









# Programme

<h1>Programme</h1>					Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> 2pm The Conquering Hero Pages 6 - 9	Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> 2pm Rhapsody Pages 10 - 13
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> 1pm Salwa Quartet Recital Pages 59 - 60	Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> 7pm La Belle Époque Pages 14 - 18	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> 7pm Breaking Free Pages 20 - 23	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> 1pm Hill Quartet Recital Pages 61 - 62	Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> 7pm Turning Points Pages 24 - 27	Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> 7pm A New Genre Pages 28 - 31	Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> 1pm Jubilee Quartet Recital Pages 63 - 64
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> 7pm Turn of a Century Pages 32 - 35	Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> 7pm Through War Pages 36 - 40	Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> 1pm Asyla Oboe Quartet Recital Pages 65 - 67	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> 7pm Post War Paris Pages 42 - 45	Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> 1pm Mazzolini Trio Recital Pages 68 - 70	Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> 2pm Caution to the Wind Pages 46 - 49	

The concerts in the green squares are the young musician series (see pages 57 - 72).

All concerts will be in the marquee at Welburn Manor, except for the following:

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> (Salwa Quartet) Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> (Hill Quartet) and Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> (Asyla Oboe Quartet) - those in the dark green squares will take place at St Hilda's West Cliff, Whitby.

# Welcome





It's wonderful to come together again for what is now our 13th successive season - welcome to the Festival! During these unpredictable times this feels like a major achievement of sorts as it underlines the value of what we do both artistically and socially. This year's celebration proudly continues the narrative from last year's live 'Revolution' festival, which was an immense pleasure to curate despite the obvious constraints at the time! That rarefied and touching experience demonstrated a passionate and mutual loyalty and as we gradually transition into a new era - or epoch if you like - we further develop those bonds. We stand strong in what we all firmly believe in and, if anything, the past 18 months have only intensified that solidarity.

This connectivity and bringing together of communities and friendships in celebration of music and what that represents to us all is key. The festival survived and manoeuvred around the pandemic by tapping deep into the 'why' we exist which generated a determination to provide solace and joy through live performances. For artists, performances are also a lifeline and this mutually beneficial experience has helped us as a festival truly define what we represent.

Looking forward we hope there will be some return to normality as we once knew it and the inclusion of our magnificent churches will not be far off. Alas, at the time of launching back in December 2020, they were still unavailable to us but we have managed to secure St Hilda's West Cliff (Whitby) for three of the Young Artists' concerts, which is a step in the right direction. Its spacious, well-ventilated interior means that we can all feel comfortable enough to inhabit an indoor space and we thank them for the opportunity to include it and take our music to the other side of the Moors.

Meanwhile, the vicissitudes of the last year meant the sensible option was to once again base the festival in a large marquee set within the beautiful grounds of Welburn Manor. We are eternally grateful to the

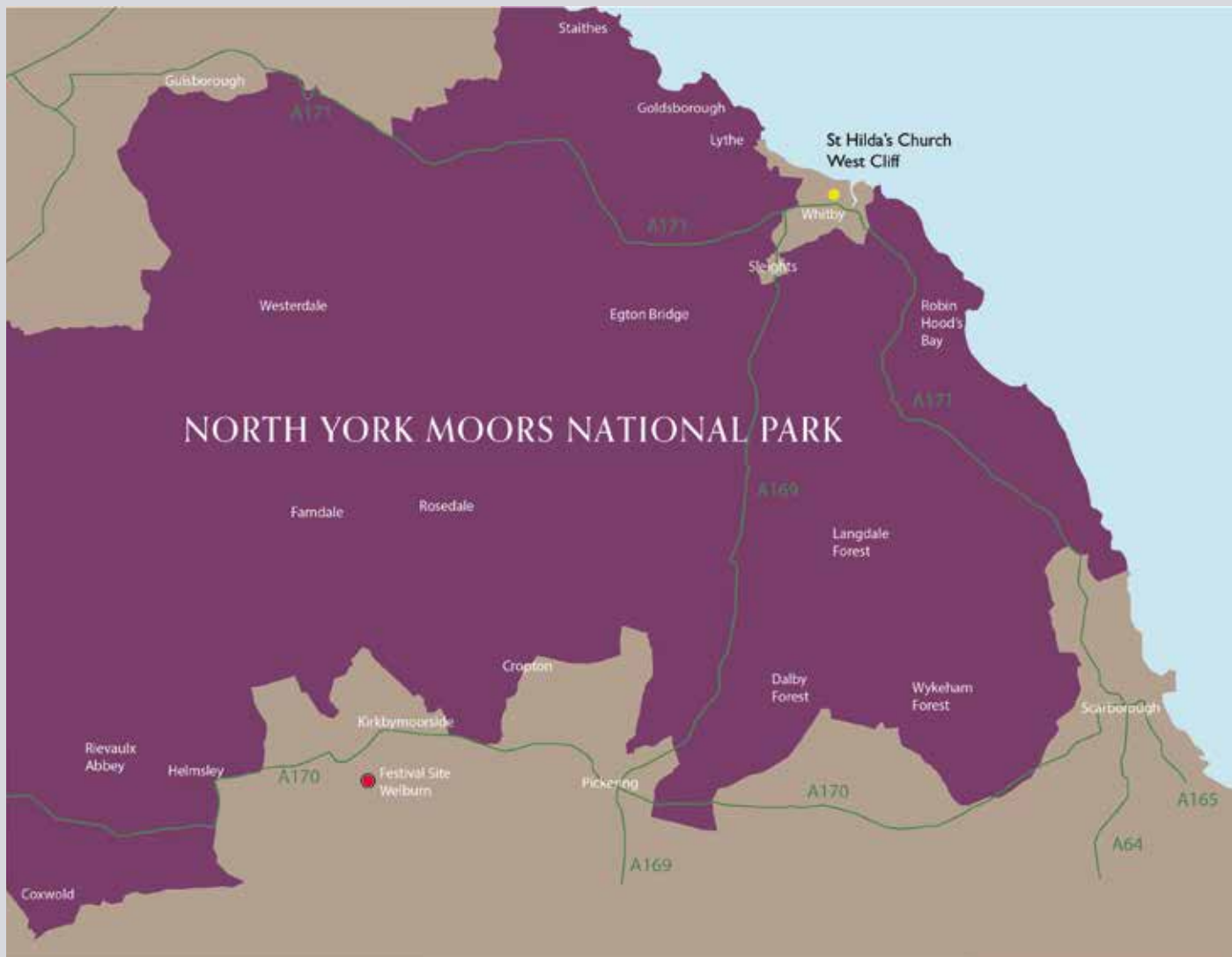
Shaw family who have generously hosted us for a second year running. This open spirit is rather fitting for the festival and we hope you enjoy the experience as much as we do behind the scenes. In a way the need to recreate this environment once again is a blessing because it offers an opportunity to those who couldn't attend last year to experience what was clearly a resounding success in 2020. The magic thus returns - although we can't promise another heatwave!

There are so many people to thank and the best way we can do this is by giving it our all. That is only possible of course through the dedication of the amazing artists involved, including the photographers Paul Ingram and Matthew Johnson - we are extremely grateful to them all. Our appreciation extends to the extraordinary team of volunteers and hosts who are the whirring engine behind the festival. I would also like to thank our anonymous supporters who make all the difference in how we produce this festival, and also the matched generosity from organisations such as the Normanby Charitable Trust.

There's no denying that we are living in some sort of epoch right now and one which is instigating significant change. Who knows how our cultural landscape will look over time but if it adapts well enough, I believe the experience will be transformative for the industry as it is forced to be more innovative and personal.

History is punctuated by defining moments which influence the course of humanity and its cultures - let us give context to this by exploring those turning points through the power of music which gave them full expression. Sit back and enjoy this intense fortnight of concerts, our friendships, these splendid grounds and perhaps even the odd picnic!

Jamie - Artistic Director.



Landscape photos: Paul Ingram;  
People/event photography: Matthew Johnson.  
Programme notes: Anthony Friend.  
Logo design and styling advice: Harrison Flynn.

The North York Moors is a spectacular National Park in North Yorkshire, with one of the largest expanses of heather moorland in the UK. It covers an area of 1,436 square km (554 square miles) with a population of about 25,000. This region encompasses two main types of landscape: green areas of pastureland and the famous purple and brown heather moorland which gives the area its distinctive character. There are records of 12,000 archaeological sites and features within the National Park, of which 700 are scheduled ancient monuments. Radiocarbon dating of pollen grains preserved in the moorland peat provides a record of specific plant species that existed at various periods in the past. Around 10,000 years ago the cold climate of the Ice Age ameliorated and temperatures rose above a growing point of 5.5°C. Plant life was gradually re-established when animals and humans also returned.

Many contemporary visitors to the area engage in outdoor pursuits, particularly walking upon the vast swathes of unspoilt landscape and

along its Jurassic coastline. The Park contains a network of rights-of-way routes almost 2,300 km (1,400 miles) in length and most areas of open moorland are now open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

## Car Parking

There will be volunteers on site to guide you and your car to the parking area, which is the southern section of the same field where the concerts take place. If 'track and trace' information or other checks are required, these will be taken at the entrance.

## Toilets

There will various unisex portaloos and a urinal cabin located around the periphery of the site.

## Refreshments

Feel free to bring your own picnic and drinks to enjoy within the gardens adjoining the marquee site before the concert or during the interval.

## Venue postcodes and arrival guidance

The ten main concerts in the and two of the young musicians series will take place in a 4850 square foot adapted marquee with wooden floor and acoustic panels. This is situated within the grounds of Welburn Manor for which the postcode is: YO62 7HH

Welburn Manor is 2 miles south-west of Kirkbymoorside en-route to Helmsley, off the A170. Take the turning onto Back Lane and continue for less than a mile, The field is on your left hand side and well signposted. We open the gates one hour before each concert starts. It is advisable to double check the start times beforehand.

For users of the what3words app, the rectangle with the gate to the field is: shells.together.creatures.

The postcode for St Hilda's West Cliff Whitby is YO21 3EG

The what3words location for St Hilda's West Cliff Whitby is : talkers. grounding.latched.

The North York Moors Chamber Music Festival Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. Company registration number 6878005; registered charity No 1129262. Registered office: The Granary, Appleton-le-Moors, York, North Yorkshire YO62 6TF

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2pm

# The Conquering Hero

Mozart	Piano Quartet in E-flat K493
Dvořák	Bagatelles op 47*
Schumann	Piano Quartet in E-flat op 47

\* denotes interval





## **Mozart - Piano Quartet in E-flat major K493**

*Allegro*  
*Larghetto*  
*Allegretto*

Mozart never had much luck securing the types of regular employment that so many of Europe's great composers had relied on over the centuries. He had been performing for royalty around the world since he was four years old; perhaps, despite his best efforts, joining the ranks of servants and waiting staff as a court musician was therefore never going to suit Mozart's temperament. Similarly, though he wrote some glorious religious music, Mozart later became involved, alongside many Enlightenment thinkers, with Freemasonry; he was not the ideal candidate for a full-time job as a church musician.

Nevertheless, Mozart was unquestionably a celebrity in Vienna and throughout Europe, second only to Haydn, his older friend and mentor. From 1780 until his death in 1791, Mozart abandoned his search for a job and went freelance. This new found freedom enabled him to keep up a busy performing schedule and compose large quantities of music. Between 1783 and 1784 Mozart composed five piano concertos, and in 1784 put on more than twenty sold-out subscription concerts consisting entirely of his own music, signalling a huge demand for his output. He

made up any shortfall in his income by teaching a string of wealthy ladies, excited to study with a former child prodigy. Publishers offered him advances on compositions, which they hoped to sell to a thriving market of amateur musicians.

One such commission came in 1785 from Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812), who asked Mozart to write three piano quartets. After receiving the first, Piano Quartet in G minor K 478 (one of Mozart's most profound and tempestuous chamber works), Hoffmeister decided it was too difficult for his amateur market and released Mozart from the contract. Unusually, Mozart decided to plough on without a commission fee, indicating that he wanted another piano quartet for one of his own concerts. The resulting Piano Quartet in E-flat, finished in 1786, certainly shines a light on Mozart's abilities as a keyboard virtuoso. At a time when many concertos were played with small ensembles rather than big orchestras, the piece could perhaps be understood as a small-scale concerto, not unlike his Piano Concerto in E-flat K 482, composed the year before.

The first movement's principal mood is one of sheer joy at being alive but, as ever with Mozart, it is joy tinged with melancholy and drama. From the opening sense of excitement, seemingly innocent and charmingly melodic fragments become vehicles for the expression

of moments of profound sadness. A turbulent development section, with wave after wave of piano arpeggios, emerges seamlessly from one such moment - before the waves subside and we are back on dry land. The Larghetto achieves its emotional impact through its beauty rather than through drama, and the gavotte-like last movement is both a vehicle for Mozart to display his virtuosity and inventiveness, whilst constantly including the string parts in a rich dialogue.

## **Dvořák - Five Bagatelles op 47**

Nationalism is expressed in a huge array of Romantic music in the nineteenth century: from the polonaises and mazurkas of Chopin, the voice of the Polish soul in exile, in defiance of the Russian Empire; to the music dramas of Wagner, with their stories rooted in Germanic legends; and the folkloristic symphonies of Antonín Dvořák, with themes drawn from Czech folk songs. It perhaps has its roots in primitivism (man was born pure but corrupted by society) and individualism (aspiring to an authentic voice, not just a stylistic consensus). On the other hand, a Czech composer whose works offer a taste of Eastern Europe in highly palatable Western forms, such as Dvořák, was also a potent commercial force. Initially championed by Brahms, works like his Slavonic Dances op 46, paved the way for a large output of symphonies and chamber

music. Before long, Dvořák was being commissioned by the Vienna Philharmonic (for the Sixth Symphony) and conducting his work in Britain and the United States.

His Bagatelles, op 47, were composed in 1878, around the same time as the Slavonic Dances, and originally scored for two violins, cello and harmonium – a type of reed organ. This quaint but unusual ensemble was the group of instruments available to a small collective of friends and amateur chamber musicians, including Dvořák's friend, the cellist Josef Srb-Debrnov. Reflecting the cosy domesticity of their intended performance scenario, the music is richly melodic, beautifully crafted but not excessively demanding. Each short piece is based around a simple melody, with the same one forming the basis of the first, third and fifth, in order to create a sense of cohesion between the five-part structure of the piece. Each has a perfectly distilled character; humorous at times, soulful at others.

### **Schumann - Piano Quartet in E-flat major op 47**

*Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo*  
*Scherzo – Molto vivace – Trio 1 – Trio 2*  
*Andante cantabile*  
*Finale: Vivace*

Schumann seems to have spent long periods of his life fixated on a particular subject, before moving abruptly on to the next. Some

have seen this as a forewarning of the mental illness that caused him to spend the last two years of his life in an asylum. The result is a compositional output that is structured like a geological cross-section. At the bottom, there is a base layer of piano music as the bedrock; he composed almost nothing else until his thirtieth year, obsessed as he was with becoming a piano virtuoso. Above that, a layer of songs; he composed 138 songs in 1840 alone, the year in which he married Clara Wieck. On top of that, a thin but rich layer of orchestral works; in 1841 he composed his first two symphonies. And in 1842, near the top, a rich body of chamber music works: beginning in June, he produced three string quartets, a piano trio, a piano quintet, and the present Quartet for the same forces minus one violin.

The work begins with a slow, prayer-like introduction; a four-note motif looking upwards and answered by the piano. The same motif is the main tune once the movement gets going, disguised in a faster tempo, and driven forward by repeated chords in the piano. Unusually, the slow introduction returns briefly later on (he got the idea from Beethoven's op 127 string quartet, also in E-flat) a moment of collection in an otherwise relentlessly driving stream of music. It is followed by an urgent, fantastical Scherzo. Instead of the conventional 'first section - second section - first section' structure, a sandwich with

a contrasting filling, Schumann includes two middle sections and quotes the same music in each. This provides continuity rather than clear-cut rigidity.

In the third movement, Andante Cantabile, the cello finally breaks free of the piano's left-hand, to which it had been tied in the first two movements, and takes centre stage in a melody that only someone who had previously mastered the Lied (art song) could have composed. Towards the end of the movement the cellist's lowest string must be tuned down from a C to a B-flat in order to underpin the harmonic resolution of the movement in low, earthy octaves. The turbulent internal world of the first three movements, suggestive of Schumann's literary alter ego 'Eusebius', is thus brought to a close. In the Finale, the theme is recast in the extrovert voice of Eusebius' dialectical opposite, 'Florestan', becoming a fugue subject, clear-cut and energetic, passed around the ensemble like a piece of good news, and concluding the Quartet with triumphant contrapuntal vigour.









Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2pm

# Rhapsody

Brahms		Piano Quartet no 3 in C minor op 60 *
Fauré		Piano Quartet no 2 in G minor op 45

## **Brahms - Piano Quartet no 3 in C minor op 60**

*Allegro non troppo*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Andante*

*Finale: Allegro comodo*

Brahms' relationship with Robert and Clara Schumann was close, and indeed placed Clara at the centre of one of the major love triangles of the nineteenth century. The couple had played a role in launching Brahms' career when he met them in 1853, with Robert Schumann endorsing him in the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and Clara in private (she wrote in her diary that he 'seemed as if sent straight from God'). Brahms soon became a dear family friend, and when Robert's mental health declined and he was confined to an asylum in 1854, Brahms moved in above Clara to help her look after her children. It was during this difficult period that Brahms first began the C minor Piano Quartet (originally in C-sharp minor). His anguish at his friend's state and his conflicted feelings over his unrequited love for Clara are manifested in a bleak and brooding piece, explicitly based on Goethe's *Werther*, who commits suicide over his unrequited love for Charlotte. *Werther's* suicide is botched, and he takes twelve hours to die from his self-inflicted gunshot wounds; he is buried beneath a linden tree, and his funeral is poorly attended. The piece was not completed until 1875, and when he resumed work on it in 1873 he changed the key

from C-sharp minor to C minor. This is the stormy key of many of Beethoven's most heroic works, including the Fifth Symphony, which is quoted in the Quartet's last movement. Whilst the original emotional intent of the Quartet remains, twenty years' distance seems to have enabled Brahms to joke about the *Werther* reference; he wrote to his publisher: "On the cover you must have a picture, namely a head with a pistol to it. Now you can form some conception of the music! I'll send you my photograph for the purpose."

The piece begins with bare octaves in the piano, against which the strings play a sighing motif that grows more desperate with each change of harmony. Clara is written into the music using Schumann's own musical cipher for Clara (C-B-A-G sharp-A), which Brahms transposed in C minor to E-flat-D-C-B-C. With typical concern for rigorous motivic development and unity, Brahms takes this motif, the octave and the 'sigh' as the three motivic bases of the piece. The opening octave and sigh combination is inverted in the Scherzo, becoming a rising figure instead.

The Andante sees the piano take a more supportive role, allowing legato string melodies and delicate pizzicati to come to the fore, before a spirited finale in which the piano and strings are equally matched. We are left with

a sense of unease which permeates the whole piece, and which is often achieved harmonically; in the first movement, the pizzicato E-naturals undermine the tonic harmony (C minor demands E-flats instead), and when the first section is recapitulated it arrives in G, not C minor, giving what should be triumphant homecoming a rather alien feeling. The E major Andante is similarly distant from C minor – a key relationship that again follows Beethoven, who had included a slow movement in E major in his own C-minor Piano Concerto. The fourth movement's end in the tonic major – often a victorious conclusion to minor-key pieces – is at first subdued, and then abrupt, as though this a matter that has not yet been resolved.

## Fauré - Piano Quartet no 2 in G minor op 45

*Allegro molto moderato*

*Allegro molto*

*Adagio non troppo*

*Finale - Allegro molto*

For someone who spent the first part of their career primarily as an organist and teacher and is described by musicologist Richard Taruskin as 'strait laced', Gabriel Fauré was paradoxically the French composer who brought heightened sensuality and decadence into his national school of composition, paving the way for the so-called Impressionism of composers such as his pupil, Maurice Ravel. He crystallised the art of French song into what became known as *mélodie*, drawing on the fragrant poetry of far more Bohemian contemporaries such as Baudelaire and Verlaine, with whom he became unlikely personal friends. His early, miniature masterpiece *Après un rêve* is one of the most famous of all French songs, capturing some of the elusive qualities of Chopin's musical language but with an unmistakably French accent. Fauré's later Requiem (a work differentiated to other requiems by critic Vuillermoz as "looking to Heaven, rather than to Hell") remains a hugely popular choral work. However, aside from a few favourite songs, as well as his Pavane and the Requiem, Fauré is not widely known outside of France.

Fauré's chamber music was appreciated in his lifetime, with his

first essay in the unusual genre of piano quartet (violin, viola, cello, piano) contributing to his winning the Académie des Beaux-Arts' Prix Chartier in 1885. As a composer who felt most at home at the piano, he felt he needed the security of including a piano in the ensemble; it was not until his final year, 1924, that he composed a string quartet. Mozart and Schumann had both composed piano quartets (Schumann's and one of Mozart's were heard earlier in the festival) but there were otherwise few precedents to which Fauré had to live up.

Fauré's Piano Quartet no 2 in G minor was begun shortly after winning the Prix Chartier and was first performed in 1887. The first movement is tumultuous from the outset, an impassioned unison melody sung out in the strings over a harmonically unsettled, rippling piano backdrop. The texture is periodically stripped back to the simplest of piano chords and a quiet solo from one of the instruments. The second movement is a whirlwind of a scherzo, with almost manic, repeating piano figuration and the strings swerving wildly between quiet plucked accompaniment and a few bars of full-throated unison melody. The third movement *Adagio non troppo* is the most experimental, both in terms of the harmony and the narrative structure employed by Fauré. It alternates a resigned, plodding piano figure with an austere melody. The plodding figure recurs every few bars, a

kind of refrain, and the answering melody becomes gradually more filled-out and elaborate with each restatement. It is several minutes before the movement at last swells to a glorious, heartfelt song, and when the refrain recurs it is in the plucked string instruments, the piano is left to elaborate in the next answer. The finale recaptures the first movement's storminess but with some of the unhinged dance character of the second movement; Fauré wanted to create a cyclical structure, in which memories of previous movements recur in a vague, almost metaphorical way. Unlike the first movement, there are no moments of reflection; the energy is unrelenting, and the wheels almost seem to fall off as the harmony shifts rapidly towards a joyful climax in G major.

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# La Belle Époque

Duparc	L'invitation au voyage
Paladilhe	Psyché
Debussy	Trois chansons de Bilitis
Chausson	Chanson perpétuelle op 37
Chaminade	Viens! Mon bien-aimé!
Hahn	L'heure exquise
Viardot	Havanaise *
Ravel	Ravel, Chansons madécasses
Chausson	Poème op 25





## Vocal Song Set

In the late nineteenth century France emerged as an optimistic, wealthy and confident country following a century of upheaval, bookended by the French Revolution and Reign of Terror in the 1790s and a costly and humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. In the meantime, Napoleon I (who ruled France from 1800-1814) and his nephew Napoleon III (in power from 1852-1870), had added to France's colonial empire and created a new system of education, government, law and infrastructure. By the 1880s there was no longer a threat of war at home in Europe, though France continued to extend its overseas colonies (particularly in Africa). From then until the horror of the First World War was a golden age of peace and prosperity in which the arts thrived, known as La Belle Époque.

The music, art and literature of La Belle Époque was colourful, decadent and sensual. Having previously found their work too avant-garde, the Parisian public began to warm to Impressionist painters such as Monet and symbolist poets such as Baudelaire. Art Nouveau, a stylish, decorative aesthetic, emerged and can still be seen in the stylised railings and signs of the Paris Métro. The first seeds of twentieth-century modernism were sown across multiple art forms in Paris at this time by Stravinsky, Debussy, Picasso, Proust,

Thomas Mann, Nijinsky and others. Intellectuals from all disciplines mingled in the salons of Paris' wealthy elites, exchanging ideas and socialising.

The composers in this programme provide a cross-section of the richness and complexity of La Belle Époque. Together with Camille Saint-Saëns, Henri Duparc formed a cross-generational partnership in creating the Société Nationale de Musique, whose members also included Gabriel Fauré and César Franck. Duparc studied with Franck, and is best known for producing numerous songs such as *L'invitation au voyage*, a gorgeous, dreamy song with a text by Baudelaire. He destroyed much of his other music aged 37, in 1885, whilst suffering from a mental illness, and never composed again.

Much of Émile Paladilhe's music has faded into obscurity, but his song *Psyché*, on a 17th-century comédie-ballet text by Pierre Corneille and Molière, shows that Ravel and Debussy owe him a debt in their approach to vocal writing: the voice is still, often hovering on one or two notes for extended periods, whilst the piano sings out an artfully contoured melody. He was a prolific child prodigy, winning the Prix de Rome competition aged 16, in 1860; three years after Bizet. His 'grand opera' *Patrie!* premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1886; grand opera was a genre of music theatre roughly analogous to a modern

Hollywood blockbuster in its cultural significance.

Debussy's *Trois chansons de Bilitis* sees misty clouds of piano chords and harp-like ripples of piano figuration shift around an almost static vocal melody. The texts, by Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), were presented as the first French translations of ancient Greek poems – fooling one critic, who criticised the fidelity of the translation to the non-existent originals. Debussy captures both the imagined decadence of the Greeks (fused with that of the Paris salon, filled with smoke) and a sense of antiquity, with modal flourishes like ancient flutes and solemn chords sounding as though etched in stone.

Unlike the plethora of child prodigies that populated La Belle Époque, Ernest Chausson had an unsteady start as a composer. Born the son of a wealthy building contractor who was involved with Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris, he was pressured into studying law and became a barrister but always felt drawn to more artistic pursuits. He eventually enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire aged 24, where he studied with Massenet and Franck. Quiet and introverted, he was nevertheless a generous host to the city's artistic elite. Tragically, aged only 44, he died in a cycling accident at one of his country retreats. *Chanson perpétuelle* was his last completed work, originally a song with orchestral

accompaniment but reworked into a chamber work with piano and string quartet by the composer himself. Later in his short life, Chausson seemed to shrug off Massenet's influence and absorb some of the Wagnerian fever that was sweeping across Europe. Although still very much with a French accent, some of the breathless intensity of Wagner's operas can be heard in *Chanson perpétuelle*, based on a text by Charles Cros (1842-1888) about an abandoned woman who contemplates suicide.

Cécile Chaminade was a pianist-composer whose musical gifts were noted in childhood by none other than Georges Bizet, who happened to be her neighbour. Despite overwhelming prejudice, she achieved considerable success; virtually all of her output was published in her lifetime. She received the Légion d'Honneur in 1913, as well as an oft-quoted, rather dubious compliment from Ambroise Thomas (composer of the opera *Mignon* and a famously conservative principal of the Paris Conservatoire): "this is not a woman who composes, but a composer who is a woman". Though she composed several large-scale works, her most popular music was her short piano character pieces and songs: beautifully constructed, perfumed miniatures that would have evoked the refinement of Paris' salon culture to her many fans in Britain. Her 1892 song *Viens! Mon bien-aimé!* is a perfect example, and may well be exactly what Puccini

was evoking in Musetta's famous waltz in *La Bohème*, composed just a few years later. It is a charming, poignant, gem of a piece. The protagonist sings to her lover that April is here and she feels a longing for him, yet there is a tinge of sadness in the harmony and the way the melody falls that suggests he may not return.

Reynaldo Hahn was born in Venezuela to a German-Jewish father and Spanish mother, emigrating to Paris aged three and landing firmly on his feet amongst his parents' illustrious social connections. A well educated child prodigy, he entered the Paris Conservatoire aged 11, and his song *Si mes vers avaient des ailes*, setting a text by Victor Hugo, brought him fame and a half-page broadsheet feature in *Le Figaro* aged just 14. He remained connected to Paris' artistic elite, becoming lifelong friends with Marcel Proust (the two were also sometime lovers). L'Heure exquise sets a text by Paul Verlaine based on the 17th century paintings of Antoine Watteau, showing young lovers frolicking around in idealised pastoral landscapes. Like Paladilhe (and later Debussy), Hahn keeps the voice part relatively static, only occasionally allowing it to break free, whilst the piano surrounds it in harp like arpeggios.

Another musician who was at the centre of Paris' artistic melting pot was Pauline Viardot. As a singer, she premiered Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, sang for Wagner in the first run

through of *Tristan und Isolde*, and was declared by Berlioz to be "one of the greatest artists who comes to mind in the past and present history of music". Viardot studied piano with Liszt as a teenager, was friends with Chopin and Clara Schumann, muse to Turgenev and was cast in a novel by George Sand. Her father, Spanish tenor Manuel Garcia, had sang the role of Almaviva in Rossini's original production of the *Barber of Seville*. Her career as a composer blossomed after she retired from the stage aged 42. Unsurprisingly, her largest volume of work was for voice, composing hundreds of songs including the *Havanaise* of 1880, an astoundingly flashy operatic showpiece with a sunny, sultry habanera-based main theme that showcases her Spanish heritage.

Ravel's music, too, sometimes has a Spanish flavour: he was born near Biarritz, just north of the Spanish border, and his mother was Basque. In his *Chansons madécasses*, however, the exoticism comes from further afield: composed in 1925, they are a setting of a collection of poems of the same name by French poet Évariste de Parvy, born on the Isle of Bourbon off the coast of Madagascar in 1753. The three texts depict the seduction of a native Madagascan woman, Nahandove; then the alarming arrival of 'the white men'; and finally a tranquil island scene. Ravel's harmonic language is vastly more modernist here than in much of his earlier music, rooted as it was in the



colouristic harmony of Debussy, especially in the clusters of notes that accompany the cries of terror in the second song. Yet the music is often stripped back to the purest of intertwining melodic lines, cello and flute circling the singer and the piano contributing just a few notes here and there.

The programme concludes with a return to Chausson, and his *Poème*, whose genesis is a good example of the composer's humility. Asked by the great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysayë to compose a violin concerto, Chausson replied:

"I hardly know where to begin with a concerto, which is a huge undertaking, the devil's own task. But I can cope with a shorter work. It will be in very free form with several passages in which the violin plays alone".

On the manuscript, two versions of a longer, more complicated title are crossed out, with only 'Poème' remaining. Originally for violin and orchestra, a version with string quartet and piano accompaniment was recently discovered. Despite Chausson's worries, it is one of the best-loved works in the violin repertoire, becoming an instant hit even when Ysayë and his wife (on the piano) sight-read it at a party in Spain, and receiving continuous applause after its official premiere in Paris.















Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# Breaking Free

Dvořák		String Sextet in A op 48 *
Tchaikovsky		Souvenir de Florence op 70

## Dvořák - String Sextet in A major op 48

*Allegro - moderato*

*Dumka. Poco allegretto*

*Furiant. Presto*

*Finale. Tempo con variazioni. Allegro grazioso, quasi andantino*

Dvořák's String Sextet in A, op 48, was composed in May 1878, in the same year as his Slavonic Dances op 46, and only a few weeks after the Bagatelles op 47, that we heard earlier in the festival. This was Dvořák's break-through moment. Having won the Austrian State Prize Stipendium in 1874, 1876 and 1877, Dvořák had been able to fund his composition activities with scholarship money, but had not yet reached a wider, international audience. Brahms, who sat on the panel for this competition, had referred Dvořák to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, and effectively launched his career as a published composer. It was not just the outstanding quality of Dvořák's music that attracted enthusiastic responses, but the exotic, Eastern European flavour of his melodies and dance rhythms, which Simrock encouraged, sensing an appetite for this in the market.

The violinist, Joseph Joachim, also had a part to play. By the late nineteenth century, virtuoso instrumental performers – as opposed to performer-composers, like Liszt and Paganini, or Beethoven and Mozart before them – were

emerging as star attractions in the way that operatic singers had been for a century. It was a symbiotic relationship: virtuoso performers needed music to play, and composers needed performers to bring their compositions to the public, even if many were also accomplished pianists or conductors in their own right. Joachim was a friend of Simrock and eagerly accepted Dvořák's new String Sextet from the publisher. He organised a party at which it was played on 19 July 1879, with an illustrious audience in attendance, ahead of giving a public premiere in Berlin in November and another performance in London early the following year.

Brahms had composed two string sextets, in 1860 and 1865, which use the same formulation of two violins, two violas and two cellos; this probably inspired Dvořák's own Sextet in A. Compared to a string quartet, which has two violins and one each of viola and cello, the balance of the ensemble is weighted towards the lower instruments, tending towards a richer, warmer texture. Dvořák balances the thick texture perfectly, giving breathing space to the melody (mostly in the first violin) whilst making full use of the extra power available in the climaxes, and thickening melodic lines with thirds and octaves to add extra depth.

The first movement is largely easygoing, a luxurious and serene

ride through varying landscapes in which the passenger is not unduly troubled by passing dark clouds. The second movement is given the Russian-language title *Dumka*; originally a Ukrainian term, but incorporated into Slavic music more generally, it literally means 'thought', and has the storytelling, mystical character of a folk ballad. *Dumky* are known for their changeable moods, and here the plodding dance over a plucked bass line switches instantly between cheeriness and melancholy, alternating with slower sections of a dark, folkloristic lament. The *Furiant* third movement is an ecstatic scherzo, largely sanitised of the Eastern European rhythmic quirks suggested by its title, but with plenty of character emanating from its melodies. The finale is a theme and variations on a wistful, halting melody. Although beautiful, it seems hardly to be a triumphant start to the conclusion of the piece; yet Dvořák provides injections of energy and excitement and builds to a virtuosic climax.



## **Tchaikovsky - Souvenir de Florence in D minor op 70**

*Allegro con spirito*

*Adagio cantabile e con moto*

*Allegro moderato*

*Allegro con bio e vivace*

Tchaikovsky's most enduringly popular music belongs in the public realm: his six symphonies, numerous ballets, Piano Concerti, Violin Concerto and his operas Eugene Onegin and The Queen of Spades were all conceived for large forces in concert halls and theatres. It is perhaps unsurprising that even in his chamber music, such as his Piano Trio and string sextet Souvenir de Florence, he achieves an epic, larger-than-life sense of drama and virtuosity. Tchaikovsky often takes us to heightened states of joy or desperation, leaving out the middle ground.

Even though a string sextet is essentially a super-sized, bass-heavy string quartet, it is also no surprise that Tchaikovsky found working for these relatively smaller forces a challenge. He sketched some of the music in 1890 whilst travelling in Florence, Italy, where he was composing his opera The Queen of Spades. Having returned to St Petersburg and finished the opera in just six weeks, the sextet was meant to be a relaxing yet productive means to recover from these exertions. In a further, manic three weeks he had expanded his sketched theme, literally 'a memory from Florence,'

into a fully-scored work, and it was premiered on 7 December 1890. Neither Tchaikovsky nor his audience at the St Petersburg Chamber Music Society were convinced and Tchaikovsky put it aside for a year before revising it for publication. As he returned to it, he wrote to his brother saying, "I am composing with incredible effort... I am hampered not by lack of ideas but by the novelty of the form. There must be six independent and at the same time homogeneous parts." In a further letter to his friend Ziloti, he wrote, "I constantly feel as though ... I am in fact writing for the orchestra and just rearranging it for six string instruments."

The result is that the four movements of Souvenir de Florence seem to be striving for something bigger and more virtuosic than their meagre six instruments allow and there is a thrill in this tension. In the first movement, the soaring violin melody has to contend with five busy colleagues, almost as though it were a concerto solo line. Scampering staccato passages and the elegance of the musical material lighten the texture, but it is overall a hugely forceful, impressive stretch of music. The second movement Adagio begins with a prolonged, inward sigh of grief before the violin sings a private, personal melody with gentle pizzicato accompaniment. A whispered middle section interrupts, and the melody returns, this time with the cello taking centre stage. In

the third movement Allegretto, Tchaikovsky loses his Italian accent and begins to speak in native Russian, strumming balalaikas and folk fiddles taking over. We remain in the Russian folk style for the gripping and exhilarating Finale, whose central fugato section yielded Tchaikovsky a rare moment of smug satisfaction in an otherwise difficult compositional process: he wrote, "it is terrible how thrilled I am with my own work".

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# Turning Points

Mozart		String Quintet in C K515 *
Mendelssohn		Octet in E-flat op 20







## **Mozart - String Quintet in C major K515**

*Allegro*

*Menuetto: Allegretto - trio*

*Andante*

*Allegro*

Mozart and Mendelssohn were two of music's greatest child prodigies. Though they belonged to different eras, it was the extraordinarily good fortune of the writer and polymath Goethe (1749-1832) to witness both composers perform as young boys: Mozart he saw as a young man, and Mendelssohn when somewhat older. In some respects, reckoned Goethe, the young Mendelssohn was even more gifted as a prodigy than Mozart. Leaving aside impossible comparisons and focusing instead on similarities, both composers had become gifted performers and composed large scale works at an age when most children are learning to tie their shoelaces. Even though many of their compositions plumb the depths of human experience, both composers also carried into their mature years some of the freshness, brilliance and apparent effortlessness that perhaps came with having achieved technical mastery at such a young age. It takes great skill to achieve the illusion of simplicity.

This is apparent in Mozart's String Quintet in C, composed in 1787 whilst Mozart was freelancing in Vienna. On the surface, this music is bursting with excitement

and joy, and seems to have been composed with little effort. Life was not so easy for Mozart at this time, however; his best friend had just died at the age of 31; his father was ill; and due to financial troubles he had been forced to give up his central Vienna apartment and move to the suburbs with his wife. The bright C major quintet is paired with a stormy opposite number in G minor, just as his Symphony no 40 in G minor would be paired with the C major Jupiter Symphony. Joy and sorry are two sides of the same coin for Mozart and it is touching that he could conceive such uplifting music when he was at his lowest ebb.

The Quintet in C adds an extra viola to the standard line-up of the string quartet, a genre to which Mozart had recently contributed seven masterpieces in the Haydn Quartets and the Hoffmeister Quartet. An extra viola expands the scale of the texture, enriching it, but Mozart also achieves an incredible breadth and spaciousness in the flow of the music. In the first movement's opening, this is balanced by the effervescence of the cello and violin in dialogue over sparky repeated chords in the inner parts. Whilst the rhythms drive us forward, the harmony, which is the key driving force in most classical music, often remains static for extended periods. It is a trick that Beethoven frequently employed in his middle period, and it enables the music to stretch over longer expanses.

In some versions, the Minuet and Trio follows the first movement, rather than appearing (as is conventional) as the third movement of four. Usually the scene of courtly elegance, it has lopsided phrase lengths and the hesitant, awkward feeling of someone reluctant to join the dance; it only gets into its stride in the longer Trio section in the middle.

The Andante is pure melody, the first violin and viola duetting in ever more richly ornamented intertwining lines. Mozart's opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* had recently been a huge hit in Prague, prompting the commissioning of *Don Giovanni*; his expert writing for singers seems to have informed his instrumental writing here, as in so much of his music.

To play us out, Mozart takes a rustic contredanse as his theme for a rondo-like movement in which the main tune comes round and round, being subjected to ever more ingenious transformations (including being played upside-down at one point).

## **Mendelssohn - String octet in E-flat major op 20**

*Allegro moderato ma con fuoco*

*Andante*

*Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo*

*Presto*

As discussed, Mendelssohn was an astonishing child prodigy. From the age of 12, large private concerts



were given in the home of his wealthy parents in Berlin, with the local intelligentsia in attendance, in which works such as his twelve string symphonies (composed between the age of 12 and 14) were performed. His maturity is widely considered to have been reached at age 16 with the composition of his String Octet in E-flat, a breathtakingly fresh, uplifting and ambitious work for double string quartet which is a key part of the string chamber music repertoire today.

You might wonder how a 16 year-old boy could have very much to say, or that his music

might lack emotional depth. Mendelssohn was not 'just' a child prodigy, but an extraordinarily multitalented artist and organiser. As well as being a phenomenal pianist who premiered many of his contemporaries' works, he would go on to be conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, be offered a position as newspaper editor, become principal of the Leipzig conservatory and revive interest in Schubert and Bach after the death of both composers. Mendelssohn's intelligence, understanding and humanity would elevate him to great heights during his short 38-year life, and it sings out in the Octet.

Like the Mozart Quintet, the scale of Mendelssohn's Octet is staggering. Two string quartets' worth of string players create a bustling, almost symphonic texture at times, but with the first violin occupying a heroic role as the leader of this larger than usual chamber ensemble. From the rising arpeggios of the first movement's main theme, there is a yearning, desperate sense of urgency that propels us through triumphant climax after climax; a heartfelt, funereal slow movement follows, only to be blown away by a fleet of foot scherzo and a barnstorming finale.











Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# A New Genre

Schumann	Piano Quintet in E-flat op 44 *
Simaku	con ri sonanza (UK premiere)
Dvořák	Piano Quintet in A op 81



## Schumann - Piano Quintet in E-flat major op 44

*Allegro brillante*

*In modo d'una marcia. Un poco largamente*

*Scherzo: molto vivace*

*Allegro ma non troppo*

Schumann's Piano Quintet was composed in 1842 almost simultaneously with the Piano Quartet performed in the first concert of this festival, the year in which Schumann became obsessed with composing chamber music for the first time. Both are in E-flat major, both combining strings and piano, but they are entirely different sides of the composer's personality. In terms of Schumann's two literary alter-egos, the Quartet belongs to the introverted Florestan, more gentle and more dominated by the piano; and the Quintet to the more outgoing Eusebius, with the strings often united in forceful opposition to the piano.

As usual, the pianist for whom the work was intended was his beloved wife, Clara Wieck, but she fell ill at the last moment before a play-through of the work. Mendelssohn, a good friend of the Schumanns, stepped in to sight read the part flawlessly, even suggesting a few revisions that Schumann took on board before the piece was published. Clara gave the public premiere a month later at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, proclaiming it "splendid, full of vigour and freshness".

There are some musical ciphers in the Piano Quintet: a motif that sinks down a space of a fifth (a distance of five notes of a scale) twice, appearing several times, is a reference to the Romance from Clara Wieck's Characteristic Pieces op 5, a piece she wrote for Robert Schumann. In the first and second movement, Bach's 'Es ist vollbracht' from his St John Passion (the words of Christ dying on the cross) appears in quotation. Finally, more of a tribute than a reference, is the resemblance to Schubert's Piano Trio in E-flat, one of the works that Schumann had admired as he immersed himself in studying chamber music that year; both works are in E-flat major, have a slow funeral march movement, and bring back the first movement's themes in a triumphant quotation in the last movement.

It does not take long before Schumann's gift for singing melodic line takes over in the Piano Quintet's first movement, a triumphant, martial motif softening into a yearning tune that is passed around the quartet. The tension between these two moods creates a drama that explodes into a stormy middle 'development' section, with the opening motif finally winning out at the end. The slow movement's Schubertian funeral march follows, solemn and stiff at first, then turning inwards for a melting, heartbreaking lyrical section of music in the middle of the movement. The scherzo has

a boisterous, excitable character, with breathless, bubbly succession of rising and falling streams of scales being punctuated with short contrasting sections - first lyrical, then frantic. The finale opens in the key of C minor, with a short, Russian-sounding theme, and over the course of a thrilling few minutes builds towards a fugue in which the first movement's theme reappears; from then it is a frantic rush to a climax in jubilant E-flat major.

## Simaku - 'con-ri-sonanza'

Like Schumann's Piano Quintet, Thomas Simaku's con-ri-sonanza contains a musical cipher: the name of the composer's publisher, Bill Colleran, is translated into musical chords using the notes' letter names, and this motif recurs throughout the piece. However, the title is a combination of three Italian words: consonanza, risonanza, con risonanza ('consonance', 'resonance', 'with resonance'), all suggesting that this piece is primarily about sound. Italian being the international language of music, it is not a clue to the composer's nationality: Simaku was born in Albania in 1958, relocating to the UK in 1991 and currently resident in York. The modernism of late-twentieth century giants such as Ligeti and Kurtág was banned in his native country, and his emigration enabled him to connect with the astonishing developments in classical music over the preceding decades.

con-ri-sonanza emerges from a silky thread high in the violin register, reverberating downwards into the low piano. The whole texture buzzes, vibrates and shimmers, suddenly stopping dead with still, reverberant piano chords and exuberant flourishes. These flourishes grow ever more elaborate, and the insect-like strings become increasingly insistent, until the piece breaks down in to pure sonority, the cello's low C string ringing out and then spiralling upwards into its harmonic series.

### **Dvořák - Piano Quintet no 2 in A major op 81**

*Allegro, ma non tanto*

*Dumka: Andante con moto*

*Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace*

*Finale: Allegro*

Dvořák composed the Piano Quintet in A in 1888 at his country house, Vysoka, as he was approaching the peak of his international fame (three years later he would receive an honorary degree from the University of Cambridge, and the year after that would begin a stint as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York). The piece exudes the easy confidence of a composer in his prime, with extraordinarily fluent, natural-sounding melody bathed in a warm halo of instrumental sonority. There is, nevertheless, a great deal of drama in the piece. The first movement's opening theme, a lullaby-like melody in the cello over a gently rocking

piano accompaniment, is swiftly obliterated as the rest of the string quartet crash in, fortified by powerful piano chords and rich figuration. The contrast of lyrical passages with episodes of high energy and virtuosity is contained within a deftly controlled sonata-form movement that creates coherence from the seemingly organic flow of musical ideas.

The second movement is entitled Dumka, as in the String Sextet in A op 48, heard earlier in the festival. This mystical folk ballad is full of ambivalence and swiftly changing moods; pensive, lyrical passages of profoundly melancholic beauty are alternated with sections of more forward-driven and cheerful music.

The scherzo contains many similar moments of harmonic ambivalence, frequently switching from major to minor for just a few bars at a time, but always within a spirit of playfulness. Scampering scales and jagged chords give way to a central Trio section in which all the tension and urgency seems to have seeped out of the music, giving it a floating, dreamlike quality.

The finale sustains an unwavering sense of momentum and urgency whilst retaining the open-hearted joyfulness that characterises the work as a whole. Repeated-note, march-like figures

permeate the movement, frequently melting into sumptuous melodies or building into rapturous climaxes. As in the first movement, themes flow seamlessly from one into another; all expertly controlled, and arranged within a musical structure we scarcely notice, the last movement builds to an ecstatic climax to end the piece.

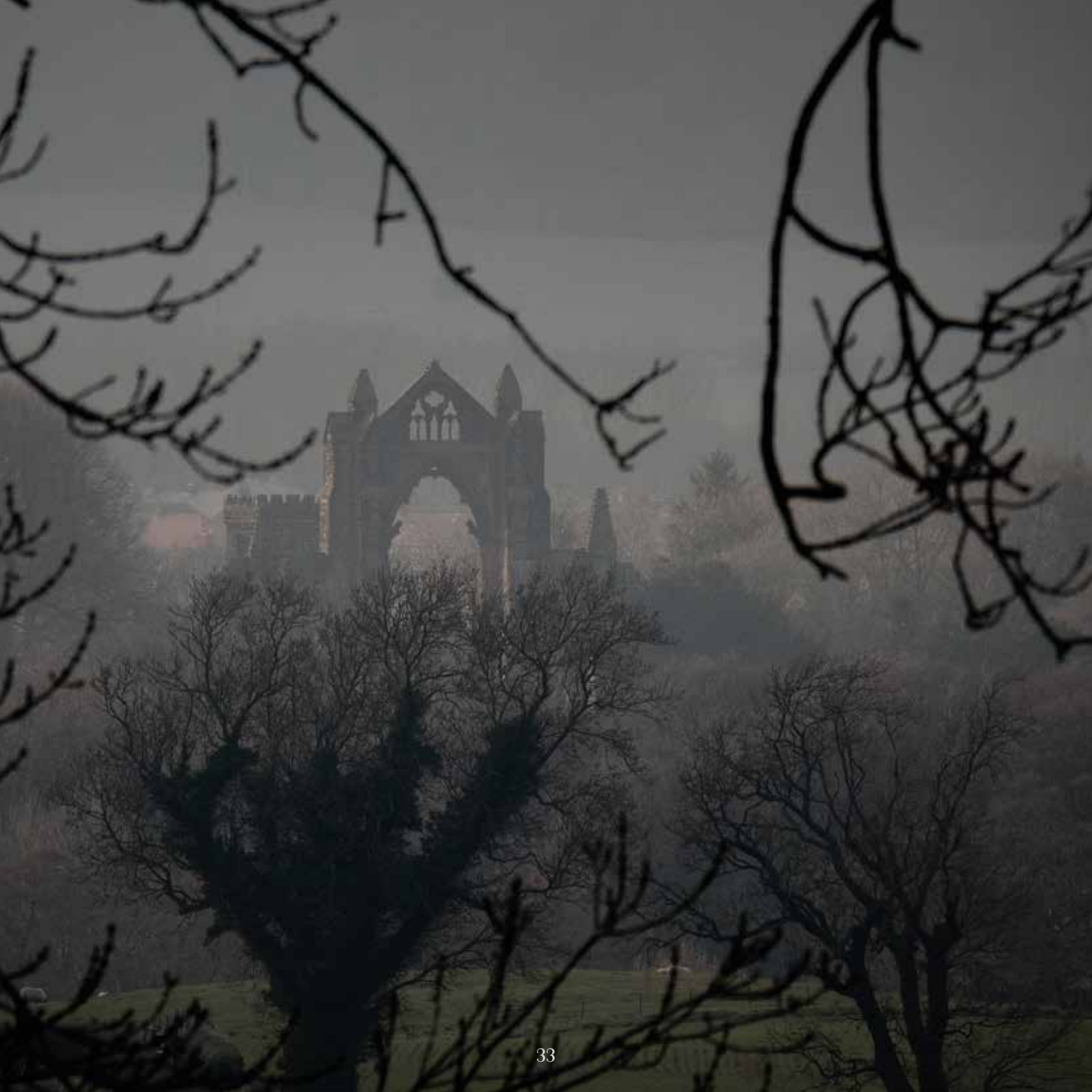
Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# Turn of a Century

Strauss		Piano Quartet in C minor op 13 *
Bartók		Piano Quintet in C







## **Strauss - Piano Quartet in C minor op 13**

*Allegro*

*Scherzo: Presto - Molto meno mosso -*

*Tempo 1*

*Andante*

*Finale: vivace*

The enormous arc of Richard Strauss' musical career began with the twilight years of the Romantic era, followed by an interlude in which he put forward his own brand of 20th-century modernism, and concluded with a retrospective later period when he returned to the romanticism of his youth. In his grand old age, he wryly commented, "I have outlived myself". He is most famous as a composer on a grand scale: his operas *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Salome* and his tone poems *Don Juan*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Eine Alpensinfonie* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* are for extremely large orchestras. His expertise as a conductor is revealed in the complexity of his orchestral textures, with numerous intricate contrapuntal lines combining to create a sweep of orchestral colour. He also had a capacity for refinement, best exhibited in his *Lieder* with orchestral accompaniment: *Morgen!* from op 27, or the *Four Last Songs* which he wrote just before he died - where a singing line is expertly supported with pianissimo string textures and delicate touches of colour from the harp and woodwind.

The Piano Quartet in C minor dates from 1885, when Strauss was only 21, and a period in the years leading up to his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in which he composed most of his chamber music. The first movement's strong opening motif, octave heavy piano writing and sinister harmonic 'pedal' notes (with changing harmony over a static bass line) recall many of the robust first movement *Allegro* movements of Brahms' chamber music, but there are already hints of the composer Strauss was to become. Scampering descant lines recall the wind writing in his orchestral tone poems, at several points the music miraculously expands into sensual, Straussian ripples of arpeggios, and the melodic contour often swoops downwards and soars upwards by large distances; a marker of Strauss' later writing.

After the broad sweep of the first movement, the *Scherzo* is full of the light, waltzing swirls of his short, mischievous tone poem *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* composed ten years later. The *Andante* is hauntingly beautiful, piquant touches of dissonance colouring a quietly intense melody that stretches on and on in one unbroken stretch, foreshadowing his affinity for the human voice expressed so richly in his operas. Though the music races towards a powerful conclusion in C minor in the *Vivace* final movement, playfulness shines through its seemingly serious surface with

slinking contrapuntal lines and rhythmic excitement.

## **Bartók - Piano Quintet in C major**

*Andante*

*Vivace (Scherzando)*

*Adagio*

*Poco a poco più vivace*

A teenage Bartók composed a Piano Quartet in C minor. Subsequently withdrawn, but newly rediscovered, it shows an accomplished young composer who was in thrall to Brahms. By the time he was 23 and composing the Piano Quintet in C, his inspiration had shifted to Strauss. As with the Quartet, this work remained lost until the early 1970s, having been withdrawn by the composer, who refused to allow it to be published. The Juilliard Quartet and Beveridge Webster resurrected it from the manuscript, languishing in Budapest, and it has subsequently become a welcome addition to the piano quintet repertoire.

In 1902 Bartók had witnessed a performance of Strauss' monumental tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (its epic opening sequence immortalised in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey). In its dense chromaticism and complex piano figurations, the first movement shows its debt to Strauss' orchestral language whilst remaining firmly rooted in a Romantic piano idiom established by Bartók's compatriot, Franz Liszt. Similarly, and despite the fact that the work was conceived

as a sonata, each of the movements is so free-roaming that one hears more of the moment to moment spontaneity and narrative thread of Strauss' Don Juan than the exposition, development and recapitulation of a conventional sonata form structure. The first movement also allows moments of Bartók's wild, Hungarian folk-influenced later style to break through, with motoric repeated rhythms, crunchy clashes between the string lines, and visceral, gutsy exploitation of the string instrument sonorities.

Though written as one continuous expanse of music, with themes recurring throughout the piece, it is more or less divided into four movements. Bartók's Hungarian heritage is in evidence from the start in the cheeky folk rhythms and gypsy flourishes and string glissandi (sliding from one note to another) of the Scherzando second movement. The third movement Adagio is the most easily recognisable as Bartók; slow, searing melodies become nearly unhinged, and the piano breaks down into cimbalom-like cadenza moments. Its dark sense of mystery prefigures what would become his 'night music' style in later works. After this, a csárdás style finale, marked poco a poco più vivace (getting faster little by little), concludes the work, with sometimes reflective, sometimes humorous digressions adding a sense of whimsy and irony.









Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# Through War

Bowen	Clarinet Sonata in F minor op 109
Vaughan Williams	On Wenlock Edge *
Howells,	Rhapsodic Quintet op 31
Elgar	String Quartet in E minor op 83



## **Bowen - Clarinet Sonata in F minor op 109**

*Allegro moderato*

*Allegretto poco scherzando*

*Finale. Allegro molto*

Hailed by Saint-Saëns as "the most remarkable of young British composers", Edwin York Bowen's lack of a reputation today might have astonished those who witnessed his early career at the turn of the twentieth century. His music was championed by violinists such as Fritz Kreisler and Joseph Szigeti, violist Lionel Tertis and conductors Henry Wood, Adrian Boult and Hans Richter. As a pianist he appeared regularly as a soloist at the Proms, and was soloist in the first ever recording of Beethoven's Piano Concerto no 4. He became a professor at the Royal Academy of Music aged just 23; the same institution he had attended as an Erard scholar from the age of 14. Had he been born one generation earlier, there is a good chance that he might today be as familiar as Elgar in the roster of British composers. As it was, York Bowen's rise was out of step with the course of history. By the end of the First World War (during which he played in the Scots Guard Band) his rich, melodic Romanticism seemed anachronistic, belonging to the hangover years of the nineteenth century. He entrenched himself in his style, and publicly denounced Stravinsky's Symphonies of Winds in 1921. Despite being a prolific composer, much of his

output remains unpublished or unperformed and, along with a few piano works, those pieces which are most often heard today are his notable contributions to the repertoire of solo instruments such as the viola.

Happily, Bowen's Clarinet Sonata is one such piece. It was composed in 1943 yet is firmly rooted in his youthful musical style, in some ways calling back half a century to the wistful nostalgia of Brahms' monumental late clarinet sonatas from 1894. Like the first of Brahms' op 120 clarinet sonatas, Bowen's is in the stormy key of F minor, exploiting the clarinet's singing quality across its large range, from the woody depths to pearly heights. Unlike the tightly motivic construction of Brahms' writing in the late nineteenth century Bowen's is more free-flowing. The first movement's melodic line runs almost uninterrupted, rising and falling in intensity and sweeping the listener away with it. After such a sumptuous first movement, York Bowen has no need of a slower middle movement, instead cleansing our palates with a playful scherzando second movement, before launching into a wild, march-like finale full of explosive flourishes.

## **Vaughan Williams - On Wenlock Edge**

*On Wenlock Edge*

*From Far, from Eve and Morning*

*Is My Team Ploughing*

*Oh, When I Was in Love with You*

*Bredon Hill*

*Clun*

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the most important English composers of the twentieth century, whose output is widely performed today and includes nine symphonies, numerous songs and vocal works, and a number of concertante pieces such as *The Lark Ascending* for violin and orchestra. He made pioneering ethnomusicological studies into the folk music of the British Isles, helping to forge a national style of composition rooted in folk song, in a similar way to Eastern European composers like Bartók and Kodály. Where Hungarian folk music tended towards wildness, reflected in Bartók's visceral modernist language, Vaughan Williams' English source materials led him (and others) to a more serene melodic style. Like so many other English composers of the time, Vaughan Williams also looked back to the glory days of the Renaissance and Baroque for inspiration, as is evident in one of his most enduringly popular works, the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* of 1910.

*On Wenlock Edge* dates from a year earlier, a song cycle for tenor, piano and string quartet that sets six poems from Alfred Edward



Housman's collection *A Shropshire Lad*. Written in 1896, these poems about Englishness, maleness and adolescence became incredibly popular in the subsequent few decades. Though the poems are full of local detail, Housman, in fact, had only a passing knowledge of Shropshire, whose "blue remembered hills" he saw on the western horizon of Worcestershire, where he grew up. The illusiveness (indeed, fictitiousness) of the English ideal rendered in the texts lends them a poetic poignancy that was heightened for the teenage boys reading them in the trenches during the First World War, soon to be killed in action hundreds of miles from home. Later, George Orwell noted that in his interwar schooldays at Eton, "these were the poems which I and my contemporaries used to recite to ourselves, over and over, in a kind of ecstasy".

Even before the slaughter of the First World War made these poems about a lost England so much more relevant, Housman was the ideal poet for the new English pastoral tradition of composition. Vaughan Williams and other English composers' use of folk song was not just due to ethnographical interest, but an expression of rural life and landscapes in musical form. In a slightly vague, notional way of thinking, widespread throughout the nineteenth century, 'the folk' were seen as the people who worked 'the land', and therefore folk music and stories were somehow 'of the land'.

On *Wenlock Edge* takes a dramatic approach to setting Housman's poetry. Instead of a cycle for piano and voice, the work feels as though it was conceived for tenor and orchestra, or even as an opera, and that this is a version in reduced orchestration. (Vaughan Williams in fact expanded the work to full orchestra fifteen years later in 1924.) With a broad, symphonic sweep and a plethora of quasi-orchestral colours achieved from the five accompanying instruments, the singer is required to play the characters of the narrator and protagonist; the living and the dead.

### **Howells - Rhapsodic Quintet op 31**

At the premiere of Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* in 1910, the composer himself came and sat down next to an awestruck 18 year-old Herbert Howells, sharing his score of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with him for the duration of that work's performance. This was a formative experience for Howells, a promising composer who was soon to begin his studies at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford, Hubert Parry and Charles Wood. Both Vaughan Williams and the music of the Renaissance would be lifelong sources of inspiration for Howells, as for his fellow students at the RCM, who included Ivor Gurney and Arthur Bliss. For this generation of composers, the

First World War was a shattering experience: Gurney was gassed and suffered a mental breakdown in 1918, and though Howells was not conscripted owing to his diagnosis with Graves disease in 1915 (he was initially given a mere six months to live), his sense of loss and trauma was palpable.

The *Rhapsodic Quintet* for clarinet and string quartet dates from just after the war in 1919. His teacher Stanford had written numerous works for the clarinet, and the instrument's dark, smooth sound and vocal qualities had made it popular with the melody-driven style of English composers in the early twentieth century. The late chamber works of Brahms probably provided some inspiration, in particularly the *Clarinet Quintet in B minor* for the same forces as the *Rhapsodic Quintet*. The unusual single movement structure, however, originates in a chamber music competition founded by Walter Wilson Cobbett (1847-1937). Two years earlier, in 1917, Howells had won this competition with another single movement work, the *Phantasy String Quartet*. Cobbett's competition offered options of entering either a multi-movement sonata form work, or a piece in the Tudor English form of *Phantasy*, a single movement piece containing a contrasting succession of musical ideas, yet also creating a unified

whole. This is what Howells gives us in the Rhapsodic Quintet, a luxurious string introduction and a rising, passionate first theme giving way to episodes of reflection punctuated by dramatic outbursts.

### **Elgar - String Quartet in E minor op 83**

*Allegro moderato*

*Piacevole (poco andante)*

*Allegro molto*

Elgar is widely regarded as the first truly 'great' English composer since Henry Purcell, his orchestral Enigma Variations, oratorio The Dream of Gerontius, two symphonies, and violin and cello concertos are amongst the most famous works by any British composer. Unlike the generations of English composers he would inspire, including Vaughan Williams, Elgar had no interest in folk music and drew his principal inspiration from European composers. He was also from far humbler origins, born the son of a music shop keeper and piano tuner in Worcester. Where many of the next generation of British composers were prodigious talents who earned scholarships to study in London, Elgar was taught by his parents and honed his crafts as a church organist and jobbing freelance violinist.

In 1884 he was part of a scratch orchestra at the Worcester choral festival when Dvořák (who, incidentally, had a similar

upbringing to Elgar) came to conduct a performance of his own Stabat Mater on his first British tour, cementing himself as a huge musical celebrity in Britain. This had a big impact on the young Elgar, whose own Enigma Variations are inspired by Dvořák's Symphonic Variations op 78. Though for many he stands for thoroughbred Englishness today, he considered himself a European composer. Wagner's dense harmonic language is an unacknowledged but important feature of Elgar's music; as were French composers with a lighter palate, such as Berlioz, Delibes, Massenet and Saint-Saëns. Handel and Brahms were also of significant influence.

Elgar's final burst of creativity before his death in 1934 occurred in 1918-19 and yielded three important chamber works. Whilst recovering from a tonsillitis operation at his country house retreat in West Sussex, escaping the depressing news of war, he completed his String Quartet in E minor, Violin Sonata in E minor and Piano Quintet in 1918; his Cello Concerto in E minor followed in 1919. Despite their smaller forces, these pieces have all the grandeur and sweep of the large scale works on which Elgar had largely built his reputation, reinforced by Elgar's apparent fixation on the dark and serious key of E minor.

The first movement of the String Quartet in E minor

is impassioned and lyrical, reaching almost desperate, hysterical heights in the first violin part. A sad, grieving quality spills over into the second movement; yet the end of the war was in sight, and the summer haze of Elgar's West Sussex surroundings at times infuse this lilting music, described by Lady Elgar as having the qualities of "captured sunshine". The third and final movement regains the seriousness of the first movement, this time invigorated by driving rhythms and a sense of urgency, and with more active involvement from the quartet's lower voices; Lady Elgar thought this movement sounded like "galloping stallions".





Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> August 7pm

# Post War Paris

Poulenc	Sonata for oboe and piano
	Sonata for flute and piano
	Sonata for clarinet and piano *
Prokofiev	Quintet in G minor op 39
Poulenc	Sonata for piano, oboe and bassoon



## Francis Poulenc

The story of the twentieth century in music is usually told as a march towards total serialism, a quest for the new and a reaction to the human evil committed in first part of the century, resulting in music that lost its recognisable rhythms, melodies and timbres. Yet there is another story to be told, of composers creating beauty in a barren world. Though they had strikingly different lives, both Poulenc and Prokofiev shared the very singular ability to create beautiful, memorable, interesting melodies, underpinned with their own unique takes on the traditional harmony employed by composers for centuries.

Poulenc's parents died in 1916 and 1918, when he was still a teenager, thrusting him into the mentorship of his piano teacher, the Spanish virtuoso Ricardo Viñes who premiered numerous works by composers including Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Falla and Albéniz. His parents had hoped he would pursue a conventional career; they were high flyers themselves, presiding over a successful pharmaceutical company. In their absence Poulenc quickly developed a mature, distinctive compositional voice, falling in with a group of Parisian composers in the 1920s, together calling themselves Les Six, whilst also enjoying a hugely successful career as a pianist

(especially in accompanying song recitals).

Poulenc had an extrovert, flamboyant side, tempered with a devout Catholicism. He loved pop and cabaret music, which he called "adorable bad music", but also Debussy, Ravel, Schubert and Stravinsky. His reputation began, and largely still rests, on his secular music. In his early twenties he landed a commission with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (the same company who created the Rite of Spring with Stravinsky and Daphnis et Chloé with Ravel), resulting in the hit ballet *Les Biches* (1923). Despite his homosexual tendencies, he nevertheless felt drawn to the Catholic church, composing a great number of serious religious works from the 1930s onwards.

There are other composers who alternated the sacred and the profane in their output, but there are few who combine them in the same breath quite as outrageously as Poulenc. The wind sonatas Poulenc composed at the end of his life illustrate this perfectly: exquisite, deeply moving melodies are interrupted after a single phrase with crass outbursts and rude dissonances, like car horns blaring outside a church service. We seem never to hear more than a fragment of any particular mood, as though each phrase was a collage made from other musical scores, arranged for maximum shock value.

## Poulenc - Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano

*Presto*

*Andante*

*Rondo*

The Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano was Poulenc's first successful foray into chamber music, composed between 1924-26. It was finally completed with the composer hiding away in Cannes to avoid distractions, and helped by an encounter with Stravinsky, who happened to be there at the time and who gave him "quelques bons conseils" (some good advice) to help with its composition. The three movements have a Classical sense of balance, some listeners noting a Mozartian touch, though the grandiose rhythms of the introduction are unmistakably those of a Baroque 'French overture'.

## Sonata for oboe and piano

*Elégie (Paisiblement, Sans Presser)*

*Scherzo (Très animé)*

*Déploration (Très calme)*

The three wind sonatas heard tonight are in many ways very similar pieces of music, each with three movements and exhibiting both Poulenc's trademark melodic fluency and his irreverence. Tragically, they also share a common theme of the loss and remembrance of his personal friends. The Oboe Sonata of 1962 was dedicated to the memory of Prokofiev, and turns the fast-slow-fast movement



structure of the other two on its head.

### **Sonata for clarinet and piano**

*Allegro tristamente (Allegretto - Très calme - Tempo allegretto)*

*Romanza (Très calme)*

*Allegro con fuoco (Très animé)*

The Clarinet Sonata of 1962 was dedicated to the memory of Arthur Honegger, another composer in his group Les Six, and was commissioned by the jazz and classical clarinettist Benny Goodman. He intended to give the premiere with the composer at the piano, but Poulenc died of a heart attack before it could take place; fortunately, Leonard Bernstein stepped in for the first performance at Carnegie Hall.

### **Sonata for flute and piano**

*Allegretto malinconico*

*Cantilena: Assez lent*

*Presto giocoso*

The Flute Sonata dates from 1957 and was dedicated to the memory of pianist and music philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, though Poulenc himself alluded to the work embodying the spirit of his friend Raymonde Linossier. Before her death, he had proposed a 'marriage of convenience', which she refused, and though they never patched up their friendship afterwards, he was prone to reminiscences. The dedication to Linossier in the score of his song Cocardes

illuminates not only their friendship but Poulenc's character. It reads, "To Raymonde who loves as I do French fries, mechanical pianos, chromos, shell-covered jewellery boxes and Paris. Her friend Francis". On the premiere of the Flute Sonata years later, Le Figaro wrote that "the music burst forth from the heart, without formality, and 'sang' in every sense".

### **Prokofiev - Quintet in G minor op 39**

*Tema con variazioni*

*Andante energico*

*Allegro sostenuto, ma con brio*

*Adagio pesante*

*Allegro precipitato, ma non troppo presto*

*Andantino*

Arriving there by several strange twists of fate, Sergei Prokofiev became close friends with Poulenc in Paris in the early 1920s - both outstanding pianists, they used to run through some four-hands piano duets and then play bridge. A brilliant Russian piano and composition virtuoso, Prokofiev had sought his fortunes in the US whilst revolution boiled over in Russia and war gripped Europe - joining many other emigres such as Rachmaninov. Unlucky coincidences meant his American career did not go as planned, and instead of returning home a failure he settled in Paris, remaining there until he moved permanently to the Soviet Union in 1936. Prokofiev's output was widely

played and loved at the time, as it is now, including his symphonies, piano and instrumental sonatas, numerous ballets (including Romeo and Juliet), five piano concertos, two violin concerts and much else besides. However the return to the Soviet Union proved bittersweet; state support for the composer wavered, and he suffered humiliating denouncements. In a cruel irony, he died on the same day as his nemesis, Joseph Stalin, in 1953.

Whilst in Paris in 1924, Prokofiev was hardly starving for work, his Second Symphony having just been commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky, the Russian principal conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Yet when a touring ballet troupe asked him to compose a score for a ballet, he took up the challenge of writing for their unusual, five-piece house band of oboe, clarinet, violin, viola and double bass. This chamber ballet, *Trapèze*, was too difficult for the dancers, and was soon recycled into the Quintet in G minor op 39 and *Divertimento* op 43. Instead of smoothing over the rough, unblended combination of instruments he had at his disposal, the Quintet exaggerates the different timbres and adds harmonic clashes to boot. Thorny, difficult, full of wrong-sounding notes, its six movements are underpinned by a strong pattern of dance rhythms and create the atmosphere of a Dadaist circus.





Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2pm

# Caution to the Wind

Adès	Catch op 4
Poulenc	Sextet for piano and winds *
Schubert	Piano quintet in A 'Trout'



## Adès - Catch op 4

Today, contemporary classical music often seems a fringe activity within a niche field. It has to compete not only with the canon of 'great' composers of old, who dominate concert programmes, but with the prominence of pop culture. Reading about riots at premieres over a century ago, or stylistic censorship under political oppression, it sometimes seems hard to imagine that a composer today could elicit as much anger or excitement from musicians or audiences as was once seemingly commonplace. This is why the warmth of the reception that greeted Thomas Adès at the start of his career is so noteworthy.

Now arguably Britain's leading composer, as well as an accomplished performer as a pianist and conductor of some of the world's top orchestras, his works are played throughout the world by the most famous musicians. When Sir Simon Rattle took over as chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, he programmed Adès' *Asyla* for his first concert, remarking, "however head-scratching, stomach-churningly difficult the music is, the truth is that the better you play it, and the closer you come to his idiosyncratic vision, the more wonderful it sounds." The notoriously hard-to-please critic Andrew Porter could scarcely contain himself in his notes to an early Adès disc, feeling the need to explain himself thus: "If

a hoary critic seems to be writing in the vein of a modern publicist, it's because he has again and again been excited by the way that in work after work young Adès, like Purcell and Britten, without repeating himself, has freshly touched and revitalised mainsprings of modern music."

Perhaps a crude way of explaining these reactions is that, to people who mostly listened to core classical music and considered contemporary music to be unappealing, Adès seemed to be both sophisticated yet potentially intelligible, and it left them with an emotional response. Like the first listeners of a late Beethoven string quartet, people felt there was something deserving of their effort in attempting to play, listen to and understand his music. It concerns itself not with tribal style politics (serialist, minimalist, etc.) but with note against note, in the way that composers have done for centuries, whilst saying something new.

In fact, Adès seemed to be so fluent as to be able to have fun whilst composing, as is evident in his quartet for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, *Catch*. Composed in 1991 when the composer was just 20 years old, the first impression of the piece for the audience is that it is in fact a piano trio. Violinist, cellist and pianist are on stage, trying to play together. The extreme highs of the piano texture and string harmonics, bracing yet somehow beautiful, cut through the air like shards of glass

one minute, and then menacing, jazzy rumblings take over the next. From offstage, a lonely clarinetist attempts to play with them, and is spurned. Sparkling, rippling flourishes are thrown from player to player ('Catch!'), sometimes with care and sometimes with hostility, until meeting in uneasy reconciliation at the end.

## Poulenc - Sextet for piano and winds

*Allegro vivace*

*Divertissement: Andantino*

*Finale: Prestissimo*

Like the four works for wind and piano by Poulenc heard in the previous concert, Poulenc's Sextet for piano and winds in many ways typifies his style. The first movement's opening musical gestures are bold, even ugly, before a chugging *Allegro* that would not be out of place as the soundtrack to a cartoon illustration of a 1920s motorcar. Poulenc chooses to exhibit the vulgar sides to his ensemble – the horn is at its razziest, the clarinet at its most shrill and the oboe at its reediest – before a comically delicate flute and piano section arrives for just a few bars. Such extreme juxtapositions make Poulenc's music constantly surprising and entertaining; it is a comic book aesthetic, one frame at merciless right angles to the next. Before we know it, a sublime, sultry music has taken over, elegant melodies supported by the most melancholy and colourful of

harmonies. The crashing return of the opening material would be offensive if it were not so fun.

The second movement begins as if in a child's dream, sumptuous yet slightly ghostly. The subsequent section of music is stunningly, impressively silly; yet it dissolves effortlessly into an achingly beautiful, altered rendition of the opening music, all the more touching for the joviality of what has preceded it.

The finale begins as if quoting Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, visceral and angry, before breaking into a smile, and then surprising us once again with swirling piano and soaring wind lines. Confounding our expectations of a humorous conclusion to the piece, Poulenc ends with slow, almost religiously beautiful alternating chords rocking back and forth, the harmonies suddenly austere and wide open.

With so much contrasting material, it is no wonder that Poulenc took several revisions to reach a version of the piece with which he was satisfied, rearranging its proportions until he deemed it satisfactory: "better balanced, it comes over clearly".

## Schubert - Piano quintet in A major D667 ('Trout')

*Allegro vivace*

*Andante*

*Scherzo: Presto*

*Andantino - Allegretto*

*Allegro giusto*

The popular image of Schubert is one characterised simultaneously by a Romantic 'inwardness' and a cheerful, simple domesticity. He grew up playing viola in a family string quartet, and his songs were performed informally amongst a circle of friends at evenings devoted to Schubert's compositions, known as Schubertiades. Schubert was relatively unusual in that he earned most of his income directly from publishing his compositions; Schubert had no patrons on a scale of Beethoven's, nor did he have any full time church employment like Bach's. With such a rich history of amateur music making in his own family home and an extraordinary fluency with melody, it is no wonder that Schubert proved commercially successful in the genres most suited to domestic music making, in works that could be performed by amateurs.

A cosy domestic performance of Hummel's Septet, in the composer's reduced arrangement of five players, gave Schubert the occasion to write his Piano Quintet in A in 1819, at the age of 22. Hummel was a celebrated composer, a former child prodigy who had been spotted by Mozart aged eight and taught and housed

by him for two years. Hummel was also one of the great piano virtuosos of the day; his own piano concertos are fiendishly difficult. The scoring was unusual, removing one of the violins from a string quartet and replacing it with a double bass, but it freed up the pianist from constantly having to balance the ensemble by playing chords and bass lines. One imagines that Hummel made use of this freedom to give his pianist wave after wave of showy runs and arpeggios. Schubert exploited this in his own very different way; with the cello and double bass occupying the bass role, he allowed the pianist to explore the high reaches of the instrument, with both hands playing a melody one octave apart from each other, resulting in a distinctive instrumental colour that gives the Piano Quintet in A its own particular sound world.

The recipient of this quintet (it was only published after Schubert's death) was a wealthy amateur cellist called Sylvester Paumgartner, who suggested that Schubert include some variations on one of his songs. The song in question was Die Forelle, D 550 ('The Trout'), a song Schubert had composed two years earlier to a text by the confusingly similarly named Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart. This was a poem warning young women (trout) not to be caught by men (fishermen), but Schubert removed Schubart's moralising last verse, so that it essentially became a song about fishing.

This theme and variations on the Die Forelle melody occupies the fourth of the piece's five movements. A bright and sincere, conversational slow second movement follows the excitement of the first, before a vigorous scherzo; a theme and variations then follows whose piano figurations glisten, like the light catching a fish's scales; and a vigorous finale. As an early piece in Schubert's output, it contains more unaltered repetition than in his later works, but many of Schubert's mature hallmarks are in evidence. He is always in control of tension and release, holding a bass note for just long enough to build a sense of expectation before allowing the music to flow forward. Excitable arpeggios and natural-sounding, fluent melodic lines are subtly manipulated so that we enter surprising harmonic realms, slightly unsure of how we arrived there. The overriding character of the work is one of wholesome cheerfulness, supposedly inspired by a pleasant summer in the Austrian Alps.





# Musicians

main concert series

### **Katya Apekisheva – piano**

Katya made her stage debut in Moscow aged 12 and has since performed concertos with many fine and eminent orchestras such as the LPO, RPO and London Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared in numerous festivals throughout the world as a renowned collaborative chamber musician, most notably the highly successful duo partnership with pianist Charles Owen with whom Katya set up the London Piano Festival in 2016.

[www.katyaapekisheva.com](http://www.katyaapekisheva.com)

### **James Baillieu – piano**

Professor at the RAM, James is one of the leading song and chamber pianists of his generation, collaborating with world-class singers such as Lise Davidson, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Anna Huntley and Benjamin Appl with whom he has recorded for Sony Classical. James is a frequent guest at many of the world's most distinguished centres including Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw, Metropolitan Opera and Vienna's Musikverein.

[www.james-baillieu.com](http://www.james-baillieu.com)

### **Simon Blendis - violin**

Simon enjoys an international career as a chamber musician, soloist and orchestral leader. He led the award-winning Schubert Ensemble for 35 years, recording over 20 CDs and commissioning more than 50 new compositions. Currently Concertmaster of the London Mozart Players, Simon is also First Concertmaster with the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa in Japan with whom he has recorded Vivaldi's Four Seasons for the Warner Japan label. In 2019 Simon was appointed a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London where he currently lives.

[www.simonblendis.com](http://www.simonblendis.com)

### **Benjamin Baker – violin**

Born in New Zealand, Benjamin studied in the UK and has since developed a reputation as a consummate artist, appearing in festivals throughout Europe, New Zealand, Australia, USA, Colombia, China and Argentina. His debut CD 'The Last Rose of Summer' released on Champs Hill Records hit the charts and Benjamin has just released a disc of works by Prokofiev, Copland and Poulenc with pianist Daniel Lebhardt for Delphian.

[www.benbakerviolin.co.uk](http://www.benbakerviolin.co.uk)

### **Alasdair Beatson – piano**

Born in Scotland, Alasdair tours prolifically as soloist and chamber musician, broadcasting and performing regularly around the world and regularly at London's Wigmore Hall. He has just released a disc of Beethoven with violinist Viktoria Mullova (Onyx) as well as a solo recital (Pentatone), adding to his increasing discography. Alasdair is co-artistic director of the Swiss chamber festival at Ernen from where he will hop on a plane straight to North Yorkshire.

[www.alasdairbeatson.com](http://www.alasdairbeatson.com)

### **Meghan Cassidy – viola**

No stranger to this festival, Meghan has performed as a successful chamber musician all over Europe and the UK, appearing as guest principal viola with many world class orchestras such as the London Mozart Players, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Meghan was a former member of the Solstice Quartet and curates the Marylebone Music Festival, which she founded four years ago and which took place in front of live audiences last month.

[www.marylebonemusicfestival.com](http://www.marylebonemusicfestival.com)

### **Nicholas Daniel - oboe**

Acknowledged as one of the world's great oboe players, Nicholas has enjoyed a hugely successful career spanning four decades, performing concertos with many fine orchestras and ensembles, including the Britten Sinfonia (being a founding member). He records regularly for Harmonia Mundi and as Professor greatly enjoys teaching and nurturing talent. Nicholas is Music Director of the Leicester International Festival and was awarded an OBE last year.

[www.nicholasdaniel.co.uk](http://www.nicholasdaniel.co.uk)

### **James Gilchrist - tenor**

One of the country's most treasured tenors, James is a prolific recording artist and versatile recitalist with a hugely varied repertoire. His role as the Evangelist in JS Bach's St Matthew's Passion is universally recognised as the finest. Having recorded for Linn, Chandos and Orchid Classics, James continues to collaborate with many of the world's greatest musicians such as Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington and the late Richard Hickox.

[www.jamesgilchrist.co.uk](http://www.jamesgilchrist.co.uk)

### **Kate Gould - cello**

Chamber music has always been at the heart of Kate's life, establishing both the Winchester and Ironbridge Music Festivals. A member of the renowned London Bridge Trio, Kate was also cellist of the hugely successful Leopold String Trio who, as New Generation Artists, won numerous accolades whilst recording for Hyperion Records. Passionate about teaching, Kate currently coaches at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

[www.ironstonechambermusic.com](http://www.ironstonechambermusic.com)

### **Bryony Gibson-Cornish - viola**

Originally from New Zealand, Bryony now lives in the UK after graduating from the Juilliard School and the Royal College of Music in London. She is a member of the Marmen Quartet (previously featured in the festival) who recently won major awards in Bordeaux as well as First prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Bryony has also performed with many world-renowned orchestras.

[www.bryonyviola.wixsite.com](http://www.bryonyviola.wixsite.com)

### **Rebecca Gilliver - cello**

Principal cellist of the London Symphony Orchestra amongst others, Rebecca has also performed as a recitalist in many renowned halls including Wigmore and Carnegie. A frequent guest of the Nash Ensemble, Rebecca is a regular participant at IMS Prussia Cove where she fulfils her love of chamber music coaching which she continues at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Rebecca lives in London with her husband and two dogs.

### **Thomas Hancox- flute**

Both co-principal flute of Britten Sinfonia and principal flute of Northern Ballet, Thomas also appears as guest principal with many of the country's top orchestras including the RPO, LPO, English Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia. In his solo capacity, he collaborates with artists such as Trevor Pinnock, Jeremy Denk and the Castalian string quartet. Thomas read music at Oxford before gaining distinction at the Royal Academy of Music who made him an Associate in 2019.

[www.thomashancox.co.uk](http://www.thomashancox.co.uk)



### **Amy Harman - bassoon**

A passionate advocate for the bassoon, Amy is much sought after as a soloist, chamber musician, teacher and communicator, regularly featuring on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Television. In 2011 Amy was appointed Principal Bassoon of the Philharmonia Orchestra shortly after joining Ensemble 360. She is a member of the recently formed Orsino Ensemble with whom she has appeared at many international festivals and regularly at Wigmore Hall.

### **Anna Huntley - mezzo-soprano**

An outstanding recitalist and opera singer, Anna has performed in many great halls with pianists such as James Baillieu, Julius Drake, Graham Johnson, Simon Lepper, Trevor Pinnock and Andras Schiff. Her concerts are regularly broadcast and opera appearances include starring roles at the ENO and Welsh National Opera. Her stunning tone has been captured on many recordings, most notably in the music of Ravel, Schubert and Schumann.

[www.annahuntley.com](http://www.annahuntley.com)

### **Daniel Lehardt - piano**

Born in Hungary, Daniel studied at the Liszt Academy and then London's Royal Academy of Music. After early success he was invited to record music by Bartók for Decca and has since gone on to perform concertos with the Hallé Orchestra and further appearances at the Barbican and Symphony Hall. As a chamber musician Daniel regularly collaborates with violinist Benjamin Baker with whom he frequently broadcasts from Wigmore Hall.

[www.askonasholt.com/artists/daniel-lehardt](http://www.askonasholt.com/artists/daniel-lehardt)

### **Matthew Hunt - clarinet**

One of Britain's leading clarinetists, Matthew is well known for his vocal quality and distinctive sound, appearing as soloist with many orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic and guest principal with the Concertgebouw, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Matthew appears regularly in festivals all over the world as a chamber musician, recently appearing on a disc of French music for Chandos with the Orsino Ensemble.

[www.matthewhuntclarinet.com](http://www.matthewhuntclarinet.com)

### **Jubilee String Quartet**

This prize-winning young quartet bring a great sense of cultural identity to the group, drawing upon four different homelands: the Czech Republic, Canada, Spain and England. They've appeared at Wigmore and Conway halls and in 2020 they launched the online Jubilee String Quartet Academy, streamlining and connecting musicians and music-lovers across the globe. Their recent debut recording of Haydn has received glowing reviews.

[www.jubileequartet.co.uk](http://www.jubileequartet.co.uk)

### **Nikita Naumov - bass**

Born in Russia, Nikita came to study in the UK at London's Guildhall. Principal bass of Scottish Chamber Orchestra since 2010, he has also appeared as guest principal with the London Symphony Orchestra, RPO, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Netherlands Philharmonic. As a chamber musician Nikita has appeared in many international festivals and regularly at Queen's Hall, Edinburgh and the BBC Wigmore Hall Chamber Series.

[www.nikitanaumov.com](http://www.nikitanaumov.com)

### **Alice Neary - cello**

Alice's versatility as a musician has led to a hugely varied career, regularly appearing in recitals and concertos abroad and at home in venues such as the Wigmore and Bridgewater halls. Chamber music remains key to her musical activities and as well as collaborating with the Nash Ensemble, Alice was a longstanding member of the Gould Piano Trio with whom she made numerous recordings and broadcasts, all to great critical acclaim.

### **Brian O'Kane - cello**

An avid chamber musician, Irish cellist Brian O'Kane has toured extensively throughout the Far East, Australasia and Europe in collaboration with some of the world's finest artists, on tour the Navarra string quartet and as a founding member of the Cappa Ensemble. He also enjoys a busy career as soloist and recently released a disc of works by Fauré and Saint-Saëns to great critical acclaim. Brian currently plays on a beautiful Ruggieri cello from Cremona c.1690.

[www.briancellokane.com](http://www.briancellokane.com)

### **Sasha Raikhlina - violin**

Born in Moscow, Sasha moved to Belgium as a child before winning scholarships to study in the UK where she settled, currently in Newcastle where she runs her own Brundibár Arts Festival. Since graduating, Sasha has performed as soloist and chamber music in some of the country's finest festivals and concert venues including the Royal Albert Hall (Proms), Wigmore Hall, Barbican, Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Sage Gateshead.

### **Timothy Ridout - viola**

A current Radio 3 New Generation Artist and with a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, Timothy is now in huge demand as soloist and chamber musician, performing regularly throughout the UK, Europe, Scandinavia, Siberia and Japan. In 2020 he released his second album to great acclaim and this year he joins the Bowers Program of the Chamber Music Society of the Lincoln Center. His chamber music collaborators include artists such as Janine Jansens, Benjamin Baker and the Nash Ensemble.

[www.timothyridout.com](http://www.timothyridout.com)

### **Vicky Sayles - violin**

Chamber musician, soloist, orchestral leader and a former Director of Music, Vicky enjoys a hugely varied career which has taken her to various continents including Australia and (currently) Scandinavia. A passionate communicator, she also has a Masters Degree in Education. Chamber music remains at the heart of Vicky's artistry and her vivacious, collaborative style has been a welcome fixture at this festival for many years.

### **Charlotte Scott - violin**

Renowned for her generous tone and consummate artistry, Charlotte has built up a hugely respected reputation as chamber musician, soloist and concertmaster of many renowned orchestras. Her Oculi Ensemble has appeared at LSO St Luke's and the Concertgebouw, having recently released their debut recording of Strauss' chamber works to huge critical acclaim. She lives Sussex with her violist husband Jon, their two children and her precious Stradivarius.

[www.charlottescott.uk](http://www.charlottescott.uk)

### **Simon Tandree – viola**

Simon has enjoyed a wide career as chamber musician and former member of the Doric Quartet with whom he recorded for Chandos Records and performed all over the world in many great festivals and halls. Passionate about teaching, his activities have taken him to India, Spain, Indonesia and Mozambique. Currently he divides his time between the UK and Italy, having also qualified as a Cranio-Sacral therapist.

### **Jamie Walton – cello**

Jamie lives on the North York Moors where he fulfils his passion for running festivals, building recording studios and bringing world class musicians to the area. He has recorded 13 concertos with the Philharmonia and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Britten and Bach Suites and much of the cello sonata repertoire. Jamie has performed all over the world but to save on travel, he now brings like-minded artists to North Yorkshire.

[www.jamiewalton.com](http://www.jamiewalton.com)

### **Maria Włoszczowska – violin**

Maria has just been appointed the next Leader of the Royal Northern Sinfonia and will make her debut at Sage Gateshead next month. She is currently based in Scotland where projects include leading the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Winner of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, Maria then made her London debut at Wigmore Hall with pianist Alasdair Beatson and has since performed as soloist, guest concertmaster and chamber musician worldwide.

[www.mariawloszczowska.com](http://www.mariawloszczowska.com)

### **Rosalind Ventris – viola**

Chamber music has always been at the heart of Rosalind's musical life and she was recently appointed Artistic Director of the Cowbridge Music Festival. Her experiences as soloist and guest principal violist with various orchestras have taken her from Amsterdam to Australia and when not collaborating as part of a contemporary ensemble, Rosalind also enjoys her role as teacher, writer and researcher, splitting her time between the UK and Ireland.

[www.rosalindventris.co.uk](http://www.rosalindventris.co.uk)

### **Claire Wickes – flute**

Since graduating from Brasenose College, Oxford with first class honours before completing her Masters at the Royal College of Music, Claire has been in demand as guest principal flute of all the major London orchestras. She was appointed principal flute of the English National Opera in 2015 and frequently performs concertos in both Germany and the UK. With harpist Tomos Xerri, Claire formed the duo Siren, exploring ground-breaking repertoire.

[www.clairewickes.com](http://www.clairewickes.com)



# Young Artists

Last summer during the festival and whilst the pandemic continued to stifle the world of culture, I couldn't stop thinking about how life must be for those either still studying or having just graduated. What could they look forward to, with so few opportunities even for those already on the circuit? It seemed like such a crushing blow after what is effectively 15 years of intense and pressured musical education. I really felt for them.

It was then, upon hearing so many stories about young musicians being forced to temporarily give up in order to survive, that I felt compelled to do something, however small. If

we could give a selection of young musicians the opportunity to perform at the festival, this would offer some hope but also inspire and influence these musicians in whatever direction they then choose to follow. One's formative, early experiences in the music industry are the most crucial, so let's make them good ones. For me that principle matters more than ever.

So it is with great pleasure that we invited these artists up to our festival after such an incredibly challenging 18 months for them - the world needs to hear what they have to say!

Jamie

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Above left: Trio Mazzolini with the unmistakable backdrop of the Gherkin in the City of London.  
Right, top: Hill Quartet and on the sofa, the Jubilee Quartet who also feature in one of the main concerts.

# Salwa Quartet

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August 1pm  
**Ilhem Ben Khalfa** - violin  
**Caroline Heard** - violin  
**Cameron Howe** - viola  
**Abigail Lorimier** - cello

## **Britten, Three Divertimenti**

*March. Allegro maestro*  
*Waltz. Allegretto*  
*Burlesque. Presto*

## **Bridge - Phantasie in F minor**

## **Shaw - Entr'acte**

## **Hensel - String Quartet in E-flat**

*Adagio ma non troppo*  
*Allegretto*  
*Romanze*  
*Allegro molto vivace*

## **Britten - Three Divertimenti**

It seems quite natural that a brilliant, prodigious young person like Benjamin Britten should grow up to adore children and sentimentalise youth. This was one of the few things, other than an interest in folk song, that Britten shared with his more soft-edged English pastoral contemporaries. Throughout his adulthood Britten spent more time with children (especially boys) than many now consider to be normal and he often looked back to childhood with a sometimes rose-tinted nostalgia. Writing in the sleeve notes to his Simple Symphony in 1956, he painted a self-portrait:

"Once upon a time there was a prep-school boy. ... He was quite an ordinary little boy ... he loved cricket, only quite liked football (although he kicked a pretty "corner"); he adored mathematics, got on all right with history, was scared by Latin Unseen; he behaved fairly well, only ragged the recognised amount, so that his contacts with the cane or the slipper were happily rare (although one nocturnal expedition to stalk ghosts left its marks behind)."

A similar fond look back to his school days inspired his Three Divertimenti for String Quartet in 1933, when he was 20 years old. Each movement is a portrait of one of his old school friends, and the piece was intended to be a suite with more movements entitled Alla quartetto serioso 'Go play, boy, play'. Revising it in 1936 into the version we know today, Britten removed his titles of 'PT', 'At the Party' and 'Ragging'.

The first movement is a march, bracing and austere. At first it is not recognisably tonal, full of sliding effects ('glissandi') and harmonics, but a unison melody soon develops and grows into a vibrant quartet texture, plunging down and soaring up from earthy drones. The Waltz has a hushed, almost lullaby quality. The dance rhythm is plucked by the accompanying instruments whilst the others take turns to play a gentle, songlike melody, pairing up for short duets as though spinning between dance

partners. The Burlesque regains the vigorousness of the first movement, repeated drones motoring along and some of the more extreme string textures returning to add sparkle to a movement that seems to capture the energy of a Russian balalaika ensemble strumming together.

Britten is widely regarded as the most significant British composer of the twentieth century, remembered as much for his operas (Peter Grimes, Billy Budd, The Turn of the Screw, Death in Venice, Albert Herring, amongst others) and large scale orchestral pieces (Sinfonia da Requiem and The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra) as for his chamber works, choral works and songs. His formative musical guide was Frank Bridge, with whom he began studies as a precocious 14 year old. It is partly thanks to Bridge's cosmopolitan outlook that Britten veered away from the English pastoral style of his contemporaries and towards the European modernism of Stravinsky.

## **Bridge - Phantasie in F minor**

Like the 1910 Phantasy Piano Quartet in F-sharp minor, heard elsewhere in this festival, the Phantasie in F minor for String Quartet owes its unusual single movement structure to Walter Wilson Cobbett and his competition for chamber music composition. If competing in the Phantasy category, a single movement piece had to be submitted, with contrasting ideas woven together to create a piece



with a sense of unity, just as Purcell had done in his own Phantasies centuries earlier. The jury evidently considered Bridge to have done this successfully: he was runner up in the competition with the Phantasie in F minor in 1905, before winning it in 1907 with his Phantasie in C minor for piano trio, and was then commissioned by Cobbett in 1910 along with ten other British composers to compose a chamber music Phantasy, resulting in the Phantasy Piano Quartet.

The piece begins with a cheerful march, swinging rhythms dancing across the beats, before a sumptuous second section in which a sultry melody is passed around the quartet. The final section recalls some of Debussy's more whimsical piano preludes, balancing colourful harmonies and a jovial rhythmic feel with an air of sophisticated elegance.

### **Shaw - Entr'acte**

Caroline Shaw became the youngest composer ever to win a Pulitzer Prize in 2013, for her Partita for 8 Voices. An American composer, violinist and singer, her music is both original and accessible. She has found numerous illustrious champions for her classical works whilst also attracting the attention of pop musicians like rapper Kanye West, for whom she composed some vocal parts in the style of her classical compositions. Her frame of reference is most definitely classical and the widely performed single movement string quartet work

Entr'acte was inspired by Haydn's String Quartet in F op 77, no 2. Specifically, in a performance by the Brentano Quartet in 2011, Shaw admired the "spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet", reflected in her music, which seems to teeter on the edge of clear-cut tonalities before veering away in halting, kaleidoscope reflections.

### **Hensel - String Quartet in E-flat**

Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn) was older sister to Felix Mendelssohn, the much celebrated nineteenth-century composer, pianist, conductor and impresario. Though the two siblings shared their musical education reaching similar levels of accomplishment, Mendelssohn's career blossomed from the start, whereas the prevailing attitudes towards women largely thwarted Hensel's career in music. Several of her pieces were published under her brother's name, some even only being correctly attributed in the last decade or so. Some level of ability on the piano was expected of a middle or upper class European woman at the time, but a career was out of the question for a woman of higher standing. Despite Hensel's obviously exceptional gifts, their father presented the realities starkly: "Music will perhaps become his profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament". We can only wonder at the number of women throughout history

whose creativity was stifled by conventions of class and gender.

Her String Quartet in E-flat dates from 1834 and is based on an earlier piano sonata. Denied opportunities to gain experience in composing larger scale works, she felt she "lacked the ability to sustain ideas properly and give them the needed consistency", and her brother agreed with her, finding the piece undisciplined. Nevertheless, this, the first widely-known string quartet by a woman, is an impassioned, sombre piece that, in the composer's own words, emanates from the "exceedingly moving and emotional" music of Beethoven that she heard as a child. A dark, minor-key slow introduction leads to a short, tender first movement, followed by a scherzo-like second movement that brings to mind the magic of her brother's A Midsummer Night's Dream. A seemingly serene Romanze third movement erupts into a tense, heartfelt fugue-like section, driving forward before floating high up to the pearly upper reaches of the string texture. The finale offers a joyful, flashy opening theme, before once again tilting towards the more sinister minor key in an insistent fugue-like section. Ultimately it is the exuberant, virtuosic side of the movement that wins out in its brilliant final climax.

# Hill Quartet

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August 1pm  
Bridget O'Donnell - violin  
David López Ibáñez - violin  
Julia Doukakis - viola  
Ben Michaels - cello  
www.hillquartet.com

## Mozart - Quartet in D K 575

*Allegretto*  
*Menuetto: Allegretto*  
*Adagio*  
*Allegro*

## Ravel - Quartet in F

*Allegro moderato - Très doux*  
*Assez vif - Très rythmé*  
*Très lent*  
*Vif et agité*

## Mozart - Quartet in D K 575

The last two years of Mozart's life gave us some of his most extraordinary works: the operas *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito*, numerous piano concertos, a clarinet concerto, a clarinet quintet, three string quartets, two string quintets and his *Requiem*, left incomplete on his deathbed. Still only in his mid-thirties, his health was ailing and he was in desperate financial trouble. Having given up on seeking full-time employment, he had been freelance in Vienna since 1780 and remained so until his death on 5 December 1791. Whilst this gave him the freedom and opportunity to promote himself both as a performer and a composer (in 1784 alone, he gave twenty sold-out

subscription concerts consisting only of his own music), it was a precarious lifestyle.

In the spring of 1789, Mozart embarked on a concert tour which included Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden. In an effort to curry favour (and, hopefully, a large benefaction) from the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, a keen amateur cellist, Mozart began composing three string quartets while on his travels. The quartets' dedication, to Friedrich Wilhelm, have earned them the nickname the 'Prussian Quartets' - though it seems this dedication was not enough to earn Mozart any money from the king. The Quartet in D K 575 was completed after the tour had finished, in Vienna in the summer of 1789, and the other two (Quartet in B-flat, and Quartet in F K 590) the following year, after which Mozart then sent them to his publisher. He complained that he had been "forced to give away my quartets ... for a song, simply in order to have cash in hand". In fact, the cash only arrived after Mozart had died in 1791, and the quartets were published posthumously.

In light of the dedication to the royal amateur cellist, King Friedrich Wilhelm, it is not surprising that the cello parts of all three of the 'Prussian Quartets' are significantly more involved and soloistic than in other quartets of the time by Mozart, and by his older colleague and father of the modern string quartet, Haydn. Amusingly, however,

the first movement of the Quartet in D begins without the cello, who only joins in for a few repeated 'D's' after eight bars; it gives the opening a wonderfully weightless, celestial quality, but it might also have raised the King's eyebrows to see that his instrument hardly features. Suddenly, the cello finds itself playing a very high solo melody, doing a fine impression of the first violin; Mozart seems to be having a joke at the King's expense. This nevertheless paves the way for a rich, expressive first movement; a luxurious feeling second movement follows, with a silky, high violin line that could be from an operatic aria, each of the instruments (but particularly the cello) taking their turn to join for a duet. The repeated notes of the Minuet and Trio sound curiously inhuman, more like birdsong than a courtly dance, and there are striking moments of avant-garde harmony that shatter the movement's composure further. The final *Allegretto* is a tour de force, exhibiting the players' virtuosity and rotating the players into different textures as though instrument were a colour on a Rubik's cube.

## Ravel - Quartet in F

Debussy was unquestionably the great new force in French music at the turn of the twentieth century, even if the establishment belonged to more classically-minded composers like Gabriel Fauré. Debussy's colourful piano miniatures and sweeping orchestral works were for many

listeners a musical metaphor for the Impressionist paintings of artists like Monet. A great number of imitators followed in his wake, pejoratively labelled 'Debussystes'. Ravel frequently fielded accusations of Debussysme in his early career as a composer, and it is true that Ravel was hugely influenced by Debussy, even as he studied with Fauré; he watched all fourteen performances of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Opéra Comique when it was first staged, despite composers like Saint-Saëns hating the work and Dubois forbidding his Paris Conservatoire students to attend.

Completed in 1904, Ravel's String Quartet in F owes a great deal to Debussy's Quartet in G minor of 1893, and the period was probably the time at which the two composers' friendship was closest. Ravel's more Classical approach (as well as his frequent celebration of his Basque-Spanish heritage in other pieces) is a crucial distinction between the two composers in general; Ravel enjoyed constructing innovative, impressionistic works within more Classical forms. With his String Quartet in F, Ravel announced himself as Debussy's equal. Although Ravel continued to be dismissed by the establishment, failing yet again to win the Prix de

Rome in 1905, the public was on his side and they pointed to his Quartet as evidence that the jury was wrong about him.

Part of the drama of the piece lies in Ravel's use of contrast from one movement to the next, fused with a sensual harmonic palette and infectious melodic fragments. A languid first movement ebbs and flows in daydream-like reverie, out of which the listener is shaken by the snap of pizzicato strings in the second movement. The slow movement makes time stand still once again before the repeated, soaring notes of the last movement.





# Jubilee Quartet

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 1pm

Tereza Privratska - violin

Julia Loucks - violin

Lorena Cantó Woltèche - viola

Toby White - cello

[www.jubileequartet.co.uk](http://www.jubileequartet.co.uk)

## Haydn - Quartet in D minor op 103

*Andante grazioso*

*Menuetto ma non troppo presto*

## Schubert - Quartet in D minor, 'Death and the Maiden'

*Allegro*

*Andante con moto*

*Scherzo: Allegro molto*

*Presto*

## Haydn - Quartet in D minor op 103

Haydn is often appraised in terms of the legacy he left future composers. His popular nicknames, 'Father of the Symphony', 'Father of the String Quartet', or simply 'Papa Haydn' all pay respectful tribute to his originality, but implicitly frame him as an older relation of Mozart and Beethoven. Both studied with Haydn and both drew heavily on the stylistic and formal innovations Haydn perfected in his vast output. Haydn's 104 symphonies, 68 string quartets, 45-or-so piano trios, 52-odd keyboard sonatas, 11 keyboard concertos and 15 masses are somehow staggeringly varied, whilst also converging on a crystalline conception of style. These works are especially notable amidst a vast number of other pieces for more obscure instrumentation (there are

a few dozen works for mechanical clock, for example) partly because they helped define these genres as the most significant of all, inspiring further contributions from not only Mozart and Beethoven, but from almost all major composers even to the present day. However, there is something patronising in this view of him; Haydn's achievement stands on its own merit, rather than in terms of where it eventually led in the music of his successors.

We perhaps tend to find Haydn's long life, vast output and success within the establishment as rather less poetic than the unhappy or tragically short lives of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and other less fortunate artists. Haydn's life and career was not without its difficulties, including about eight years as a struggling freelancer from 1749-1757, teaching himself composition from various treatises and taking work where he could get it, including sometimes as a street performer. However, in 1761 he was eventually taken into employment by the Esterházy family who became his longtime benefactors. Their love and appreciation of music - and wealth - gave Haydn the ideal context in which to develop as a composer; he even had access to his own orchestra. Moreover, when the terms of his contract were renegotiated in 1779, Haydn suddenly gained his artistic and commercial independence: his music was his own property, and no longer belonged to his employer. His

career exploded, and he found fame throughout Europe and travelled widely, including repeatedly to London. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that he was the most famous musician in the world.

Against that backdrop, it is interesting that his output includes not only large numbers of 'public' works like symphonies, but also intimate chamber music works. The string quartet was characterised as a sophisticated conversation amongst 'amateurs' (a word without pejorative implications in the eighteenth century); for example, Haydn and Mozart played through some of their quartets together. Domestic music making of this kind was a primary form of entertainment, and enthusiasm for published works in 'private' genres such as string quartet, piano trio and piano sonata was sufficient for Haydn to achieve wealth and fame internationally long before he was able to visit the far corners of Europe.

Haydn's Quartet in D minor op 103 was never finished, published as a fragmentary two out of four intended movements with the composer's blessing in 1803. Quoting his chorale, *Der Greis*, he wrote, "Gone is all my strength, old and weak am I." Possibly the first and second movements of four, or perhaps the second and third, there is an effortlessly simple *Andante Grazioso*, with an undertow of darker minor harmonies, and a minuet in D minor whose grave,

dotted rhythms lend the movement an authoritative stateliness, the expected courtly elegance arriving only in the central trio section.

### **Schubert - Quartet in D minor, 'Death and the Maiden'**

In the context of a 31 year life cut short by illness (we do not know whether it was typhoid fever, syphilis or alcoholism which proved fatal), delineating a 'late period' would seem rather meaningless, not least as Schubert continued to compose at a prodigious rate despite his declining health. However, death looms unmistakably over Schubert's String Quartet in D minor, D. 810, the second movement of which recycles the melody from his 1817 setting of Matthias Claudius' *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (Death and the Maiden).

Unlike most of his songs and piano miniatures, his late chamber works seem to have been composed without hope of having them published (his major source of income). Without wishing to idealise the Romantic credentials of art produced without financial incentive, it does seem that his late works for string quartet (from the *Quartettsatz* in C minor of 1820 to the String Quartet in G major of 1826) express a more personal side to Schubert. 1822 was the year of his first major bout of syphilis, and in March 1824 he composed the single-mindedly morbid String Quartet in D minor, perhaps admitting more openly than in his

more commercially viable pieces of the same period that he was keenly aware of his own mortality. On 31 March, that same month, he wrote a letter to Leopold Kupelweiser saying:

"Think of a man whose health can never be restored, and who from sheer despair makes matters worse instead of better. Think, I say, of a man whose brightest hopes have come to nothing, to whom love and friendship are but torture, and whose enthusiasm for the beautiful is fast vanishing; and ask yourself if such a man is not truly unhappy".

The poem by Matthias Claudius, set by Schubert in 1817 in the song *Der Tod und das Mädchen* and quoted in the second movement, is a dialogue between death ('fierce man of bones') and a maiden. She pleads with him to pass her by, but he reassures her that he is a friend, not sent to punish her - "softly shall you sleep in my arms". The musical argument of the first movement reflects the dialogue of Claudius' text. Death's music, a short triplet theme framed in bare fifths and octaves creating a chilling sparseness, is immediately answered by the sweet lyricism of the maiden. This dialectical premise dissolves into a lengthy brawl, with hard driven triplets echoing the fearsome repeated octaves of Schubert's setting of his song, *Der Erlkönig*.

The second movement quotes the piano part to *Der Tod und das*

*Mädchen*, played in rhythmic unison by the quartet in a funeral dirge. As in the first movement, the melodic part of the texture is framed by unmoving fifths, creating a drone effect; we might sense an echo of the devastatingly simple *Der Leierman* (The Hurdy-gurdy Man), the final song from *Winterreise*, D 911. Five variations ensue, each based rigidly on the 24-bar theme's structure but with a typically Schubertian fluency in the melodic writing and variations of texture.

Like the first movement, the third movement *Scherzo* bears out a structural metaphor for the dialogue between Death and the Maiden. Its demonic outer sections are violent; harmonic progressions slither downward, spiralling round and round, and strident double stops (multiple strings being played on one string instrument) simulate the jangling of bones. The central trio section, on the other hand, is a scene of utter tranquillity, with the first violin mimicking birdsong and the ends of phrases fluttering gently to rest. The last movement is an urgent *Presto*, the four instruments playing in unison with only the concluding notes of each phrase diverging into separate parts. The distinctive rhythmic pattern is that of a tarantella, the dance used in folklore to cure a fatal spider bite. There is a sinister, fairy-tale quality to the unison melody and its call-and-response alternation with chordal figures which hints at dark witchcraft.

# Asyla Oboe Quartet

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 1pm

Eleanor Sullivan - oboe

Drake Gritten - oboe d'amour

Fergus McCready - cor anglais

Mikey Sluman - bass oboe

Crick - A Dale's Lament

Baker - Medieval Suite

Bennet - Weep, O Mine Eyes

Byrd - Ave Verum Corpus

Slater - Fractal Light

Mozart - Queen of the Night Aria

Talbot-Howard - Rievaulx - A Study in Memory (World premiere)

Puccini - O Mio Babbino Caro

Anna-Maunders-Whitworth Street West

Handel-Halvorsen - Passacaglia

The oldest musical instrument in the world is a 60,000 year old Neanderthal flute, made from the thigh bone of a small bear with four pierced holes. Of all the woodwind instruments commonly played today, the oboe is the second most senior, with its origins in various double reed instruments from Ancient civilisations. Long after the Ancient Greek aulos and Persian sorna, shawms found their way to Europe from the Middle East in the wake of the Crusades. By the mid-16th century the shawm had evolved into the oboe, and it came into its own as both an orchestral and solo instrument in the Baroque period. Over the following centuries, the enormous technical strides taken in all areas of European engineering were reflected in the refinement and invention of musical instruments.

As well as the oboe, which could be considered the 'treble' voice in the oboe family, the oboe d'amore (alto), cor anglais (tenor) and bass oboe (bass) had been perfected by the end of the nineteenth century. The unusual combination of these four instruments in one ensemble, outside of an orchestral context, makes for a blended yet distinctive ensemble.

Though the music heard in this recital has all been specially arranged or commissioned, the Asyla Oboe Quartet's diverse programme stretches back as far as the English polyphony of the 16th century and evokes a complete range of the uses to which the modern oboe has been put. Crick's A Dale's Lament is a sparse, beautiful work whose core message seems to pick up on the oboe's pastoral heritage. Crick, a Yorkshireman, takes his inspiration from Yorkshire poet John Taylor, who wrote in 1622, "From Hull and Halifax and Hell, Good Lord deliver me". This sentiment was picked up by anti-industrialist poet and scholar F W Moorman in the nineteenth century, and incorporated into his Dalesman's Litany which catalogues the miseries of a country man forced to leave the Yorkshire Dales and take up work in the towns. A famous setting of this line provides the melodic inspiration for Crick, who draws this thread of natural beauty through the piece, even amidst the noise and distractions of other interjecting voices.

Baker's Medieval Suite is another new work, takes as its starting point the ancient-sounding double reed timbre of the oboe quartet. Medieval courtly celebrations are injected with modern funk and rave rhythms in the first movement, Empress Matilda's Ductia. The second movement Song of the Troubadour exploits the oboe's ability to convey narrative through simple melody, in a tale of love and sorrow. The final movement, Jousting and Lament is a medieval tournament, with fanfares, ceremony and a final lament for the fallen.

We skip forward from the imagined medieval period to the real English Renaissance, and John Bennet (c. 1575-1614), one of its most famous composers. Best known for his madrigals, which are secular part songs, usually for up to six voices, Weep, O Mine Eyes is an homage to John Dowland, the lutenist and composer who was the biggest star of the sixteenth century. Bennett takes Dowland's most famous song, Flow My Tears, as the starting point for his four-part madrigal. Strands of melody are passed around the ensemble, each voice entering and then falling, like tears.

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623) was undoubtedly the greatest composer of the English Renaissance alongside his older compatriot Thomas Tallis (1505-1585), achieving fame in his lifetime despite being a Catholic in the post-Reformation Protestant England. Byrd and Tallis both



received permission to publish their works, thanks partly to the moderation of Elizabeth I who had a soft spot for the supposedly 'Catholic' complexities of these composers' music (Protestants considered highly wrought music as a diversion from the Word of God). Ave verum corpus is a setting of part of the Catholic liturgy for use on the feast of Corpus Christi, and was consequently entirely rejected, despite its glorious musical qualities. Catholic choirs revived it in the nineteenth century, and it has become Byrd's best known piece, beloved for its pure, painful harmony with surprising turns of direction and crystalline counterpoint.

Slater's *Fractal Light*, by contrast, is a contemporary work inspired by the fractal patterns found in lightning and bursts of shimmering light. Shapes are repeated over and over, branching outwards from the source and becoming ever smaller. Slater writes, "the piece starts with more fragmentary material that then solidifies in the bold strikes of lightning before disintegrating again".

Mozart's 'Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen' ('Hell's vengeance boils in my heart') is popularly known as the Queen of the Night Aria. It is the most famous number from *Die Zauberflöte* ('The Magic Flute'), a fantastical Singspiel; not an opera, but a German-language music drama with spoken dialogue, rather than sung. Prince

Tamino is entrusted with a rescue mission by the Queen of the Night, whose daughter Pamina has been captured by the high priest Sarastro. In this aria, the Queen of the Night's desire for wrathful vengeance against the priest who has tempted her daughter away from her boils over, her supernatural anger reflected in the extreme highs and lows of the soprano singer's range.

Althea Talbot-Howard was born in Nigeria but grew up in Australia and England. Now a recorder soloist and composer, she began her career as an oboe soloist, and is therefore well placed to exploit the possibilities of the oboe quartet. *Rievaulx - A Study in Memory* takes its name from Rievaulx Abbey in the North York Moors which Talbot-Howard visited in 1990. The abbey's history is evoked in the plainsong chant *Te lucis ante terminum*, which features in the early evening Compline service, and is quoted early in the piece. The three men of the Asyla Oboe Quartet recreate the singing of the Cistercian monks at Rievaulx, whilst the sole female of the group is excluded from the singing, instead ringing the abbey's bells on a recently invented percussion instrument, the Aluphone. Appropriately, there is an etymological link between the Cistercian monks and the oboe quartet: the word 'Cistercian' originates in the old French 'Cîteau', which means 'reed'. Composed in arch form, the starting point is the original plainsong chant and

its conclusion is Talbot-Howard's answering melody, an evocative musical reconstruction of the abbey's crumbling arches.

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) is perhaps the best loved of all Italian opera composers. His singular instinct for melody showcases the most emotive aspects of the human voice, married with a colourful harmonic palette and feel for characterisation that make his operas particularly emotionally overwhelming. His operas have real life settings and were part of a verismo (realist) movement in Italian opera. Whilst most of his famous operas (*La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*) are tragedies, in 1918 he produced a late triptych of three one-act operas known as *Il trittico* that contains a comedy, *Gianni Schicchi*. Based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Gianni Schicchi fuses Puccini's modern compositional style with throwbacks to Rossini, and is concerned with feuding families and an inheritance dispute in Renaissance Florence. Its most famous aria, *O mio babbino caro* ('Oh my dear papa') is a moment of innocent, lovestruck charm that cuts through these tensions, in which Lauretta begs her father, Schicchi, to allow her to marry Rinuccio, the boy she loves.

British composer Florence Anna-Maunders has long been fascinated in clashing styles and the juxtaposition of unusual sounds. Manchester's Whitworth Street West

was therefore an ideal source of inspiration for her Oboe Quartet of the same name. Once the centre of the city's docklands, its abandoned, industrial redbrick buildings became the scene of Manchester's clubland in the 'Madchester' years of the 80s and 90s, most famously playing host to the Hacienda nightclub. Maunders finds an analogy for this repurposing of old industrial buildings, using the unmistakably classical sounds of the oboe quartet to evoke the horn section of a 'Madchester' rave and infusing her music with music from Manchester's mixed cultural heritage - from

Bhangra to Indian Carnatic music and Northern Soul - across the piece's three-part structure.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1750) and Johann Sebastian Bach (also 1685-1750) both helped the music of the Baroque period reach its pinnacle. Though Handel is best known today for his operas and oratorios, and Bach arguably takes first prize in the realm of keyboard and instrumental music, both were astonishing virtuosos on harpsichord and organ. Handel's Suite in G minor, HWV 432, is a thrilling set of short pieces for

solo harpsichord in a similar vein to Bach's English Suites or Partitas. The finale of this suite is a passacaglia, a piece based upon a repeating, closed series of chords that act as a foundation for increasingly elaborate improvisations or embellishments. In 1894, the celebrated Norwegian violinist, conductor and composer Johan Halvorsen (1864-1935) published an adaptation of this passacaglia for violin and cello duo, transforming it into a jaw-droopingly virtuosic showpiece. Here, it is adapted further in an arrangement for oboe quartet.



# Trio Mazzolini

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> August 1pm

Jack Greed - violin

Yurie Lee - cello

Harry Rylance - piano

**Haydn - Piano trio in C major  
(Hob. XV:27)**

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Presto*

**Weir - Piano trio**

*I*

*II*

*III*

*Arise! Arise!*

**Mendelssohn - Piano trio no 2 in C  
minor op 66**

*Allegro energico e con fuoco*

*Andante espressivo*

*Scherzo: Molto allegro quasi presto*

*Finale: Allegro appassionato*

**Haydn - Piano Trio in C, Hob XV:27**

Instrumental classical music has usually been an abstract art form. Even though, in the imagination of listeners over the centuries, many pieces are perceived in terms of narrative or mood, the works are not given descriptive titles. Instead, lovers of classical music must actually listen to a piece through in order to tell what might happen in it, because they are generally described only by their key and by their 'genre' - the type of instrumental forces for which it is composed. Haydn not only composed in more-or-less every genre of classical

music, but actually defined them, updating the way the instruments were used in certain combinations so successfully that they became the standard to which composers still write today. This is true of his sonatas, symphonies, string quartets, concertos, and also piano trios.

Early keyboard instruments were limited by their dynamic range (control over how loudly or softly they could be played) and by their projection (how well their sound could be heard over a distance).

Harpsichords, for example, are not touch-sensitive to dynamics. Early piano trios usually had the bass instrument doubling the left-hand bass part of the keyboard player, with a violinist doubling the melody; these instruments could add shape and dynamics to what the keyboard player was playing, and also allow these parts of the texture to be more projected and pronounced.

This was true even with the advent of the fortepiano, (literally in Italian, 'loud-soft'), the early version of the pianoforte ('soft-loud') we know today. Over the course of more than 45 piano trios, however, Haydn transformed this ensemble, firstly standardising the it to violin, cello and piano, and secondly developing it so that the three instruments became more independent and their relationship more conversational.

Haydn's Piano Trio in C, Hob XV:27 was his 43rd published piano trio, composed in 1797 whilst on the second of his hugely successful

tours to London. England was producing the most advanced pianos in the world at the time, and the richer tone of these instruments allowed Haydn to compose an unusually florid, varied and demanding piano part. So, too, did the dedicatee of the work, Therese Jansen. One of Clementi's star pupils and a renowned teacher, she was a virtuoso, and Haydn admired her greatly, acting as witness at her wedding to successful art dealer Gaetano Bartolozzi.

The bold opening gesture of the first movement *Allegro* is thrown upwards twice, each time falling gracefully downwards, before we are propelled through a substantial movement that exhibits Haydn's seemingly endless capacity for invention and variation. The second movement *Andante* begins simply, but with increasingly florid decorations in both the violin and piano, and a surprising, impassioned middle section that evokes a Hungarian style. The finale is full of quick-fire dialogue between the instruments, the pianist in particular dazzling the listener with a near-constant stream of rapid notes, whilst Haydn guides us through a wildly varied succession of major and minor keys.

**Weir - Piano Trio**

Judith Weir CBE is one of Britain's foremost living composers, born to Scottish parents in Cambridge in 1954. Her music has been performed by some of the world's



most celebrated artists, and in 2014 she succeeded Sir Peter Maxwell Davies as Master of the Queen's Music. Weir is perhaps best known for her larger scale pieces, including numerous operas, orchestral works such as *We are Shadows*, *Music Untangled* and *The Welcome Arrival of Rain*, and many choral works, including *blue hills beyond blue hills*.

For her 1998 piece *Piano Trio*, Weir abandons any attempt at a programmatic title. This might be seen as an acknowledgement of the traditionally more abstract nature of instrumental chamber music, but Weir explains in her accompanying notes to the piece that she had more imagery in mind than could be expressed in a title. The first movement conveys the Venice described in Schubert's song *Gondelfahrer* ('Gondolier'). Schubert never visited Venice, but this song, a setting of a text by Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836), paints a musical depiction of the waters of Venice, the city's mysterious beauty and the tolling bells of St Mark's at mid-night as a musical backdrop to the gondolier's isolation and despair.

The second movement, writes Weir, is inspired by a memory of being phoned from a telephone box in Africa. 'At one moment I was alone in my room, the next (or so it seemed in my imagination) surrounded by light, heat and sudden energy and activity.' Weir uses a traditional *scher-zo* and *trio*

structure to convey this energy, rather than any references to African music.

The third movement was a response to Gaelic poetry from Lewis, a Hebridean island off the Atlantic. She writes,

I was thinking of the bleached white beaches in that part of the world, where every ob-ject lying on the sand - a washed-up bottle or a bird's skeleton - is a major event in a deserted landscape. The same might be said of this short set of musical variations, where melodic fragments are laid out with plenty of space around them, clear and plain for everyone to hear.

### **Mendelssohn - Piano Trio no 2 in C minor, op 66**

Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio in C minor* was composed in 1845, two years before his death at 38. It seems perverse to talk about the 'late' works of one who died so young. On the other hand, Mendelssohn was composing mature masterpieces in his mid teens - his *Octet*, heard earlier in the festival, was composed twenty years earlier. His first piano trio, completed in 1839, had been a huge success. Schumann wrote,

This is the master trio of our age, as were the B flat and D major trios of Beethoven and the E flat trio of Schubert in their times. It is an exceedingly fine composition which will gladden our grandchildren and great-grandchildren for many years to come.

Like the Haydn trio in this programme, it was premiered in London, with a teenage Joachim on violin, and Mendelssohn on piano. (The score could not be found, and Mendelssohn played it from memory, asking someone to turn the pages of a book on the piano for him to avoid draw-ing attention to the fact.). Compared with the Haydn trio, however, the roles of the instruments are significantly expanded, reaching towards the rich and powerful sonorities that each in-strument would take on as the burgeoning Romantic movement developed through the nine-teenth century.

Six years later, during which time Mendelssohn had both taken over as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and founded the Leipzig Conservatoire, he composed another trio, dedicated to the great violinist, composer, conductor and favourite pupil of Beethoven, Louis Spohr. It is in the key of C minor, which Mozart and Beethoven had made so inescapably their own, reserving it for their most heroic or dramatic works. Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio in C minor* captures the stormy, epic quality of the greatest of Mozart and Beethoven's C minor music, from Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C minor* to Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*.

Emerging from an agitated whirl of piano figuration, the first movement's waves of arpeggios culminate in a heroic chorale,

Mendelssohn's melodic fluency ultimately winning out. The second movement's lilting duet between violin and cello is given gravitas by the rumbling chords of the piano, reaching another heroic climax, before the fleet-of-foot, fairytale world of his Mid-summer Night's Dream scherzo is recalled in the brisk, almost sinister third movement Scher-zo. The finale contains within it a Lutheran chorale, known to English speakers as The Old Hundredth but originating in the 1551 chorale *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich*. It comes initially as an un-expected moment of contemplation and tranquility within an otherwise vigorous, virtuosic dance movement, but is reimaged on an epic scale by Mendelssohn, who wrings a majestic, grandiose sonority from his meagre three instruments.

## A word from the young artists .....

### Salwa Quartet

Salwa Quartet met in the autumn of 2020 at the Royal Academy of Music. After a year of social distancing and isolation, we were keen to throw ourselves into the intimacy of quartet playing and have enjoyed developing the unique, shared language inherent to chamber music. Our immediate

aim is to connect people and communities through the powerful language of music and hold a commitment to perform works from underrepresented composers. When not performing and exploring underrated repertoire, we enjoy listening to absurd podcasts, improvisational baking, swimming, and finally once again, the close company of friends.

We are tremendously excited to present to you a programme of relatively underperformed works for string quartet. Both Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten were around our age when they wrote the *Phantasie* and *Three Divertimenti*, so they immediately resonated with us. The expansive and rather hypnotic *Entr'acte* by Caroline Shaw was inspired by a live performance of a Haydn quartet and we complete our recital with the capricious and emotionally turbulent quartet in E Flat Major by Fanny Hensel. All four works were written by composers who were profoundly affected by chamber music in their personal lives, an attribute that makes each so joyous and natural to perform together.

### Hill Quartet

Lockdown spread our quartet family far and wide across The Netherlands, Kent, Spain and London - far apart with a little too much time on our rather itchy hands. We threw ourselves into

hobbies including crocheting, antique chair restoration, sewing, painting, gardening and of course cooking! We had a laugh trying to make a few multi-tracked lockdown recordings but deep down we were all really just waiting (not so patiently) to be able to play together in person..

When the time came to reunite, at first we probably spent more time drinking tea, laughing and crying than playing but sure enough we relished being able to sink deep into a blissful period of rehearsals and quartet exploration. Our interpretations of Mozart's stunning D Major K. 575 Quartet and the ethereal Ravel Quartet were both grown during this precious time together, reigniting the pure joy that can only be found when playing chamber music with friends. In many ways they represent our experiences of this past year; the Ravel whisking us away to new and foreign lands, the Mozart weaving four strong voices together with humour and tenderness.

Our quartet met in a stuffy practice room in 2018, bashing through Haydn like it was going out of fashion (side note - it never will). David, our Spanish Troubadour, joined us last summer and together we are Chamber Music Fellows at the Royal Academy of Music.

Never more than now have we felt the privilege of performing so

much and it is an honour to be a part of this beautiful festival.

[www.hillquartet.com](http://www.hillquartet.com)

## Jubilee Quartet

The Jubilee Quartet takes inspiration from the various homelands of our four members, namely the Czech Republic, Spain, Canada and (Northern) England. Though many of our influences come from these differing backgrounds, we have a unified love for music and nature, so when not rehearsing we can often be found out on walks, long cycle rides or diving into the cold British sea. I guess this festival suits us! It is this shared love that often finds its way into our rehearsal room and influences so much of our music making.

The past year has been a challenging one but despite this we feel as optimistic as ever, having honed new skills (mostly with computers!), which have allowed us to work together online where we also live-stream concerts. In December last year we launched our own online string quartet academy, reaching out to musicians and music lovers around the world. This great sense of community we have shared with our audiences during these difficult times has been a source of incredible comfort.

This programme of Haydn and Schubert holds great personal significance for us as a quartet:

In 2017 when Toby and Lorena joined, the first works on the list were three Haydn quartets which forged our early relationship and which we would go on to record the following year. That remains a treasured experience for us all. Since then, Haydn has been a consistent composer for us and the one we most turn to. Schubert has had a similar impact and his monumental 'Death and the Maiden' quartet is a work we unanimously love and came to work on fairly early in our quartet life when we gave our very first concerts together in Spain and here in the UK.

We would like to thank Nigel Brown and the Stradivari Trust, the Mears/Speers and Evers families and Mike Down for their generous and ongoing support. We are also absolutely thrilled to be here for the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival!

## Asyla Oboe Quartet

The Asyla quartet formed in September of 2020. Mikey, studying for his PhD at the Academy, approached Drake with the idea of a quartet, and everything quickly fell into place. We love playing together as a group and think this combination of instruments is very special, with a unique sound that works just as effectively in exciting,

contemporary pieces as it does in emotive, choral inspired works.

The programme for this concert evolved naturally from what have been some of our main inspirations and ideas so far. We have been excited about working with composers and commissioning works, as well as arranging our own music. Three of the pieces programmed have never been performed before, and three others have been arranged by our members, Mikey and Drake. This idea of always evolving and creating is integral to the ethos of the ensemble.

Ben Crick's piece is a real highlight, as he is a Yorkshire local, and the timbres and flowing rhythmic motifs he utilises in the piece evoke the beauty of the Yorkshire landscape so effectively.

The influence vocal music has on the ensemble is also evident in our programme, with the Byrd and Bennet beautifully showcasing the haunting homogeneous sound this collection of instruments can create, whilst the more mischievous Queen of the Night Aria contrasts later on in the programme, with the oboe part taking on the role of 'queen'.

Florence Ann-Maunders' piece continues in this light-hearted



vein, as the buzz of a busy city is recreated with funky rhythms and more adventurous instrumental effects, and our programme finishes with the Handel-Halvorsen, which, originally written for virtuosic string players, shows the diversity and agility that can also be found in a group of wind players.

Still being less than a year old as group, and born during the covid pandemic, we are so thrilled to be playing at the North York Moors Festival. A considerable amount of our time together as a group thus far has consisted of producing music remotely, and catching up over zoom, so this Festival has kept us all very inspired and excited to play, and has, in a way, been our 'light at the end of the tunnel' as a group.

## Trio Mazzolini

Trio Mazzolini formed late 2019 after a whistle stop concert tour in Toronto and just before the pandemic hit, temporarily halting our development as a group! However, after obtaining a place as Chamber Music Fellows at the Royal Academy of Music, this opened up many new opportunities, projects and collaborations with other fellow musicians and composers in particular. As the world adapted to a new lifestyle consisting primarily of digital interactions, we decided to take advantage of this media. Our vision for this past year as Fellows has been to promote contemporary music as much as possible to a global audience through livestream

concerts - and to make the format of a piano trio more accessible to living composers.

As a trio, we take great interest in interspersing new or underplayed works around the classics to create interesting and thought-provoking programmes. This can challenge yet also encourage audiences to experience something different, hence our programme today consisting of Haydn and Mendelssohn Piano Trios on either side of Judith Weir. We are constantly striving to find ways to introduce listeners to a new music and believe the key to this is to strike the right balance between maintaining the traditional in its broadest sense whilst subtly adding in new styles.







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