

MPO CHAMBER SERIES #4

Malta Philharmonic Orchestra

Sunday, 07 January 2024, 11am

Robert Samut Hall, Floriana

PROGRAMME

Francis Poulenc

Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone

- I. Allegro Moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Rondeau

Joseph Vella

Soliloquies for Horn

Gunther Schuller

Duets for Unaccompanied Horns

- I. Molto Lento
- II. Vivace
- III. Andante Moderato
- IV. Allegro Volante

Christopher Muscat

Quintessence

- I. Quasi una fantasia
- II. Allegro assai
- III. Molto Largo e Mesto
- IV. Allegro Barbaro

Robert Sanders

Sonata in B flat for Horn and Piano

- I. Allegro Cantabile
- II. Tempo di Valse scherzando
- III. Lento – Vivace

PROGRAMME NOTES

by Dr Joseph Camilleri

Francis Poulenc

(France 1899 – France 1963)

Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone (1922, rev. 1945)

- I. Allegro Moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Rondeau

The young Poulenc was a member of *Les Six*, a group of like-minded upcoming composers whose works, laced with the popular idioms of the day (such as jazz and *café* music), were a deliberate and open challenge to the reigning musical establishment. Poulenc retained a clownish streak throughout his career, but it was tempered by a love for earlier composers (particularly Mozart) and a spiritual side which became more pronounced after a return to religious faith in the mid-1930s.

The Sonata dates from Poulenc's early period, and it was first performed in a concert in Paris alongside works by Erik Satie. It has three short movements and expresses the playful style and philosophy of *Les Six*. Throughout the piece, starting with the opening cheerful tune, the trumpet emerges as the main instrument, although both horn and trombone get their moments in the limelight. The first and third movements contain several dance-like episodes, while the central *Andante* transforms some of the themes of the first movement into a melancholic lullaby.

Joseph Vella

(Malta 1942 – Malta 2018)

Soliloquies for Solo Horn (1996)

Joseph Vella was one of Malta's major musical figures, a leading composer, conductor and musicologist. Vella's musical language is ingrained in a personal idiom influenced mainly by the 20th Century neo-classical movement, with a lyrical brand of atonality which tends to precipitate to a fundamental note. Nonetheless, there is an adventurous eclecticism to his oeuvre, evident in the diversity of styles he employed throughout his career.

Soliloquies is a work for unaccompanied horn written in 1996 for horn virtuoso José García Gutiérrez and was first performed by its dedicatee in 2012. It is a challenging and expressive piece, in which the demanding technical requirements serve the sustained drama of the work.

Gunther Schuller

(USA 1925 – USA 2015)

Duets for Unaccompanied Horns (1962)

- I. Molto Lento
- II. Vivace
- III. Andante Moderato
- IV. Allegro Volante

Long before "crossover" became a musical marketing fad, American composer Gunther Schuller was happily combining the classical and jazz worlds, performing as hornist with major classical orchestras, while collaborating with leading jazz musicians including Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Lovano and Miles Davis (on the iconic album *Birth of the Cool*). His own compositions tend to combine the diverse influences he was exposed to in his career.

Duets is a relatively short piece made up of four brief and contrasting movements for two French horns. Despite using two identical instruments, the composer uses different techniques to create variety and evoke a sense of constant movement.

Christopher Muscat

(Malta 1977)

Quintessence (2012)

- I. Quasi una fantasia
- II. Allegro assai
- III. Molto Largo e Mesto
- IV. Allegro Barbaro

Quintessence is a piece in four movements for piano and string quartet. Besides the obvious reference to the five-instrument formation of this work, the title *Quintessence* is derived from the classical elements of the ancient Greeks: "the ether, a pure 'fifth element' (*quinta essentia* in Latin), was thought to fill the Universe beyond Earth." However, the work is not as abstract as its inspiration might imply and is, in many ways, certainly more conventional than Muscat's works for string quartet. Each of the four movements employs a tempo indication 'borrowed' from a composer of the past – the four "great B's": Beethoven (*Quasi una fantasia*), Bach (*Allegro assai*), Brahms (*Molto Largo e mesto*) and Bartók (*Allegro Barbaro*). Despite the homage to the composers in question, the work is no pastiche of their style. On the contrary, each movement has its own particular, distinctive character. The opening *Quasi una fantasia's* wandering nature is mainly due to the free cadenzas played by the violin, viola and cello. The rhythmic second movement makes use of minimalist techniques in building up an exciting, forward-moving rhythmic fugue. The poignant third movement is the most expressive of the whole work and gently leads the way to the aggressive final *Allegro Barbaro* that provides a fitting and exhilarating ending.

Robert Sanders

(USA 1906 – USA 1974)

Sonata in B Flat for Horn & Piano (1963)

- I. Allegro Cantabile
- II. Tempo di Valse scherzando
- III. Lento – Vivace

Robert Sanders was an organist, conductor and composer, who also held administrative posts in university faculties, having been appointed Dean of the School of Music at Indiana University at the young age of 32. Although his well-crafted works contain some contemporary traits, they avoid the experimentalism typical of several American composers of the 20th Century. This can also be seen in this Sonata, whose three movements are characterised by a lyrical vein which is never far away even in those passages which sound more dissonant or acerbic, such as the spiky waltz of the central movement.



Sun, 14 Jan 2024

Robert Samut Hall, Floriana | 11:00am

For more information visit: maltaorchestra.com

MPO BOARD & ADMINISTRATION

Board

Chairman: **Alfred Camilleri**

Members: **Ruth Vella Micallef
Jesmond Cutajar
George Curmi
Mary Anne Camilleri
Katia Ancilleri
Elizabeth Cassar
Joseph Chircop
Noel Camilleri**

Secretary to the Board: **Carmen Zammit Farrugia**

Resident Conductor: **Michael Laus**

Administration

Acting Chief Executive Officer: **Christopher Muscat**

Director - Finance & Administration: **Reuben Sammut**

Orchestra Manager: **Aurelio Belli**

Manager - Finance & Administration: **Sarah Debono**

Manager - Events & Procurement: **Christopher Spiteri Blanco**

Manager - Logistics, Health & Safety: **Adrian Bartolo**

Senior Officer (Office of the CEO): **Shirley Farrugia**

Project Administrator: **Claire Briffa**

Media Coordinator: **Joe Julian Farrugia**

Senior Officer - Marketing & Events: **Michael Cutajar**

Support Officer: **Jennifer Scicluna**

Librarian: **Matthew Fenech**

Administrative Assistant: **Maria Spiteri Zahra**

Development & Education Officer: **Hilda Curmi**



ETIENNE CUTAJAR

Horn

Etienne Cutajar, hailing from Malta, started learning horn at age ten under the tuition of Raymond Cremona, Emanuel Spagnol and Paul Borg. He became third Horn of the then National Orchestra of Malta aged eighteen, later graduating from the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Etienne became associate principal horn of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in 2006, which position he kept for ten years. In 2007, Etienne has had "Fantasie Sonata for Horn and Piano" by the late Charles Camilleri dedicated to him, and released his solo album named after the same piece soon after. He also recorded Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 for Avia Records, and recently released his second solo album "Mdina". Etienne is currently Principal Horn of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.



MANUELE CATALANO

Horn

Born in 1994 in Messina, Italy, Manuele started playing French horn when he was eight. In 2015 he graduated from the Conservatory A. Corelli of Messina, obtaining a Master's degree in French horn with full marks and honours. After that, he took a course of high specialisation in French horn at the National Academy of S. Cecilia of Rome and at the J. Haydn Konservatorium of Eisenstadt, Austria.

He collaborated with the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Teatro Lirico of Spoleto where he toured in Japan, Orchestra L. Cherubini founded and directed by Riccardo Muti and with the Sicilian Horn Ensemble.

Manuele has been holding the position of low horn with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra since March 2017.



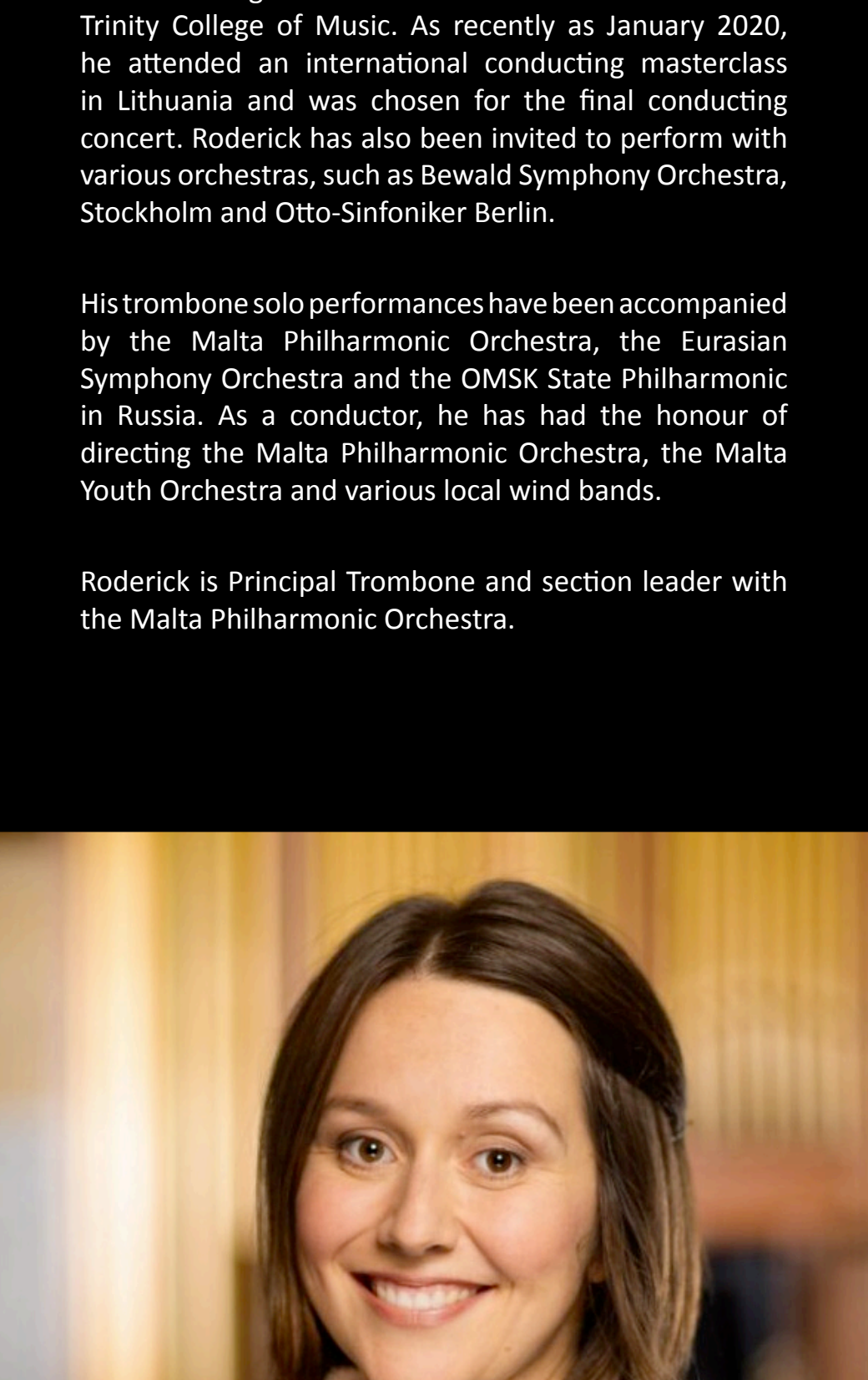
BRENDAN BALL

Trumpet

Brendan Ball began his studies on the trumpet as a government scholar at Chethams School of Music, where he was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year. He continued his studies as a Foundation Scholar, under David Mason and John Wilbraham, at the Royal College of Music, London.

Brendan has worked with almost all orchestras, ballet companies, opera houses, contemporary music ensembles in the UK and many in Europe. He has performed all the major concertos and is an internationally regarded recitalist. His output in the recording industry is equally prodigious.

Brendan joined the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra in March, 2017.



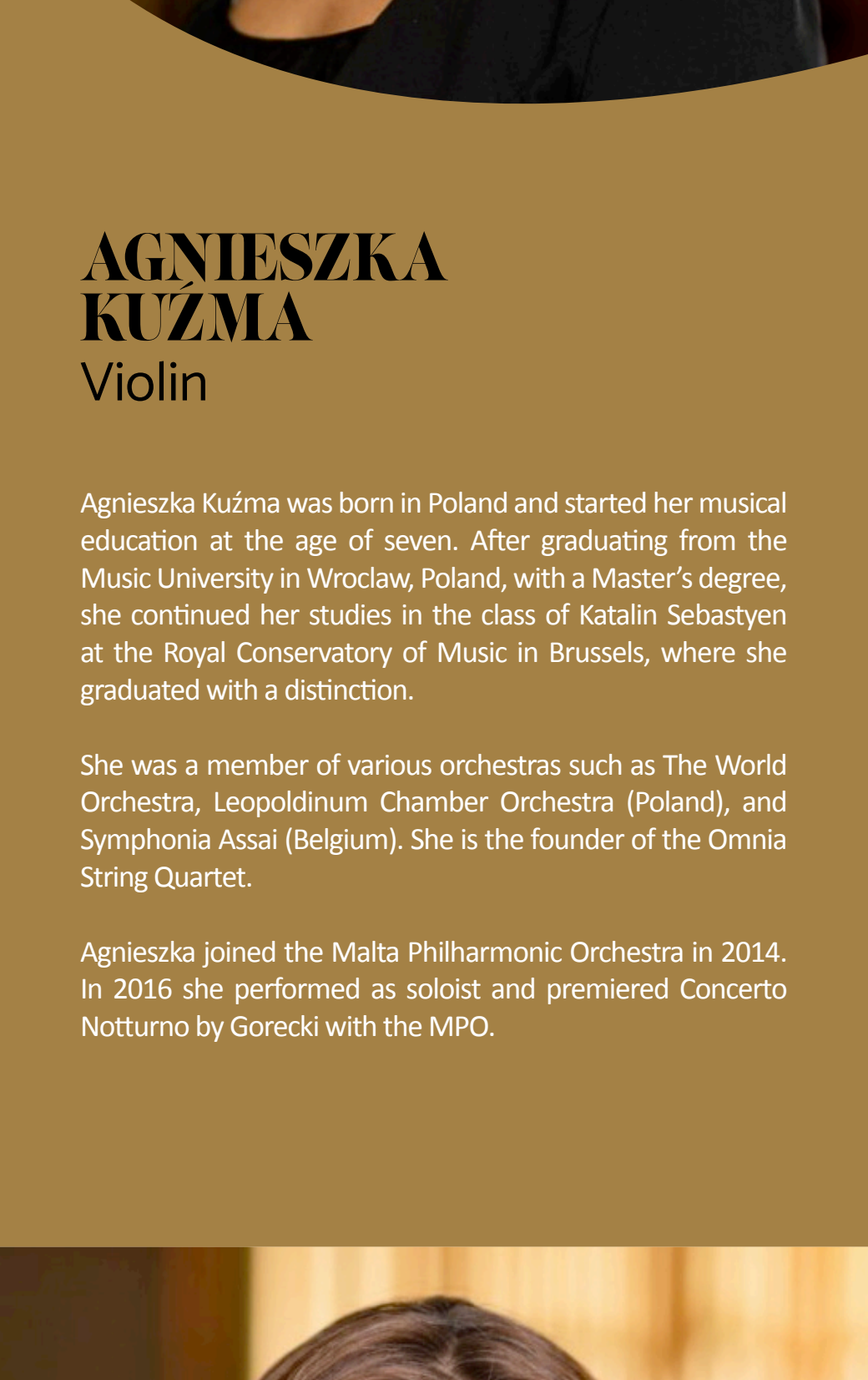
RODERICK CALLEJA BUGEJA

Trombone

Roderick Calleja Bugeja is an Associate and Fellow of the London College of Music and holds a Licentiate of the Trinity College of Music. As recently as January 2020, he attended an international conducting masterclass in Lithuania and was chosen for the final conducting concert. Roderick has also been invited to perform with various orchestras, such as Bewald Symphony Orchestra, Stockholm and Otto-Sinfoniker Berlin.

His trombone solo performances have been accompanied by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, the Eurasian Symphony Orchestra and the OMSK State Philharmonic in Russia. As a conductor, he has had the honour of directing the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, the Malta Youth Orchestra and various local wind bands.

Roderick is Principal Trombone and section leader with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.



AGNIESZKA KUZMA

Violin

Agnieszka Kuźma was born in Poland and started her musical education at the age of seven. After graduating from the Music University in Wrocław, Poland, with a Master's degree, she continued her studies in the class of Katalin Sebastyen at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, where she graduated with a distinction.

She was a member of various orchestras such as The World Orchestra, Leopoldinum Chamber Orchestra (Poland), and Symphonia Assai (Belgium). She is the founder of the Omnia String Quartet.

Agnieszka joined the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra in 2014. In 2016 she performed as soloist and premiered Concerto Notturmo by Gorecki with the MPO.



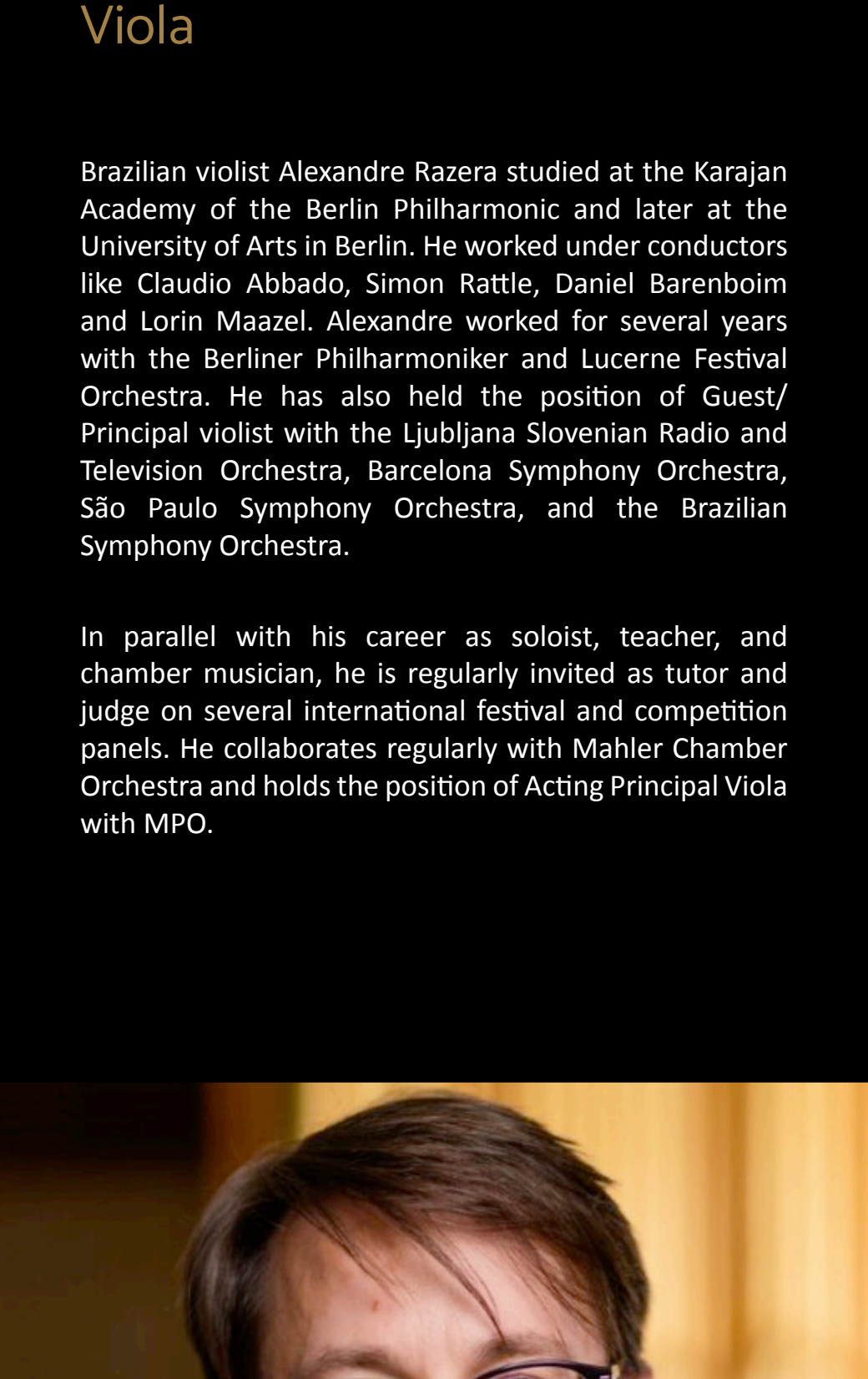
KLARA NAZAJ

Violin

Albanian-Italian violinist Klara Nazaj started playing the violin with her violinist mother. She graduated from the Tito Schipa Conservatory in Lecce, where she earned her Master's degree.

She furthered her studies at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole in Florence. She worked in the Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma, and the Orquesta de Extremadura in Spain. She was also a member of the Italian Youth Orchestra.

Klara has been a member of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra since 2011. She has appeared as soloist with the MPO several times, performances including Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante.



ALEXANDRE RAZERA

Viola

Brazilian violist Alexandre Razera studied at the Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic and later at the University of Arts in Berlin. He worked under conductors like Claudio Abbado, Simon Rattle, Daniel Barenboim and Lorin Maazel. Alexandre worked for several years with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Lucerne Festival Orchestra. He has also held the position of Guest/Principal violist with the Ljubljana Slovenian Radio and Television Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, and the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra.

In parallel with his career as soloist, teacher, and chamber musician, he is regularly invited as tutor and judge on several international festival and competition panels. He collaborates regularly with Mahler Chamber Orchestra and holds the position of Acting Principal Viola with MPO.

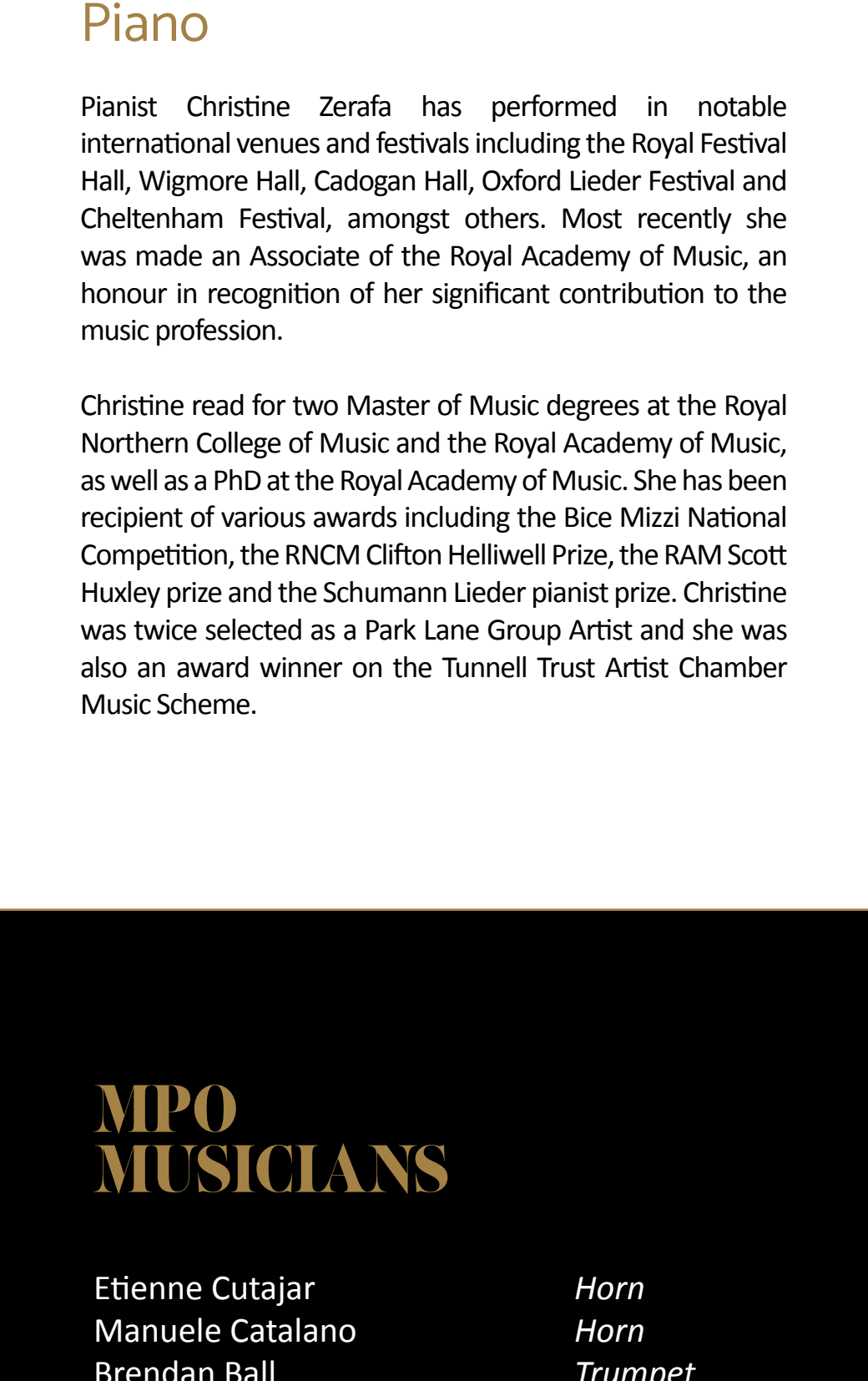


ÁKOS KERTÉSZ

Cello

Hungarian cellist Ákos Kertész studied at the Liszt Academy of Music (Budapest) and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague (Netherlands), obtaining a Master's degree. He played in several professional orchestras, including the Hungarian State Opera, the Hyogo Performing Arts Center (HPAC) Orchestra in Japan, and the Limburgs Symfonie Orkest in Maastricht.

Ákos joined the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra in 2012. Since 2019, he has been the MPO's principal cellist and has appeared as soloist in Haydn's Sinfonia Concertante with Toru Yasunaga and the HPAC Orchestra, and in Haydn's Cello Concerto with the MPO.



CHRISTINE ZERAFA

Piano

Pianist Christine Zerafa has performed in notable international venues and festivals including the Royal Festival Hall, Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival and Cheltenham Festival, amongst others. Most recently she was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, an honour in recognition of her significant contribution to the music profession.

Christine read for two Master of Music degrees at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, as well as a PhD at the Royal Academy of Music. She has been recipient of various awards including the Bice Mizzi National Competition, the RNCM Clifton Helliwell Prize, the RAM Scott Huxley prize and the Schumann Lieder pianist prize. Christine was twice selected as a Park Lane Group Artist and she was also an award winner on the Tunnell Trust Artist Chamber Music Scheme.

MPO MUSICIANS

Etienne Cutajar *Horn*

Manuele Catalano *Horn*

Brendan Ball *Trumpet*

Roderick Calleja Bugeja *Trombone*

Agnieszka Kuźma *Violin*

Klara Nazaj *Violin*

Alexandre Razera *Viola*

Ákos Kertész *Cello*

Christine Zerafa *Piano*



MPO CHAMBER SERIES #5

MPO MUSICIANS

Sunday, 04 February 2024
Robert Samut Hall, Floriana at 11.00am

www.maltaorchestra.com

BOOKING: www.showshappening.com

THANK YOU

The MPO is a Public Cultural Organisation within Arts Council Malta under the remit of the Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government.



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE,
THE ARTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



We are grateful for the support of the following cultural entities, corporate sponsors and individual supporters, which help us reach further and touch more lives than we ever could on our own.

MPO Principal Partner



MPO Corporate Sponsors



APS bank
values you can bank on



MALTA
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

www.maltaorchestra.com

Follow us on

