

IAN PACE – Piano

Christopher Fox at 70

City St George's, University of London
Performance Space

Tuesday 20 January 2026, 19:00

CHRISTOPHER FOX	<i>schwärme</i> (1998-99)
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG	<i>Drei Klavierstücke</i> , op. 11 (1909)
MORTON FELDMAN	<i>Piano Piece 1955</i>
CHRISTOPHER FOX	<i>Prime Site</i> (1997)

WALTER ZIMMERMANN	<i>Barn-Snail-Dance</i> (1996)
JOBINA TINNEMANS	<i>Seven Sisters</i> (2020-21)
CHRISTOPHER FOX	<i>More light</i> (1987-88)

This programme constitutes a heartfelt tribute to the composer Christopher Fox (b. 1955), whose music featured on both my first CD to be recorded (*Tracts* on NMC, which featured his *lliK-relliK*, and was released in 2001), and my first CD to be released (*More Light: Ian Pace plays the piano music of Christopher Fox* on Metier, released in 1998, also the first full CD of Fox's music). I went on to make another CD of Fox's piano and vocal works with soprano Amanda Crawley (*You, Us, Me* on Metier, released 1999). I also gave a series of four concerts in 1998-99 organised around Fox's major piano works, in the context of a wide range of other music by Stravinsky, Ravel, Jánáček, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, Walter Zimmermann, Gerald Barry and many others. Tonight's programme features three works of Fox, two of them (*Prime Site* and *schwärme*) written for and premiered by me, and perhaps the piece of his I love most, *More light*, which I have played many times during my pianist career. It is paired with a range of other adjacent works chosen together with Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER FOX, *schwärme* (1998-99)

schwärme was written for Ian Pace as a gift in thanks for his wonderful performances of my piano music, both on CD and in the London concert series he based around my four long piano works in 1998/9. *schwärme* is based on the complex phenomena whereby groups of creatures (swarms of bees, flocks of birds, herds of animals) can change shape and direction. As I wrote the music I became aware that it was also a kind of portrait of Ian, both of his passionate engagement with the world and his extraordinary virtuosity. So the piece represents both swarms (Schwärme) and enthusiasm (ich schwärme für...). *schwärme* is dedicated to Ian Pace and Henrietta Brougham and was written between January and September 1999.

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ARNOLD SCHOENBERG, *Drei Klavierstücke*, op. 11 (1909)

Schoenberg's *Drei Klavierstücke*, op. 11 (1909) are part of the full flowering of what is generally regarded as his 'free atonal' period, together with sections of the String Quartet No. 2, op. 10 (1907-08), and *Das Buch der hängenden Garten*, op. 15 (1908-09). Schoenberg continued to prefer the term 'pan-tonal', and the second of the cycle in particular certainly features pronounced centres of tonal gravitation. Nonetheless, the cycle as a whole demonstrate a relatively 'unanchored' development of the high chromaticism of late Romanticism, so that tonal centres are generally very localised and unstable. As such, Schoenberg is able to create a form of hyper-expressivity which can move beyond earlier forms of tonal containment, though in other senses they inhabit a gestural and expressive world clearly indebted to earlier work.

The first piece alternates wistful somewhat waltz-like gestures with mysterious arpeggiations, harmonics created by silently depressed keys combined with more adrift melodic fragments, before moving into more urgent writing characterised by sharp double-dotted rhythms. The second is organised around a recurrent F2-D2 ostinato which undoubtedly creates tonal gravity, notwithstanding the function of the melody which it accompanies to destabilise this. Again, the basic material, which develops towards a climax, is intercut with contrasting music: stark, questioning rhetorical figures and later some new dreamlike arpeggiated figures. The third constitutes the most radical disjunction with forms of romantic musical continuity, made up of a dialogue between wrenched, quite violent gestures, and hushed moments of introspection, with the alternations precluding any settling into more sustained patterns. Such a musical strategy would later have a profound impact on Pierre Boulez.

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MORTON FELDMAN, *Piano Piece 1955*

Feldman's short *Piano Piece 1955* is characteristic of his work from this time after moving away from earlier forms of indeterminacy and graphic notation towards fully composed scores. In line with Feldman's wider musical language of the time, the composer employs a post-Weberian approach to pitch with an aleatoric combination of short notes and chords and more sustained sonorities, only vaguely approaching any type of more sustained line, more akin to splashes of colour and small figurations on a canvas.

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CHRISTOPHER FOX, *Prime Site* (1997)

Prime Site is in seven sections, all of them interrelated, by pitch, figuration and duration, but each distinct. For me the subject of the music is the sound of the piano and this set of relationships, backwards and forwards across the work, setting up an increasingly complex counterpoint between the present and the past.

As I was composing the music I came across an image taken from a medieval stained glass window in which Christ receives the seven heavenly virtues. The virtues define Christ-likeness, yet are not themselves Christ, and in *Prime Site* the different sections progressively reveal more of a musical subject, yet only become that subject in the mind of the listener, after the music has finished.

Prime Site was written in 1996 and 1997 for Ian Pace, who gave the premiere in Newcastle on 13 March 1997.

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WALTER ZIMMERMANN, *Barn-Snail-Dance* (1996)

Barn-Snail-Dance (originally entitled *Barn-Snake-Dance*, the title changed when Walter Zimmermann heard of my pathological fear of snakes – a fear shared with John Cage!) was written while Zimmermann was in residence at the Djerassi Foundation in the United States of America. The Djerassi Foundation is located on an estate next to Neil Young's Crazy Horse ranch and while he was there Zimmermann lived in a converted barn. The building was, says Zimmermann, 'like a dodecahedron, twelve triangles added to a round building, like cake slices with some irregular crosswalks and stairs' and he describes *Barn Snail Dance* as 'a sounding architecture of the barn, crawling like a snail through the different rooms'. The work is dedicated to composer Howard Skempton.

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JOBINA TINNEMANS, *Seven Sisters* (2020-21)

The Seven Sisters were the daughters of Pleione and Titan. We know very little about these women: we know that they were desirable, we know the names of their offspring, and we know who fathered each of those children. These works are created to give each sister an identity, based not on their divinity but on human psychology and sibling rivalry.

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CHRISTOPHER FOX, *More light* (1987-88)

The musical ideas of *More light* are in a constant state of evolution, although the nature and pace of that evolution also changes constantly, and periodically an evolutionary process transforms an idea so radically that it metamorphoses into something new. In a sense the work does not have 'material': instead it consists of particular piano sonorities that the processes of the music call into being.

More light was written in 1987 and 1988 for Philip Mead, who commissioned it and premiered it on 28 July 1988 in Newcastle Playhouse. 'More light' were (in German) the dying words of Goethe, but the more likely source for my use of the title was Morton Feldman's essay 'More light', in which he said that Cage's music, 'as in Monet's later paintings, has us look into the sun'.

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IAN PACE is a pianist of long-established reputation, specialising in the farthest reaches of musical modernism and transcendental virtuosity, as well as a writer and musicologist focusing on issues of music, culture, performance, society and the avant-garde. He was born in Hartlepool, England in 1968, and studied at Chetham's School of Music, The Queen's College, Oxford and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the Juilliard School in New York, later completing his PhD, on the origins of post-war German new music and its infrastructure under occupation, at Cardiff University. His main piano teacher, and a major influence upon his work, was the Hungarian pianist György Sándor, a student of Bartók.

Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing in 27 countries and at most major European venues and festivals. His absolutely vast repertoire of all periods focuses particularly upon music of the 20th and 21st Century. He has given world premieres of over 300 piano works, including works by Patrícia de Almeida, Gilbert Amy, Julian Anderson, Richard Barrett, Konrad Boehmer, Luc Brewaeys, Aaron Cassidy, James Clarke, James Dillon, Pascal Dusapin, Richard Emsley, James Erber, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy (whose complete piano works he performed in a landmark 6-concert series in 1996, and then again in an 11-concert series in 2016-17), Christopher Fox, Sam Hayden, Volker Heyn, Wieland Hoban, Evan Johnson, Maxim Kolomiets, André Laporte, Hilda Paredes, Alwynne Pritchard, Horatiu Radulescu, Lauren Redhead, Frederic Rzewski, Thoma Simaku, Howard Skempton, Michael Spencer, Gerhard Stäbler, Yuji

Takahashi, Serge Verstockt, Hermann Vogt, Marc Yeats, Alistair Zaldua and Walter Zimmermann. He has presented cycles of works including Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke I-X*, and the piano works of Ferneyhough, Fox, Kagel, Ligeti, Lachenmann, Messiaen, Radulescu, Rihm, Rzewski and Skempton. In 2022 he gave a cycle in London of the nine symphonies of Beethoven as transcribed by Liszt. He has played with orchestras including the Orchestre de Paris under Christoph Eschenbach (with whom he premiered and recorded Dusapin's piano concerto *À Quia*), the SWF Orchestra in Stuttgart under Rupert Huber, and the Dortmund Philharmonic under Bernhard Kontarsky (with whom he gave a series of very well-received performances of Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand). He has recorded around 40 CDs; his recording of Michael Finnissy's five-and-a-half hour *The History of Photography in Sound* (of which he gave the world premiere in London in 2001) was released by Divine Art in October 2013 to rave reviews. Recent recordings have included a 4-CD set of major works of Michael Finnissy, including the complete *Verdi Transcriptions* and *English-Country Tunes*, which received rave reviews upon its release in 2025, and was chosen as one of 25 CDs of the year in the *New York Times*; piano music of Marc Yeats; the complete piano works of Sam Hayden; and the complete works of Brian Ferneyhough. Forthcoming recordings include the complete piano works of Horatiu Radulescu, and piano music of Volker Heyn. Recent concerts have included appearances in Paris, Lisbon, Zürich, at the Ruhrtriennale in Duisburg, Oslo, Prague, Kiev, São Paulo, and around the UK. In 2018, BBC Radio 3 broadcast a special two-hour issue of the programme *Here and Now* devoted to his work, the first time this had been done for a single artist. In June 2025 he performed in Florianopolis, Brazil to a packed hall seating 900 people and also made his first concert and lecture tour of Japan, playing and lecturing in Tokyo, Kyoto, Fukui and Kumamoto.

He is Professor of Music, Culture and Society and University Advisor: Interdisciplinarity at City, University of London. He worked in the Department of Music from 2010 to 2023, where he was Head of Department from 2020 to 2021, and became a full Professor in 2021. In autumn 2023 he joined the Department of Sociology and Criminology where he now works, as Professor of Music, Culture and Society. He previously held positions at the London College of Music and Media, University of Southampton, Trinity Laban Conservatoire and Dartington College of Arts. His areas of academic expertise include the breadth of 19th, 20th and 21st century art music, 19th century performance practice (especially the work of Liszt and Brahms), musical historiography, contemporary performance practice and issues, music and culture under fascism and communism, the post-1945 avant-garde, in particular in West Germany issues of music and society (with particular reference to the work of Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School, and their followers), critical musicology, and music education at secondary and tertiary levels. He co-edited and was a major contributor the volume *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy*, which was published by Ashgate in 1998, and authored the monograph *Michael Finnissy's The History of Photography in Sound: A Study of Sources, Techniques and Interpretation*, published by Divine Art in 2013. He has also published many articles in *Music and Letters*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, *Contemporary Music Review*, *TEMPO*, *The Musical Times*, *The Liszt Society Journal*, *Musiktexte*, *Musik & Ästhetik*, *The Open Space Magazine*, as well as writing for a wider audience in *London Review of Books*, *Times Higher Education*, *The Conversation*, the *Telegraph*, the *Spectator*, *Sex Matters*, *International Piano* and

Music Teacher, as well as making a series of podcasts. He has recently signed a contract with Reaktion Books to produce a new biography of Karlheinz Stockhausen.

He also contributed chapters to *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, edited Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Collected Writings of the Orpheus Institute: Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth-Century Music*, edited Darla Crispin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), *The Modernist Legacy*, edited Björn Heile (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), *Beckett's Proust/Deleuze's Proust*, edited Mary Bryden and Margaret Topping (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), *Writing to Andriessen: Commentaries on Life in Music*, edited Rose Dodd (Amsterdam: Lecturis, 2019) and *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Performance*, edited Gary McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). The volume *Critical Perspectives on Michael Finnissy: Bright Futures, Dark Pasts*, co-edited with Nigel McBride, was published in 2019, and another on *Researching and Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists: Challenges, Practices, and Complexities*, co-edited with Christopher Wiley, in 2020. Forthcoming edited collections, which will be published in 2025-26, include *Writing on Contemporary Musicians: Promotion, Advocacy, Disinterest, Censure*, also co-edited with Christopher Wiley, and *Rethinking Contemporary Musicology: Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity, Skills and Deskillling*, co-edited with Peter Tregear. Other forthcoming publications include monographs on music in Weimar and post-war Germany, a book on Brahms Performance Practice, and a history of specialist musical education in Britain. He also worked with the director Bettina Ehrhardt on the film *Wir fangen ganz von vorn an: Neue Musik für ein Deutschland nach dem Krieg* (2020).

He is also a thrice-elected trustee of the Society for Music Analysis, for which he is current Awards Officer. He was also a co-founder of City University Academics for Academic Freedom (AFAF), and sits on the advisory board of AFAF, and a founder member of the London Universities' Council for Academic Freedom (LUCAF), of which he is Secretary.

He is also a composer; recent works include *Das hat Rrrrass...* for speaker and piano (2018); the piano pieces *Thirty for Grace* (2019), *Clothcomposers* (2019) and *Schneeriss* (2020); the cycle for singer and ensemble *Matière: Le palais de la mort* (2021); and *Lancashire Rock* (2022) for clarinet, percussion and piano.