

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 30th November 2025, at 3.00 pm

A Christmas Carol

Ensemble V

Ruth Rogers and Kate Comberti	<i>Violins</i>
Sally Beamish	<i>Viola</i>
Sebastian Comberti	<i>Cello</i>
Viv McLean	<i>Piano</i>
Peter Thomson	<i>Actor / Narrator</i>

Described as “the finest of the younger generation of violinists” (Musical Opinion), and hailed by the Guardian as “superb”, **Ruth Rogers** is in demand as soloist, leader and chamber musician. She was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal, the Royal College of Music’s highest accolade. She appears regularly at such prestigious venues as the Wigmore Hall with Aquinas Piano Trio and has made many recordings as part of that ensemble.

Ruth was appointed Leader of the London Mozart Players in 2015, and Leader of the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra in 2022. She was Co-Leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2012, and appears as a guest leader of many other major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, CBSO and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Ruth regularly leads the orchestra of Gran Canaria, and has performed as a soloist in many different countries. She has played to orphans, landmine victims and malaria patients in refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

Kate Comberti is a versatile violinist and music educator with a diverse academic background. She honed her skills at the Royal Academy of Music, studying violin with the renowned Manoug Parikian. Kate furthered her education by earning an MMus in Creative Leadership from the Royal College of Music and an MA in Education (Early Years Music) from the Centre for Research in Early Childhood.

As a professional orchestral violinist, Kate has performed with esteemed ensembles such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hanover Band, Toronto Symphony and City of London Sinfonia, and in London’s West End with a range in repertoire spanning from Baroque masterpieces to popular classics by Freddie Mercury. Her artistic curiosity has led her to explore improvisation and musical playfulness, using these creative tools to foster connection and interaction. Through her research and performances she continues to push boundaries and bring younger people together through music.

Born in London, **Sally Beamish** composed from an early age. She studied violin and viola at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, with Bronisław Gimpel, Patrick Ireland and Atar Arad; then with Bruno Giuranna in Detmold, Germany. She co-founded the Raphael Ensemble, and was principal viola in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and London Mozart Players, before moving to Scotland in 1990, to focus on composition.



Seaford Music Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Newberry Tully Estate Agents

Seaford Music Society, registered charity no. 295569

In 2015 she returned to playing, on a viola made by her daughter, luthier Stephanie Irvine, and returned to England in 2018. Since then, she has performed at many festivals, including the Australian Festival of Chamber Music in 2023 and the International Musicians' Seminar in Cornwall in 2024. She was awarded an OBE in the Queen's birthday honours in 2020, and the Cobbett medal for Chamber Music by the Musicians Company in 2025.

In June 2026 the Delphian label will release a CD of Sally playing her recent viola music, together with six newly commissioned pieces, to celebrate her 70th birthday.

Recent compositions include a double concerto for Martin Fröst (clarinet) and Janine Jansen (violin). Her basset clarinet concerto for Michael Collins was premièred in October with the Tapiola Sinfonietta, and will receive its UK première with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields at a birthday concert in June 2026.

Sebastian Comberti was born in London and studied with Amedeo Baldovino and later with Derek Simpson at the Royal Academy of Music. He was a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet, and from 1983 to 2025 was principal cello with the London Mozart Players.

A keen interest in historically informed performance has resulted in participation with a great many of London's period instrument groups, appearing as principal cello and soloist with the OAE and the Hanover Band. As a member of several chamber groups, including Trio Goya and Divertimenti Ensemble, he has recorded for CRD, EMI, Harmonia Mundi, Hyperion, Meridian, Phoenix, RCA and CPO. Solo recordings include concertos by Geoffrey Hanson, Peter Fribbins, Haydn and Zumsteeg with the OAE, solo works by Kenneth V Jones, sonatas by Boccherini and Stephen Paxton, and early 19th century works with fortepiano.

Since winning First Prize at the Maria Canals Piano Competition in Barcelona, British pianist **Viv McLean**, described by Le Monde as "possessing the genius one finds in those who know how to forget themselves", has performed in all the major venues in the UK as well as throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the USA. Viv's concerto work includes appearances with the RPO, Philharmonia Orchestra, LPO, Hallé Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Orchestra of the Swan, Orchestra of St John's, Northern Chamber Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra. As well as Ensemble V, Viv plays regularly with the Adderbury Ensemble and has also performed with other leading chamber groups such as the Ysaye String Quartet, the Sacconi String Quartet, Ensemble 360 and the Leopold String Trio. He has collaborated with musicians such as Natalie Clein, Alice Neary, Marianne Thorsen, Daniel Hope, Adrian Brendel, Lawrence Power, Mary Bevan, Rebecca Evans, David Le Page, Guy Johnston and many others.

Peter Thomson began his career as an actor, performing in many West End shows and as a principal actor at Bristol Old Vic. He subsequently became a playwright, and has had over thirty plays produced on BBC radio, and fifteen stage plays around the UK. Peter has recently completed a series of talks with renowned theatre director Mike Alfreds, which are published on YouTube, also interviewing major figures such as Sir Mark Rylance, Michelle Williams and Sir Ian McKellan. His short film *Mac the Anecdote*, featuring actor Crawford Logan, has won several awards, and *Bomb*, performed by Peter with Jonathan Tafler, is available to watch online.

In 2017 Peter directed the London premiere of *The Judas Passion* by Sally Beamish and David Harsent, and further work with Sally Beamish includes the libretto for *A Knock on the Door*, and the lyrics for *Can You Hear Me* and *An Advent Prayer*. Peter performs regularly as poetry reader, narrator and singer. In 2023 he performed *Peter and the Wolf* and *Ferdinand the Bull* at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, and in July 2024 narrated Beamish's *The Seafarer* at the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont. He and Sally Beamish have a trio with guitarist Arthur Dick, which specialises in jazz standards and popular repertoire.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

After the novella by Charles Dickens (1843)

Abridged by Peter Thomson and Sally Beamish, music by Sally Beamish (2023)

Sally Beamish writes:

In 2020 Sir David Bintley invited me to compose an orchestral score for a new ballet, A Christmas Carol, based on the Dickens novella of 1843. This was to be performed by Finnish National Ballet, as a lavish new production in 2023.

The collaboration with David was hugely inspiring, with regular (Zoom!) meetings to discuss each scene, which I would then send to him in written score and computer audio. Next there would be quite a bit of back and forth as I built the music to his vision. I loved creating the ghost music, the parlour dances and country dances, and the Christmas street music – with barrel organs and street cries. And, of course, it was entertaining to include as many 19th century Christmas carols as I could find – sometimes secretly, and sometimes overtly, with the audience joining in a rousing ‘Hark the Herald’ at the end. Once the score was complete, David began working with the company to create the choreography.

In 2024, for the 70th birthday of my friend Jane Blatt, I arranged two sets of dances from the ballet for piano quintet. When we gave an impromptu performance of the first set to a group of friends and their children, I added short summaries of what was happening in Dickens’s story, and this led to the idea of a new version: a telling of the complete story in Dickens’s original words. I immediately thought of my own group, Ensemble V, and of course of my husband – actor and writer Peter Thomson.

Not surprisingly, there was now an issue with the amount of music and the amount of text. The complete performance would have lasted at least four hours. It became clear that, even if abridged, some of the text would need to sit over music. Music written for dance is not necessarily suitable for ‘underscoring’ narration, so Peter and I had to decide which passages were to be performed as music only, which as text only, and where exactly we could combine the two and retain the clarity of both. This was no easy task. I brought in more atmospheric sections of the orchestral score, to colour descriptive passages. During the more lively, rhythmical music, we reduced the text to its bare essentials to enable the listener to take in both.

The structure of this version follows David’s ballet, shaping Dickens’s five ‘staves’ into two acts:

Act 1:

Stave 1 – Marley’s Ghost

Stave 2 – The First of the Three Spirits

INTERVAL

Act 2:

Stave 3 – The Second of the Three Spirits

Stave 4 – The Last of the Spirits

Stave 5 – The End of It

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born king,
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”
Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies,
With th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem.”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born king.”

With thanks to: Arthur Dick, Orlando Gough, John Leonard, Will Stallibrass, Gabriel Thomson and Malcolm Ward, for musical, theatrical and sound assistance with this production.

We warmly invite you to join us downstairs after the concert for a cup of tea or coffee, and a biscuit or two

Our forthcoming concerts

Sunday 8th February 2026, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford

We are delighted to welcome back the **London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble** for their annual concert here in Seaford. They will be playing works by Mozart, Britten and Beethoven: more details in the Seaford Music Society 2025-2026 brochure, or on our website: www.seafordmusicsociety.com.

Sunday 8th March 2026, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford

Another very welcome return: the **Fibonacci Quartet**, one of Europe's leading young string quartets, and prolific prize-winners, will play works by Haydn (his charming 'Lark' quartet), Debussy and Schumann.

Membership of the Society grants you free entry to these and all the remaining concerts this season, without additional charge. A limited number of children and young adults (under 26) may also attend without charge (children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult).

If you are not a member and would like to join, see our Treasurer, Paul Moore, at the desk in the entrance foyer. There will be a small reduction in your annual membership subscription because you are joining after the start of the season, and the cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited towards your subscription.

For non-members, single-concert tickets cost £21, and can be purchased in advance from **Newberry Tully Estate Agents** in Church Street, Seaford; **Seaford, Newhaven and Lewes Tourist Information Centres**; online through **TicketSource**; or from **our Treasurer, Paul Moore**.

Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society

Members may bring one guest to any of the concerts in our 2025-26 season of concerts, at a reduction of £3 off the single-ticket price, subject to the concert not having sold out.

On presentation of their current membership card, members also enjoy the following benefits:

- A reduced price of £14 at any Haywards Heath Music Society concert in their 2025-26 season
- A reduced price of £17 at any Nicholas Yonge Society concert in their 2025-26 season
- A discount of £3 off the price of any Uckfield Music Club concert in their 2026 season

Tickets at these reduced prices are available at the door, on concert days only. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website:

Uckfield Music Club:

www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk

Haywards Heath Music Society:

www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk

Nicholas Yonge Society:

www.nyslewes.org.uk