

St  
Martin  
in  
the  
Fields

# FRESH HORIZONS

## *Chineke! Chamber Ensemble*

*Available to watch as many times as you like  
from 7.30pm, Thursday 29 April 2021,  
and available for 30 days.*

St Martin-in-the-Fields  
Trafalgar Square  
London  
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020 7766 1100  
[www.smitf.org](http://www.smitf.org)

# FRESH HORIZONS



## PROGRAMME

Two Folksongs in Counterpoint — Florence B Price (1887-1953)

*Drink to me with thine own eyes*

*Shortnin' Bread*

Piano Quintet in A 'Trout' — Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

*i. Allegro vivace*

*ii. Andante*

*iii. Scherzo: Presto*

*iv. Andantino — Allegretto*

*v. Allegro giusto*

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## PROGRAMME NOTES

by Sarah Maxted

This high-spirited programme from the Chineke! Chamber Ensemble brings together two great composers, separated by a century and markedly different circumstances, but comparable in their generous talents, rousing melodies and searching lyricism.

Florence Beatrice Price (1887-1953) is celebrated for her pioneering achievements as the first African American woman to have a symphonic composition performed by a major orchestra. Born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price received her early musical training from her mother before studying organ and teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. During her student years she avoided discriminatory racial segregation by 'passing' as Mexican, listing her birthplace as Puebla in conservatory documents. After graduating in 1906, Price held music professorships at colleges in Atlanta and Little Rock, then taught privately whilst turning her attention to composition. By 1927, her hometown of Little Rock was becoming increasingly inhospitable for African American families, with severe episodes of the harrowing racial violence typical throughout the Jim Crow South. Together with her husband and children, Price joined the Great Migration and relocated northwards to Chicago. Here, she embarked on graduate studies in composition and orchestration, forged connections amidst the city's vibrant cultural scene, and entered her works into competitions which brought wide recognition. One of these works was the prize-winning *Symphony in E minor*, which was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933.

Price composed at least five ***Folksongs in Counterpoint*** for string quartet, dated 1951 in her manuscript, but likely to have been the culmination of several earlier versions of quartets based on folksongs and African American spirituals. Some versions of the quartets appear with the name *Negro Folksongs in Counterpoint*, but Price biographer Dr Rae Linda Brown suggests that Price erased the word 'Negro' from the manuscript when she added folksongs which were not of African American origin, including *Drink to me only with thine eyes*. Many important works in Price's oeuvre draw from vernacular and folk influences, including the *Mississippi River Suite* and *Concert Overtures 1 and 2*, orchestral works based on spirituals.

*Drink to me only with thine eyes* is a centuries-old popular song with text by the Elizabethan-Jacobean playwright Ben Jonson. The familiar melody dates back to at least the late eighteenth century, when it was published in a collection of catches and glees by John Callcott. Price's contrapuntal arrangement is broad and romantic, combining hymnlike simplicity with the yearning sense of vastness associated with the American musical idiom of the mid-twentieth century.

*Shortnin' Bread* is a Southern plantation folksong, referring to a bread made with lard shortening. Price transforms the song into a lively and succinct work of counterpoint, vividly articulated with punchy accents and sultry slurs.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was an Austrian composer who, despite his tragically short life, contributed prolifically to the art song, chamber music and symphonic canon of the late Classical to early Romantic period. He was born in Vienna, where he received instruction in violin, piano, organ and counterpoint from a young age. In 1804 Schubert became a choral scholar at Vienna's Imperial Seminary, bringing the gifted young musician into the sphere of Antonio Salieri, then the city's dominant composer and mentor, who also taught Liszt, Beethoven and Mozart. By the age of sixteen, Schubert was already composing extensively but was financially driven to work as a schoolteacher and private music tutor. Musical fame did not come readily during his lifetime; his fervent operatic efforts were unsuccessful, his masterful lieder and chamber compositions received relatively little attention, and it was not until 1828 – the year of his death – that Schubert first gave a concert performance of his own works, finally enjoying the praise of the discerning Viennese public.

Schubert's *Piano Quintet in A*, popularly known as the '*Trout*' quintet, was written in 1819 at the behest of Sylvester Paumgartner, a wealthy patron and amateur cellist. It was Paumgartner's suggestion to incorporate variations on Schubert's popular song *Die Forelle* ('*The Trout*') and the quintet was likely intended for performance in the 'salon' evening recitals at Paumgartner's home in the town of Steyr. It's unclear whether or not the premiere went ahead, but the work was set aside in obscurity for the remaining decade of Schubert's career and was first published posthumously in 1829. The quintet is scored for the unusual combination of piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass (rather than the standard quintet formulation of string quartet with piano) and is structured in five movements.

The *Allegro vivace* first movement opens with a chordal flourish and leisurely exposition, building into an animated exploration of shifting harmonies and deliciously cascading melodies. From the outset, the textural contrast between the sprightly upper-register piano and the anchoring warmth of the double bass gives the quintet a distinctively spacious sonority.

In the *Andante* second movement, Schubert presents a multi-layered mood of lyrical elegance, seemingly gentle and refined, but with energetic gaiety that bubbles irrepressibly below the surface.

This softly simmering effervescence bursts into unabashed exuberance in the *Scherzo* third movement. The opening motif is rollicking and youthful, brimming with infectious joy.

The fourth movement brings the much-anticipated 'Trout' melody in *Andantino* – *Allegretto* variations. The strings introduce the theme, then the piano re-joins the texture for the first variation, decorated with violin trills like glittering sunlight on a stream, teasing the impatient fisherman with tantalising glimpses of the eponymous trout. The fourth variation briefly threatens life-and-death seriousness, but quickly reverts to light-hearted theatricals. The sixth and final variation is the truest to the original lied, with its familiar piano accompaniment of rippling sextuplets.

Schubert's finale is a jaunty *Allegro giusto* characterised by folk rhythms, harmonic surprises, and satisfying hints of the previous movements, tied together in vibrant brilliance. Each player has the opportunity to shine through the texture, sharing in the holiday atmosphere of Schubert's delectable quintet.

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## PERFORMERS

### Chineke! Chamber Ensemble

#### **Violin I**

Julian Gil Rodriguez

#### **Viola**

Clifton Harrison

#### **Cello**

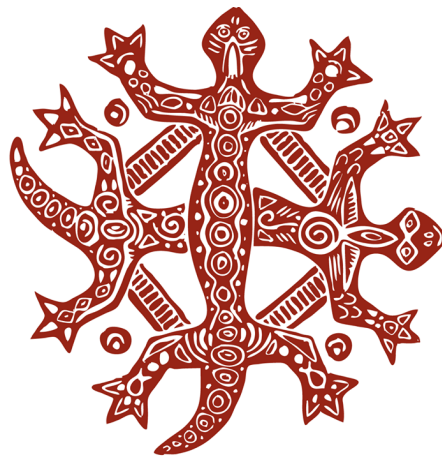
Ashok Klouda

#### **Double Bass**

Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE

#### **Piano**

Caroline Jaya-Ratnam



# CHINEKE!

**Chineke!** was founded in 2015 by the double bass player, Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE, to provide career opportunities for established and up-and-coming Black, Asian and ethnically diverse classical musicians in the UK and Europe. Chineke!'s mission is: 'Championing change and celebrating diversity in classical music'.

The Chineke! Chamber Ensemble comprises the principal players of the Chineke! Orchestra. Established two years after the orchestra, it first performed in Manchester in 2017, made its debut at Wigmore Hall in 2018 before going on to play at the Cheltenham and Ryedale festivals, Tonbridge Music Club, Wimbledon International Festival, Cambridge Music Festival and at St George's Bristol. Other highlights include performances at The Africa Center in New York, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, New College Oxford, Leicester New Walk Museum and Snape Maltings.

Chineke!'s founder, Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE, says: "My aim is to create a space where Black, Asian and ethnically diverse musicians can walk on stage and know that they belong, in every sense of the word. If even one child feels that their colour is getting in the way of their musical ambitions, then I hope to inspire them, give them a platform, and show them that music, of whatever kind, is for all people."



Chineke! (c. Eric Richmond)

*Our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for supporting the Fresh Horizons concert series at St Martin-in-the-Fields.*

*This concert was pre-recorded in the church and edited together before broadcast. The performers and technical crew carefully adhere to all current government regulations for COVID-19.*

# FRESH HORIZONS

Other online concerts from St Martin-in-the-Fields:

**Stainer – The Crucifixion**

Thursday 1 April, 7.30pm

**The Gesualdo Six**

Thursday 15 April, 7.30pm

**Handel – Messiah**

Thursday 8 April, 7.30pm

**Chineke! Chamber Ensemble**

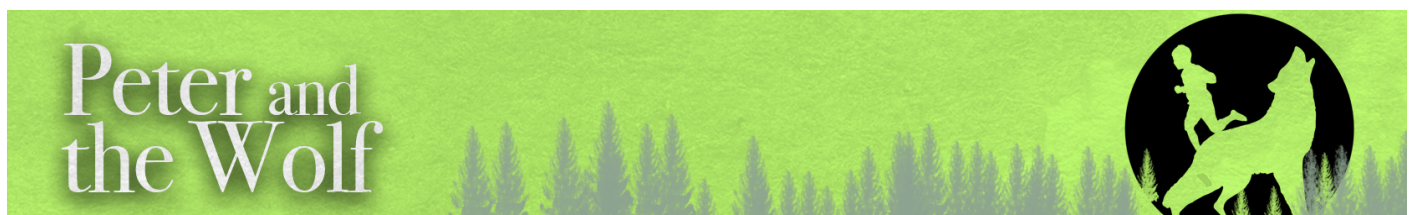
Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm

*All concerts are available to watch from 30 days after their release date*



Join us for an online fundraising event to celebrate and further the enduring ***Spirit of St Martin's***. Through music, poetry and messages from special guests, we celebrate all that is special about St Martin's.

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