

ELIZABETH MACONCHY
NICOLA LEFANU
GILES SWAYNE



RELATIONSHIPS

MALU LIN VIOLIN
GILES SWAYNE PIANO

Relationships

Music for Violin & Piano by
Elizabeth Maconchy, Nicola LeFanu & Giles Swayne

Malu Lin *violin*
Giles Swayne *piano*

About Malu Lin & Giles Swayne:

'Malu Lin could walk on air'
The Yorkshire Evening Press

*'Giles Swayne, pianist, composer and wit, is a national treasure
and should be paid more attention.'*
The Strad

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994)

Violin Sonata No. 2

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. Molto moderato | [4:32] |
| 2. Allegro molto | [2:54] |
| 3. Lento, quasi recitativo | [5:17] |
| 4. Presto | [4:25] |

Nicola LeFanu (b.1947)

Abstracts and a Frame

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| 5. Tranquillo e lento | [1:12] |
| 6. Quaver = 126 | [1:35] |
| 7. Poco esitando ... rapido | [1:28] |
| 8. Molto moderato | [1:35] |
| 9. Calmo assoluto | [1:32] |
| 10. Quaver = 126 | [2:03] |
| 11. Molto lento | [2:22] |
| 12. Tranquillo e lento | [1:17] |

Giles Swayne (b.1946)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------|
| 13. Duo, Op. 20 | [19:26] |
|------------------------|---------|

Elizabeth Maconchy

Violin Sonata No. 1

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| 14. Moderato | [6:29] |
| 15. Allegro scherzando | [1:33] |
| 16. Lento | [5:12] |
| 17. Toccata: allegro molto | [3:25] |

Giles Swayne

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| 18. Echo, Op. 78 | [5:13] |
|-------------------------|--------|

Giles Swayne

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| 19. Farewell, Op. 151 | [4:14] |
|------------------------------|--------|

Total playing time	[75:56]
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All world premiere recordings



Relationships: Maconchy, LeFanu & Swayne

Relationships is an album formed from the various strands of familial, personal and musical connections between the composers and performers involved in it. Elizabeth Maconchy, who died in 1994, was a cousin of Giles Swayne's mother and a major influence on his musical development. Nicola LeFanu is Elizabeth Maconchy's daughter and Giles Swayne's cousin (and almost exact contemporary) and their careers have many points of connection – in 1968, for example, they both studied at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. Violinist Malu Lin is married to Giles Swayne, and studied with violinist Christopher Rowland, for whom Swayne composed his 1975 Duo.

The works span nine decades. Maconchy's early Sonata No. 1 was written in 1927, Swayne's *Farewell* in July 2017. Listed chronologically, between these two come Maconchy's Sonata No. 2 (1943), two youthful works by LeFanu and Swayne (1971 and 1975 respectively), and a short Swayne piece from 1996. So the programme covers nearly a century of music for violin and piano, connecting the sound-worlds of Vaughan Williams (who taught Maconchy), Bartók and Janáček (who influenced Maconchy), Petrassi (who taught LeFanu),

and the inescapable influences of Webern and Messiaen (who taught Swayne).

Elizabeth Maconchy: Violin Sonata No. 2

Maconchy's second sonata was composed in 1943, during the war years. The differences between this sonata and the first are marked: the youthful exuberance of her early works has given way to a more searching and troubled language – the 'passionate argument' that Maconchy herself described as characteristic of her chamber music. This sonata is perhaps less free and innovative than the first, but it is more accomplished: concertante writing has given way to a confidently textured idiom, sharing musical ideas more equally between the players.

The first movement opens with a brooding and rhythmically ambiguous violin solo, introducing the twisting chromatic motives which will underpin the whole sonata. The slow introduction leads to a vigorous 'Allegro' which is technically and expressively demanding of both players. The 'scherzo' which follows alternates simple and compound metres, but its mood is dark and almost sinister compared with the scherzo of the earlier sonata. The third movement, 'Lento', also has a disquietingly bitter-sweet quality, and its underlying modality is seldom free of dissonant inflection. It leads without a break into the last movement – a 'Presto'

which takes up the motives and rhythms of the previous movements and extends them in a brilliant finale which binds together the whole work, bringing it to a quiet close in a slow coda, marked 'molto calmo'.

Nicola LeFanu: Abstracts and a Frame

The frame of the title refers to the very simple, still piece which opens and closes the work. Within the frame are six 'abstracts' – miniatures in size, though not necessarily in scope. They are closely related, interacting and drawing on similar material, but presenting it in different contexts. I imagined listening to this piece as being analogous to browsing in an art gallery: our perception of the material changes as we alter our perspective. *Abstracts and a Frame* was composed in 1971 for Levon Chilingirian and Clifford Benson, who commissioned it with funds from the Arts Council.

Giles Swayne: Duo, Op. 20

Composed in November 1975, *Duo* was first performed by Christopher Rowland and Giles Swayne at the Arts Lab, Birmingham on 7 January 1976, and is dedicated to Christopher Rowland, who was my contemporary at university, and my duo

partner when we were at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He went on to lead the Fitzwilliam Quartet, which recorded the complete cycle of Shostakovich quartets under that composer's aegis, to international acclaim. He died in 2007, greatly missed by his many friends and students.

Around that time there was wide speculation about a series of underwater photographs which purported to show the Loch Ness monster. In an idle moment I doodled a series of diminishing loops representing Nessie's curves; and it struck me that this could be a model for a musical structure which worked by compression rather than elaboration. This is how *Duo* was planned. I cheated in places, overlapping some of the loops; and one loop got out of hand, creating a bulge near the monster's rear. The result is a single-movement piece which opens in wild extravagance, disintegrates into unsynchronised lunacy, and is then pared gradually away to a gentle ending. It is a highly physical piece which makes massive demands on the both performers. Because of its free structure and the nature of its material, it had to be recorded in very long sections, almost like a live performance; so this recording comes with warts and all.

Elizabeth Maconchy: Violin Sonata No. 1

Written in 1927 when she was a student of Vaughan Williams (five years before her first string quartet) this sonata is Maconchy's first mature work. Several of her early pieces had already attracted attention; but none displays the remarkable originality of this piece, which heralds many characteristics of her later style. The harmonic idiom is bold, emphasising tritones and unresolved dissonances; and she explores irregular metre and cross-rhythms, creating a counterpoint of rhythms and lines. But the most striking and characteristic feature of the piece (as of all Maconchy's mature work) is its intensity of concentration and of feeling.

The first movement has a striking theme with a prominent tritone, and culminates in a violin cadenza which leads to a reflective coda. The 'Scherzo' is very fast and rather grotesque; the 'Lento' develops continuously unwinding melodic strands, which undergo metric transformation to create great expressive variety. The virtuoso finale is a light-hearted 'moto perpetuo' which acts as a perfect foil to the previous movements.

Giles Swayne: Echo, Op. 78

Echo was written in July 1997 in memory of the composer Paul Reade, who had died in May that year. It was first performed by Malu Lin and myself at the Purcell Room, London on 9 December 1997.

The piece is based on the four-note phrase which begins and ends my 1975 *Duo* (which I used to perform during the 1970s with violinist Christopher Rowland, who taught Malu Lin). At the end of *Duo*, the opening phrase (loud at the beginning) recurs as a whisper on muted violin. This involves putting on a mute for the last four notes; and I was interested in taking this idea and making a short piece which could either be a pendant to *Duo* or stand on its own – which is what I did twenty-two years later.

The violin remains muted throughout, except in the last two bars; so the process at the end of *Duo* is here reversed. The four-note phrase has a fifth note added; and this provides the material of the violin part, which becomes increasingly detailed as it develops. Against this, the piano plays a series of quiet chords derived from the original four-note phrase. This chord-sequence recurs twelve times, and is gradually slowed down, while the chords are thinned out from eight notes to one. At this point, over long,

bell-like notes in the bass, the piano takes the violin's material and gradually compresses it, until it is very quick. Meanwhile the violin plays a slowed-down version, and this collision between compression and expansion produces the piece's brief and sudden climax.

Giles Swayne: Farewell, Op. 151

This short piece was written in July 2017 in memory of a very dear friend who died in March that year. I imagined the violin as playing from within an all-embracing resonance (the piano sustaining pedal is held down throughout). We recorded the piece in an unusual way, feeding part of the violin output to the piano soundboard via speakers placed inside the instrument. The resulting mixture was subjected to electronic treatment, resulting in a heightened and almost supernatural violin sound.

The piece has a floating feeling, because of the irregular division of nine quavers in each bar. The right hand of the piano plays a rocking minor third which climbs slowly up the keyboard from start to finish. The violin plays a melody derived from this; and the left hand of the piano plays a deep, low echo of the violin.

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Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–1994)

A distinctive voice in British music of the twentieth century, Maconchy grew up in Ireland, came to London in 1923 to study with Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, and in 1929 won a scholarship to pursue her studies in Prague. Here in 1930 her Piano Concerto was premiered, and that year her orchestral suite *The Land* was played at the Proms to great acclaim. Influenced by central European masters such as Bartók and Janáček, the composer is widely recognised for her striking and individual voice.

Maconchy is perhaps best known for her remarkable series of thirteen string quartets. Her work has been described as 'an impassioned argument'. Whilst it can be fierce and concise, it is always expressive and often lyrical. Her lyricism also finds expression in a range of vocal and choral works, as well as three one-act operas and the cantata *Héloïse* and *Abelard*. Maconchy was President of the Society for the Promotion of New Music, and was honoured as a DBE in 1987.

Nicola LeFanu (b.1947)

Nicola LeFanu who is the daughter of Elizabeth Maconchy, has composed around a hundred works for a variety of mediums. She studied at Oxford, Royal College of Music and Harvard and is active in many aspects of the musical profession. Her music is published by Edition Peters and by Novello, and has been widely played, broadcast and recorded. She has composed eight operas, which have been staged in UK, Ireland and USA. In April 2017 she celebrated her seventieth birthday; there were premieres of five new commissions and she was BBC Radio 3 'Composer of the Week'. In 2020 an album with four of her major orchestral pieces was released by NMC.

'Nicola LeFanu is renowned for works of imaginative beauty'
BBC Music Magazine

www.nicolalefanu.com



Elizabeth Maconchy and her daughter Nicola LeFanu in 1977



Giles Swayne (piano)

Giles Swayne, who studied piano with Gordon Green, Phyllis Lee and Vlado Perlemuter, began composing at an early age, encouraged by his cousin Elizabeth Maconchy. In 1968 he won a composition scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied with Harrison Birtwistle, Alan Bush and Nicholas Maw, and between 1976 and 1979 visited the Paris Conservatoire regularly, to study with Olivier Messiaen. In 1980 his *CRY for 28 amplified voices* was premiered by the BBC Singers under John Poole. It was hailed as a landmark, and has been performed twice at the Proms and many times worldwide.

He has written over 150 works of all kinds. *The Silent Land* for cello and forty-part choir, premiered at the 1998 Spitalfields Festival, was described by *The Times* as 'a masterpiece'. After the premiere of *HAVOC* at the Proms in September 1999, *The Independent* commented 'Swayne is a master'.

www.gilesswayne.com

Malu Lin (violin)

Malu Lin grew up near Aberystwyth, where

she studied with Robert Jacoby. At the age of nineteen she was runner-up in the All Wales Young Musician of the Year competition. This resulted in several concerto appearances, including with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Cardiff Ensemble.

She went on to study music at York University, where in her final year she began to study with Christopher Rowland. She continued with him at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she led a string quartet which won all the college chamber music prizes, and whose performances of Tippett and Shostakovich won national critical acclaim. The quartet went on to win an award from the Countess of Munster Trust to study with the Amadeus Quartet at the Royal Academy of Music. She also won prizes for her solo playing at the Royal Northern College of Music, which led to a performance of the Berg violin concerto with the college symphony orchestra. Later concerto appearances included performances of the Tchaikovsky and Brahms to enthusiastic reviews.

In 1997 Malu started working with composer and pianist Giles Swayne. They gave their debut recital at the Purcell Room in December of that year, and were married in 2002. They live in Herefordshire with their two dogs.

Cover image

Title: *Relationships 1*
by Richard LIN Show Yu (1933–2011)
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Richard Lin (1933–2011)

Richard Lin, Malu Lin's father, was born in Taiwan. He came to Britain in 1952 and studied architecture, but turned to painting and quickly made a name for himself. He had several London exhibitions in the late Fifties, including a solo show at the ICA in 1958. In 1964, with exhibitions all over the world, he was chosen to represent Britain at the most avant-garde contemporary art exhibition of that time, documenta III in Kassel, Germany. In 1967 he was invited to participate in the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, and received the William Frew Memorial Purchase Award. In line with the growing abstraction of post-war artists and composers, Lin refined his method from fluid brushwork to a highly disciplined use of palette-knife and relief, to produce

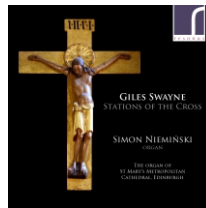
his iconic White Series. In May 1966, Miró visited him at his London studio and declared: 'In the world of white, no-one can exceed you'.

The screenprint on paper featured on the cover is one of a series of three – *Relationships 1*, *Relationships 2* and *Flirtation* – which are in the collection of the Tate. It was created in 1965, which by a neat coincidence was the year his daughter Malu was born.

Acknowledgement

Yet another strand connects Giles Swayne with John Rutter, who completed the editing and mixing of this recording, and without whose generous help it would not have been completed. They were contemporaries at Cambridge, and briefly in the same aural training class – where Rutter's amazingly acute ear put everyone else to shame. From 1975 to 1979 he was Director of Music at Clare College, Cambridge – where Swayne was Composer-in-residence from 2006 to 2014.

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Assistant engineer: Naomi Graham

Tracks 1–4 & 14–17 edited by Nick Graham; other tracks edited by John Rutter

Mixing: John Rutter

Steinway piano provided by Giller Pianos

Photos of Malu Lin & Giles Swayne: Malcolm Crowthers and Nima Yeganefar

Session photo: Nick Graham

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info@resonusclassics.com

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