer'.

## **Learmont Drysdale (1866-1909)**

Learmont Drysdale was a young composer with roots in the Scottish Borders who composed a wide range of music during his short life, including operas and orchestral music as well as many songs and some chamber and solo piano pieces. He died in 1909 at the age of only 43 years and is buried in Peebles Cemetery. There is a memorial to him on Damhead Rig, just south of Traquair.

This exploration of his life and music is jointly sponsored by the Tweeddale Society and Music in Peebles. It will feature an opening presentation by **Robert England** on Drysdale's life and links to Tweeddale, followed by a performance of a selection of his music by Music in Peebles Patron, Gina McCormack, with musicians from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS).

Drysdale's original manuscripts are lodged in the archives of the University of Glasgow, and the programme being presented has been selected following research by **Marianna Abrahamyan** from the RCS. This will be the first performance of his music for many years.

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## **Learmont Drysdale's Instrumental Music**

Drysdale seems to have composed many of his instrumental pieces for a particular purpose. He wrote the organ piece Gavotte in B flat for performance at the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886, providing an early chance to demonstrate publicly both compositional and performing skills. Some piano solos were destined for the commercial market. Many are in a style similar to numerous others composed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; light-weight and simplistic, focusing on dances, marches and character pieces, and destined to appeal to the amateur.

### **Sonatina for piano (ca. 1888)**

The Sonatina for piano is a short single-movement work. Although its title suggests a composition in several movements, the source material does not indicate that anything other than a stand-alone piece was intended. In other aspects, the work conforms to the normal use of the term "sonatina"; a short, easy and otherwise light sonata.

### **White Heather (Polka de Salon) for piano (1895)**

White Heather is a polka dance in 2/4 time. Originally from Bohemia, Polka was adopted in Prague in the late 1830s and soon spread throughout Europe. It is characterised by short rapid steps for the first beat and a half of the bar, followed by a pause or hop. Several diverse varieties of polka such as the schnell-polka, polka mazurka and polka française emerged in Vienna in the

1850s. Interestingly, Drysdale's White Heather blends two styles: polka française, a slower, more elegant variation, and schnell-polka, a quick and energetic version similar to galop.

### **Reverie for violin and piano (1907)**

This enchanting little piece features an exquisite melody for violin accompanied by gentle triplets in the piano. Listeners can feel the longing and pleasant memories filled with tender and delicate harmonies.

### **Ballade for violin and piano (1892)**

Ballade was composed for Drysdale's friend Emile Sauret, professor of violin at the RAM from 1890-1903. It is a short character piece inspired by ballad form. Drysdale does not specify a particular text as his stimulus and in this manner, the piece is similar to Border Romance where he disclaimed any intention of illustrating a definite programme, his rationale being to convey the impressions and emotions aroused by romantic Lowland landscapes. There is no external evidence to verify if this principle was applied to Ballade. Nevertheless, the resulting music is similar; an abstract piece whose title provides the setting, and where the musical language and structures employed present material suggesting balladry. At some point, the accompaniment of this work was arranged for the unusual combination of harp and strings, but the autograph of this version does not survive and thus, the arrangement is not directly attributable to Drysdale.

Although the manuscript of Ballade is not dated, Janey Drysdale states that it was written in 1892, coinciding with the period during which both Drysdale and Sauret were associated with the RAM (1890-1892). Sauret seems not to have performed the piece publicly, but a fellow student of Drysdale's played it at a RAM concert soon after its composition. Although Ballade was not published, it did receive some performances in the following years and when Sauret was informed of these, he noted: "I am so glad your brother's Ballade dedicated to me is being played with means, it certainly deserves to be known as it is most charming." It is probably Drysdale's most successful small-scale instrumental piece.

### **Trio in F for piano, violin and cello (1889)**

Drysdale composed many small-scale instrumental works, an opus which consists mainly of pieces for piano solo and for melodic instruments with piano accompaniment. He showed little interest in writing for chamber ensemble with the only work originally conceived in this format being the early trio for clarinet, bassoon and piano written in December 1889 and later adapted for the more traditional forces of violin, cello and piano.

The unusual instrumental combination of the first version suggests its composition for a specific group of players — probably the composer himself and clarinet- and bassoon-playing friends from the RAM — a supposition supported by the domestic location of the work's first performance: "Isaac's 'At Home' in Feb. 1890".

*Programme notes kindly provided by Marianna Abrahamyan  
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*Robert England at the Learmont Drysdale memorial, Damhead Rig*

**Robert England** spent his career working for the United Nations, living in nine different countries in Africa, Asia and its New York Headquarters. He and his wife, Sandra, retired to Tweeddale where they walk the hills and inspect memorials.

## Gina McCormack (violin)

Gina McCormack is well established as one of Britain's leading artists, with regular performances as a soloist and chamber musician at venues across the country and abroad. She made her recital debut in London at the Wigmore Hall at the age of 21 and has appeared many times since then in both that Hall and at the South Bank Centre, and at venues and Festivals across the country. Gina has performed as soloist with the Hallé and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Bournemouth Sinfonietta. Solo tours abroad have taken her to France, Norway, Denmark, the Czech Republic, South Africa and South America, and most recently to Austria and Switzerland.



Gina studied with György Pauk at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, and attended masterclasses with Sandor Vegh (at the Salzburg Mozarteum and at Prussia Cove in Cornwall), Dorothy DeLay, Andras Mihaly and Siegmund Nissel (from the Amadeus Quartet). While still a student, she was a prizewinner at the Royal Overseas League Music Competition in London and at the International Young Concert Artists' Competition in Tunbridge Wells.

Gina has over twenty years' experience as a quartet leader. For many years she was the leader of the Sorrel Quartet, with whom she was frequently heard on BBC Radio Three. The quartet made twelve CDs for Chandos Records, of works by Britten, Mendelssohn, Schubert and the complete cycle of Shostakovich quartets. Their Elgar CD was chosen as one of Classic FM's records of the year and was Editor's Choice in Gramophone Magazine.

She then led the Maggini Quartet for two years, leaving that group in March 2010 to focus on her solo work, continuing a long association with her duo partner, pianist Nigel Clayton. Most recently, she spent two years as first violinist of the Brodsky Quartet, with a hugely busy concert schedule in the UK and abroad. Highlights were tours of Australia, New Zealand and Mexico. She made the tough decision to leave the group in February 2021, needing to be closer to home for family reasons, and will be returning once again to her solo work.

Gina McCormack is also well-known as a teacher, having spent 11 years as professor of Violin at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (formerly Trinity College of Music) in London, followed by 7 years at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. She is currently teaching at the Royal

Northern College of Music, Manchester, and also gives regular masterclasses both in the UK and at summer festivals abroad. She frequently coaches amateur musicians, finding their deep love and knowledge of music rejuvenating.

Gina's passion for dance has led to a long association with the choreographer Matthew Bourne, whose New Adventures orchestra she has led for many years, being part of his very first iconic production of "Swan Lake" and so many other award-winning shows since then. She has also continued her long association with the London Chamber Orchestra throughout her busy career, a special highlight of which was playing for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Gina is honoured to have been invited to become Patron of Music in Peebles. She sees her role as much more than just a letterhead appointment, aiming to promote young musicians at the start of their careers and develop more opportunities for young people in the Scottish Borders to experience classical music.

### **Rebekah Lesan (cello)**

Slovak-American cellist and composer Rebekah Lesan approaches all the music she plays, from ancient to modern, with creativity. Her work with emerging composers explores multimedia, pairing cello with electronics or ensembles with visual media. A prize-winner at multiple competitions both for solo play and chamber music, she has performed in recitals, concerts, and music festivals in the Czech Republic, Scotland, and Poland as well as the United States and Slovakia.



Elements of several genres influence her own compositions, including folk, classical contemporary, and ambient music. Throughout all her work, she strives to create beauty with authenticity and help people of all ages understand and value the meaning of life.

### **Marianna Abrahamyan (piano)**

Armenian pianist Marianna Abrahamyan is a multiple prizewinner at the Orléans Concours International 2016. Her awards include the Prix SACEM, Prix Samson François, Artist-in-Residence scholarship award by the Henry Dutilleux foundation in France. In recital, Marianna appeared at the festival Musica Da Casa Menotti in Italy, Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, Purcell Room in Southbank Centre in London, St Martin in-the-Fields, Palace of Holyroodhouse

in Edinburgh, The Cumnock Tryst Festival, Pro Arte Festival in Córdoba, Festival Internacional Encuentros in Buenos Aires, Stavanger Youth Chamber Music Festival, Oslo Cathedral and Kilden Performing Art Centre in Norway and performed live in La Matinale de France Musique for Radio France.

An in-demand collaborative pianist, Ms. Abrahamyan was the recipient of the Hester Dickson Duo Prize for the Oxenfoord International Festival 2019, founded and directed by Malcolm Martineau. Marianna appeared at the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary Competition 2016, winning the Dennis Horner Accompanist's Prize. Marianna was a Samling Artist for 2018, and recently performed for His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales at Dumfries House.

A proactive exponent of contemporary music, Marianna has collaborated with living composers such as Sir James Macmillan, Philip Hersant, Hector Parra, Jay Capperauld, Konrad Mikal Ørhn, Katrin Klose, Rolf Gupta, Pierre Jodlowski and Alicia Terzian.

Currently, she is on the Doctor of Performance Programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland focusing on the role of dexterity in György Ligeti's piano music. Marianna is a piano lecturer at the Junior Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she thoroughly enjoys supporting and nourishing young talented pianists.

### **Charlotte Bateman (mezzo-soprano)**

Mezzo-soprano Charlotte will begin her studies at the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) in September, continuing under the tutelage of Elizabeth McCormack. Charlotte was a vocal scholar at the Junior Royal Academy of Music, studied at the University of Bristol, and recently graduated from RCS with a MMus (Performance).

Prior to starting her masters, she was a choral scholar at St-Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, singing professionally with St Martin's Voices. Charlotte's operatic roles include Mrs



Grose (The Turn of the Screw) and Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), and Dorabella (Così fan tutte), and her performances in scenes include Prince Charmant (Cendrillon) and Romeo (I Capuleti e i Montecchi).

Charlotte was a finalist in the 2021 French Song and Governors' Recital prizes at RCS, and was commended in final of the 2022 Governor's Recital Prize. She is generously supported in her upcoming studies by an RCS Trust scholarship and a Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Opera award.

### James McIntyre (tenor)

James Eamon McIntyre is a Scottish tenor from Dumbarton who is currently his second year of postgraduate studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under the tutelage Scott Johnson.

Within the last year, he has had multiple competition successes, winning the RCS Elgar Spedding Memorial Lieder Prize with his duo partner Anna Michels as well as the Hugh S Robertson Prize for Scottish Singing including the William Allan Prize. He is also proud to be an artist for Live Music Now Scotland alongside guitarist Ross Morris. James is very passionate about song repertoire and has a particular interest in promoting the performance of music by Scottish composers.

During his undergraduate studies, he was lucky to be mentored by international mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill on her Associate Artist programme which involved working closely with her and culminated in a performance at Drumlanrig Castle. Last year, he performed the role of The Leader in Kurt Weill's The Tsar has his Photograph Taken at Scottish Opera's Live at No.40 Festival and previously toured in Scottish Opera's new show Amadeus and the Bard. Upcoming engagements include Tritone in Marilyn Forever and Tapioca in Chabrier's L'étoile both for the RCS Opera school.

His studies are very kindly supported by scholarships from the Tillet Trust, the Caird Trust, the RCS and the Dick Maidment and Peggy Cooper Award from Help Musicians.



## MUSIC *in* Peebles NEXT CONCERT

Tuesday 4 October 2022 at 7.30pm in the Eastgate Theatre  
**'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik Unwrapped'**



**Bruce Fox-Lefriche (speaker)**  
**The Resol String Quartet**

*Maria Vila Ariza & Annabel Kidd (violins), Raphael Chinn (viola), Alasdair Morton-Teng (cello)*  
**George Podkolzin (double bass), Daniel Silcock (piano)**

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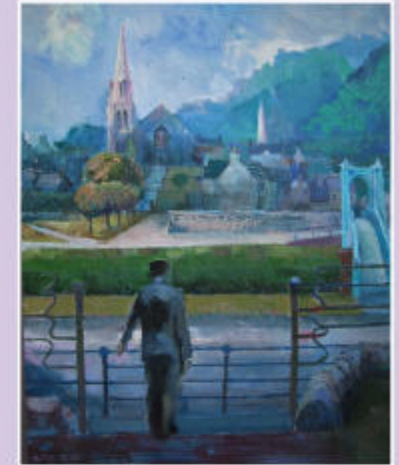
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Wednesday 26 October	Matt Carmichael Quartet (sax, piano, bass, drums)
Friday 4 November	Isola String Quartet
Friday 18 November	Daniel Lebhardt (piano)
Thursday 8 December	Pure Brass Quintet
Friday 3 February	Helen Charlston (mezzo) & Emma Abbate (piano)
Monday 6 March	Rachel Podger (violin)
Thursday 13 April	Clyde Duo (flute & harp)
Friday 19 May	Anna Fedorova (piano)

Concerts start at 7:30pm and are held in Biggar Municipal Hall, Biggar Mill Road, Biggar, ML12 6DT

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### MOFFAT MUSIC SOCIETY



Friday 26 August	Lucy Rowan & Friends (flute, wind, piano)
Friday 30 September	Nikita Lukinov (piano)
Friday 11 November	Bone-afide (trombone quartet)
Sunday 29 January	Christian Garrick & Brian Kellock (jazz violin & piano)
Sunday 26 February	Duality (piano duo: Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate)
Friday 31 March	Aimee Toshney & Michał Gajzler, (soprano & piano)

January & February concerts start at 2:30pm; all others start at 7:30pm

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# MUSIC *in* Peebles

Patron: Gina McCormack

**2022-2023 Season**

Sunday 4 September 2022 at 7.30pm

**MUSIC OF LEARMONT DRYSDALE**

Tuesday 4 October 2022 at 7.30pm

**EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK**

Tuesday 1 November 2022 at 7.30pm

**STEVEN OSBORNE**

Tuesday 6 December 2022 at 7.30pm

**SIMONE TAVONI**

Sunday 22 January 2023 at 2.30pm

**TABEA DEBUS & ALON SARIEL**

Sunday 5 February 2023 at 2.30pm

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