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PRESS RELEASE

John Casken's *That Subtle Knot* receives world premiere

11 June 2014, Sage Gateshead

13 June 2014, Milton Court Concert Hall, London
 Royal Northern Sinfonia/Thomas Zehetmair/Ruth Killius

Mozart Overture, *Don Giovanni*

Bartók Viola Concerto

Casken *That Subtle Knot* (world premiere on 11 June 2014)

Beethoven Symphony No 5

6 Aug 2014, Salzburg Festival

Camerata Salzburg/Thomas Zehetmair/Ruth Killius

Mendelssohn *Schöne Melusine*

Casken *That Subtle Knot*

Mozart *Haffner Serenade*

Composer **John Casken's** latest new work *That Subtle Knot*, a double concerto for violin and viola which was jointly commissioned by **Thomas Zehetmair** and **Sage Gateshead**, receives its world premiere on 11 June with a further performance on 13 June at the **Guildhall School's Milton Court**.

It will be performed by **Thomas Zehetmair**, who will play and direct, and his partner, violist **Ruth Killius**. The world premiere will take place at Sage Gateshead with a second performance in London at Milton Court Concert Hall. It will receive its European premiere at the Salzburg Festival on 6 August 2014 with Zehetmair, Killius and the Camerata Salzburg. Royal Northern Sinfonia's concerts also mark the last performances of Zehetmair as its Music Director.

That Subtle Knot paints a picture of human love and togetherness. The title comes from a poem by John Donne entitled *The Ecstasy* in which two lovers sit on the banks of a river, their hands entwined and 'did thread/Our Eyes, upon one double string.' *That Subtle Knot* begins with the solo viola playing "as if remembering an old folk-song...singing to oneself...before being drawn elsewhere." It is the solo violin who draws the viola towards a different musical journey, and this idea provided John Casken with the broad framework of how the two instruments should behave with one another during the course of the work. In the knitting of that knot, the solo viola, alone at first, is attracted by the violins more rhapsodic and quixotic kind of expression, but a number of times retreats to the opening melody, as if seeking refuge. Sometimes the violin joins the viola in reshaping this melody, and sometimes it appears in a new and varied form, such as at the start of the second movement. And so the relationship develops, through the exploration of independent lines, lines shared, lines in unison, lines in opposition, but always with a sense of being drawn together with one purpose. The dialogue with the orchestra is very much in the spirit of chamber music, with the orchestra taking up fragments of the solo lines, or sustaining notes to create a rich fabric, and in the faster passages acting as an equal force, driving the music forward.

Thomas Zehetmair conducted the premiere of Casken's song-cycle *Farness* for soprano, solo viola and orchestra in 2006, in which Ruth Killius played the viola part. Following this collaboration Zehetmair invited Casken to compose a new double concerto for himself and Ruth. Over the last decade, Zehetmair has raised the artistic profile of the orchestra making it the leading chamber orchestra in Britain and "one of the most daringly responsive Mozartian orchestras in the country" as described by the Guardian. At the end of this season, Zehetmair becomes Conductor Laureate with the orchestra.

John Casken was Composer-in-Association with Royal Northern Sinfonia from 1990 to 2001 writing numerous works for the orchestra including his Cello Concerto written for Heinrich Schiff and Mahara! Dreaming, a tone poem based on his opera Golem performed in April by Principal Conductor Mario Venzago. Casken studied in Poland and formed a close relationship with Witold Lutoslawski. His music has



been featured throughout the 13/14 season including The Knight's Stone on 15 February and Winter Reels in a Late Mix concert on 8 April.

Casken's work is often inspired by literature and legend, landscape and painting, and particularly by the Northumberland countryside where he lives. Casken has a long association with Royal Northern Sinfonia, as well as with The Lindsays and more recently with Quatuor Danel. His compositions have won a Gramophone award, the First Britten Prize for Composition, the Prince Pierre de Monaco Prize and a British Composer Award for Vocal Music.

For further press information and images please contact:

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

Email: rebecca@rdmr.co.uk | isobel@rdmr.co.uk | Tel: 020 7247 1894 | www.rdmr.co.uk