



Oxford
University
Orchestra

THURSDAY 23RD MAY,
8.30PM

TS Elliot Theatre,
Merton College

An evening of music from
Afghanistan and Italy with
the OUOctet

ARSON FAHIM

Broken Mountains (UK premiere)

RESPIGHI *Double Quartet*



Tickets £12/7 from ouo.web.ox.ac.uk/tickets
or on the door



Arson Fahim – *Broken Mountains (UK premiere)*

Respighi – *Double Quartet*

OUOctet

Jemima Price, *Violin*

Rose Hodgson, *Violin*

Samuel Oliver-Sherry, *Violin*

James Murray, *Violin*

Alice Sprinkle, *Viola*

Anneka Vetter, *Viola*

Lucy Silbaugh, *Cello*

Edwin Gatward, *Cello*



Arson Fahim (2000 –)

Broken Mountains

The following is from email sent to my colleagues at the Longy School of Music on September 20th, 2021. It captures not only the circumstances behind “Broken Mountains”, but also the emotions, meaning and intention. The piece was premiered by musicians who replied to this email and joined me in raising our voices.

Dear fellow artists,

I had the fortune of speaking to some of you during orientation about my project for the musicians of Afghanistan, who have been stripped of the right to create music for over a month now. My name is Arson Fahim. I am a first year undergraduate at Longy studying piano and composition. I was fortunate to arrive in the US mere days before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan and among many other inhumane policies, announced a ban on music - just like they had 20 years ago, last time they were in power. Now, the Taliban are breaking musical instruments and musicians are being killed for the crime of being a musician. My friends and colleagues back home are hiding in fear of their lives and have had to get rid of their instruments in case the houses are searched.

No human should ever be punished for creating something as beautiful as music. Something that means so much to each and every one of us - something that is so powerful and touches the soul unlike anything else. Something that without it, life would be meaningless for so many of us. My brave colleagues in Afghanistan who risk their lives to be musicians are the essence of what it means to be an artist. They fight extremists and fundamentalists like the Taliban with their instruments. Their music is a symbol of hope, change and love.

As an Afghan, and more importantly, as a musician who believes in the power of music, I believe that people around the world, especially artists, have a responsibility to raise their voice against the barbarity that Afghans are facing and support the artists who are being robbed of their passion.

I find it hard to express the emotions I've felt recently. The guilt and powerlessness that I felt - the pain, heartbreak, and shatter that I felt. However, it is in the hardest of times that strength and hope are most important and as Leonard Bernstein once said: “This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

Being around the extremely supportive and caring community of Longy, a community that cares deeply about social change through music, I realized that together we can do something very big and impactful and send a very strong message. I invite all of you to join me in raising our voices and supporting the musicians of Afghanistan. With the help of all of you, I hope to organize a concert that can raise awareness and maybe even raise funds for the musicians in Afghanistan. I am looking for volunteers - regardless of instrument/major. If you are passionate about this issue and have the will to join this effort which I think is very meaningful, simply email me and let me know you'd like to contribute. I do not have a specific plan yet because I want to hear your thoughts and we can make a plan together and find the best way forward.

I look forward to hearing from you and I hope that together, we can make a difference.

With utmost love and respect, Arson Fahim

© Arson Fahim

Ottorino Respighi (1879 – 1936)

Double Quartet

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio non troppo, quasi Andante*
- III. *Intermezzo – Allegro Vivace ma no troppo*
- IV. *Finale – Presto all'Ungherese*

Italian composer Ottorino Respighi wrote his *Double Quartet* for four violins, two violas, and two cellos in 1900. Not much is known about his motivations for composing it, but it is placed chronologically during a major transitional period in his life. In the summer of 1899, at age 20, he graduated with a violin diploma from the Liceo Musicale di Bologna, where he also studied viola, music history, and composition. By the next year, he had relocated from his birth city of Bologna to Saint

Petersburg and had become the principal violist of the Russian Imperial Theatre. Perhaps his switch to viola could explain his motivations to write especially active viola parts in the *Double Quartet*.

The first movement, *Allegro*, begins with a brooding quaver line in the second cello and second viola parts, The texture builds with urgency, and just as quickly settles to a softer section, leading to a sweeter second theme. The *Adagio* makes full use of the richness of the string octet sound, opening with an expansive, broad melody. It ends with a playful yet inquisitive conversation of demisemi-quavers and pizzicato before leading directly into the *Intermezzo*. The active third movement has a slight frenetic, unsettled quality, but ends calmly, with a dreamy solo line in the first viola. The *Presto all'Ungherese* ('Hungarian') is packed with folk-like moments, such as the dark, soloistic second theme in the first violin and the playful, rustic tune in the third violin and first viola.

© Alice Sprinkle

Arson Fahim *Composer*

Arson Fahim is a pianist, composer and conductor from Afghanistan. He was born in the year 2000 as a refugee in Pakistan where his family had fled due to the war in Afghanistan. In 2012, he started taking piano lessons and a few months later, he received admission at Afghanistan's only music school, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music where he also composed and arranged music and eventually became the conductor of the Afghan National Youth Orchestra and the Afghan National Symphony Orchestra. In 2021, only two weeks before the Taliban took control and once again banned music, Arson arrived in the US and started his studies at the Longy School of Music where he was awarded a scholarship.

Arson believes in the power of music to bring social change and considers music a vital weapon against fundamentalists and radicals who try to silence it. His music is inspired by the tragedies in Afghanistan and beyond. His compositions such as "Farkhunda", "Freedom", "Dreams of Peace" and "The Lost Dove" are a way for him to protest and raise his voice for justice through music. Arson hopes to help young, underprivileged Afghans discover music and help them change their lives through learning music.

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OUOctet

Jemima Price, *violin*: Jemima is a second-year music student at The Queen's College, Oxford, and has been in OUO since the beginning of her first year. She also currently plays with New Chamber Opera, groups at the Keble Early Music Festival, the University Sinfonietta, and various quartets. As well as playing the violin, she is a soprano who sings with the chapel choir of Queen's, in addition to other solo and choral appearances. Jemima hopes to study vocal performance at the postgraduate level.

Rose Hodgson, *violin*: Rose graduated last year from Oxford with a Masters in Biology. Although she pursued a degree in science, music has always been a major part of her life. She was a violinist at the Royal College of Music Junior Department (RCMJD) for 6 years, and throughout university she played in a huge array of ensembles ranging from symphony orchestras to small chamber groups.

Samuel Oliver-Sherry, *violin*: Samuel is a first-year music student at St Anne's College, studying violin with former St Anne's tutor Dr Alberto Sanna. He was the concertmaster of the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (LPYO) in the 2022-23 season, and has been involved with the Liverpool-based charity Early Music as Education (EMAE) since its inception in 2017, working both as an orchestral member in its flagship ensemble as well as a tutor in its Beginner and Intermediate programmes. Currently, he is a first violinist in Oxford University Philharmonia. As well as violin, he is also a pianist (studying with Tom Kimmance) and self-taught organist.

James Murray, *violin*: James Murray is a second-year music student at Christchurch College, Oxford. Studying the violin and viola at the Royal Academy of Music's Junior Department, James played chamber and orchestral music throughout his childhood. He joined OUO at the start of this year on the violin.

Alice Sprinkle, viola: Alice has played viola in the Oxford University Orchestra for six years, starting when she began a Master's in musicology at Oxford in 2018. Still living and performing in Oxford, she is a PhD Candidate in Music Education at the Institute of Education, University College London. Alice is a Maryland native, and an alumna of Holton-Arms School, Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras, and College Park Youth Orchestra, for which she was a founding member.

Anneka Vetter, viola: Anneka Vetter is a violist studying music at Oriel College, Oxford, with a choral scholarship at Merton College, Oxford. She studies viola with Jonathan Barritt at the Royal College of Music, where she was previously a member of the Junior Department. An alumna of the National Youth Orchestra, Anneka continues to get involved in orchestras and ensembles while at university, including in OUO, St Anne's Camerata, and the Oxford Baroque Players.

Lucy Silbaugh, cello: Lucy Silbaugh earned a Master's from Oxford in Comparative Literature in 2023. She hails from Philadelphia and loves chamber music and Russian literature.

Edwin Gatward, cello: Edwin Gatward is a second year music student at Oriel college, where he holds an instrumental award. He currently studies with Felix Schmidt in London and has been in OUO since his first year.

OUO America Tour Overview

Immediately following their week in Italy, seven OUO string players, along with conductor Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey, travelled to Washington, D.C. for an outreach tour. The OUO members collaborated with a group of US-based Afghan refugee musicians, arranged by Cayenna. Three of the Afghan musicians visited D.C. in 2013 as part of a tour with the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), and during that tour collaborated with the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras (MCYO) and the Holton-Arms School. OUO violist Alice Sprinkle, an alumna of both MCYO and Holton-Arms, participated in both of those events in 2013, and helped facilitate this OUO tour to bring Afghan music back to those institutions. Recently, music has been banned in Afghanistan by the Taliban, and Afghan musicians have had to flee to avoid severe punishment. The opportunity to introduce young people to Afghan music and musicians was profound. OUO is honoured to have been able to be involved in this project.

On their first day of outreach, the OUO and Afghan musicians collaborated with East County Strings, a branch of MCYO. East County Strings provides students at underfunded middle schools in Montgomery County, MD the opportunity to learn a string instrument. The East County Strings programme culminates yearly in a mass string ensemble performance at the Music Center at Strathmore, comprising of students from ten local middle schools. Arson Fahim, an Afghan pianist and composer, created *Medley of Afghan Songs*, an arrangement designed for the East County Strings students to perform at Strathmore. OUO and Afghan musicians joined the mass orchestra side-by-side to rehearse and perform the piece, conducted by Cayenna. OUO musicians also joined the ensemble for the rest of the programme to support the students. In between the rehearsal and the concert, the OUO and Afghan musicians gave a mini-concert in the Strathmore lobby, introducing the students to Afghan instruments and sounds.

The next day of outreach began at the Holton-Arms School, where the OUO-Afghan group held a side-by-side workshop with the school's Chamber Orchestra. The workshop introduced the students to Afghan music, especially rhythmic patterns. The Afghan musicians took turns introducing their instruments, including tabla, rubab, and sitar. After lunch in Holton's dining hall, the Chamber Orchestra joined the group for an assembly, which included speeches and musical performances. The response from the audience was incredibly positive – one Holton teacher reported hearing students leaving the auditorium saying 'that was so cool'!



Clockwise from top left: OUO violinists Cecelia Loughney and James Murray with harmonium player Maram Atae; violinists Jemima Price (OUO) and Sunbul Reha; tabla player Hamid Habib Zadah; the OUO-Afghan ensemble after their performance at Holton-Arms; at the CPYO workshop; enjoying the cherry blossoms; the octet, post-performance, with Cayenna.

Later that evening, the group returned to Strathmore for a side-by-side workshop with MCYO's Philharmonic, the most advanced orchestra in their programme. Like with the Holton-Arms assembly, the workshop began with demonstrations by the Afghan musicians, followed by rehearsals of two pieces by Afghan composers. First, cellist and composer Nazira Wali, who played with MCYO as a member of the Afghan Youth Orchestra in 2013, introduced her piece *Endless*. In describing her piece, which depicts the Taliban's brutal takeover of Afghanistan, she said 'my desire has grown even more to continue making music and to show the Taliban that they can burn the instruments but will never be able to remove music from our hearts'. Following *Endless*, Cayenna introduced the second piece, *A Journey Through Diversity: Traditional Songs from Afghanistan*, an arrangement by German-based Afghan composer Mohammad Qambar Nawshad. MCYO musicians enjoyed playing Afghan music and were excited to learn about life in Oxford from OUO musicians.

The next morning, the OUO-Afghan group was treated to a private tour of the US Capitol, made possible by New Hampshire Senator Jeanne Shaheen. The group enjoyed exploring the building and learning about its history. Later that evening, the OUO musicians (joined by guest cellist Lourdes de la Peña) performed Respighi's *Double Quartet* for a private soiree hosted by the Oxford University Alumni Society of Washington, D.C. The event, which was open to Oxford alumni, sold out almost instantly. The dynamic octet performance was followed by a reception. The next day the OUO musicians enjoyed wandering through Smithsonian museums, monuments, and memorials. D.C.'s famous cherry blossom trees were blooming along the Tidal Basin, which made for a magical finish to the day. To end the tour, the OUO musicians and Cayenna held a side-by-side workshop for members of the College Park Youth Orchestra (CPYO), introducing its members to Afghan and British repertoire. Pieces included Arson's *Medley of Afghan Songs* and Edward Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*.

OUO would like to thank all of our collaborators for making the U.S. tour such a success!

The Oxford University Orchestra Committee

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We would like to thank:

- Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey;
- The Faculty of Music for rehearsal venues;
- OUMS and the Faculty of Music for funding.

Upcoming events in Oxford

Oxford Britten Ensemble

Friday 24th May, 7:30pm
Holywell Music Room

Britten – Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings.
& Simple Symphony

Conductor – Beth Fitzpatrick

Tenor – Daniel Tighe; Horn – Tommaso Rusconi

Oxford University Sinfonietta

Saturday 1st June, 7.30pm
Christ Church Cathedral

Mozart – Cosi fan tutte Overture;

Ravel – Le Tombeau de Couperin;

Burkill – Tsuru; Farrenc – Symphony No. 1

Conductor – James Norton

Oxford University Philharmonia

Saturday 25th May, 7.30pm
Sheldonian Theatre

Sibelius – Finlandia;

Amy Beach – Gaelic Symphony;

Schubert – Unfinished Symphony

Conductor – James Norton

Oxford Chamber Orchestra

Saturday 1st June, 7.30pm
University Church

Pärt – Fratres, Gipps – Wind Octet

Stravinsky – Wind Octet

Mozart – Symphony No. 41 (Jupiter)

Conductor – Ben Winters

Save the Date: OOU Michaelmas Term Concert

Thursday 14th November, Sheldonian Theatre, 8pm

Conductor – Remy Ballot

Rimsky-Korsakov – Scheherazade;

Ravel – Mother Goose Suite and Schubert – Symphony No. 8

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This ensemble provides an opportunity for the University's top musicians to play challenging and exciting repertoire with exceptional professional conductors and soloists. Ticket sales alone are unable to cover the cost of any concert, so it is thanks to the generous support of the University's Music Faculty, corporate sponsors, and people like you that we are able to continue to put on these ambitious concerts. With a small donation, you could help support us in this activity.

Become a **Friend** of OUO for £40 each year (£60 for a couple) and enjoy:

- Advance booking of concert tickets
- An annual newsletter with updates on the orchestra's development and plans
- Acknowledgement in each concert programme and on our website
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As a **Sponsor** for £100 each year (£150 for a couple) you will enjoy the additional opportunity to attend a pre-concert rehearsal and receive a 10% discount on tickets (max. 2 per concert).

For a donation of £500 or more each year you could become a **Benefactor**, where you will have the opportunity to be named as the sponsor of a specific activity each year. You will also receive one complimentary ticket for the OUO concert of your choice each year.

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Thank you for your support.

