

SAINSBURY ROYAL ACADEMY SOLOISTS

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2023, 7.30PM
WIGMORE HALL



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Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) arr Lucas Drew (b 1935)

Italian Serenade

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) arr Leonid Desyatnikov (b 1955)

Four Seasons of Buenos Aires

Otoño porteño (Autumn)

Invierno porteño (Winter)

Primavera porteña (Spring)

Verano porteño (Summer)

Interval

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) arr Lucas Drew

Souvenir de Florence, Op 70

Allegro con spirito

Adagio cantabile e con moto

Allegretto moderato

Allegro vivace

First Violin

Clio Gould

Mio Takahashi

Muriel Oberhofer (Summer)

Emil Hartikainen (Autumn)

Second Violin

Nikolaus Besthorn

Mafalda Barradas Vaz Galante

Francisca Caldas de Brito (Winter)

Iohan Coman (Spring)

Viola

Gordon Cervoni

Sara Ramírez

Luca Wadham

Inácia Afonso

Cello

Jihyo Jung

Samuel Vincent

Oliver Clark

Shanyue Zhu

Double Bass

Phoebe Clarke

Holly Little

Programme notes

It was to Wolf's great chagrin – and eventual mental unrest – that he was never considered an opera composer. He was certainly not helped in those ambitions by his old student friend Mahler, whose refusal to stage *Der Corregidor* in Vienna drove the unstable composer over the edge. And yet there are traces of other theatrical projects throughout Wolf's output, including the *Italian Serenade*, written for string quartet in 1887 and subsequently arranged for string orchestra.

Wolf had planned to beat Johann Strauss II and others at their own game by writing a light and attractive work for one of the many operetta theatres in Vienna. The piece never came to fruition, though the *Serenade* remains, all inspired by Joseph von Eichendorff's 1826 novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. Wolf had set several of the poet's texts and may well have seen himself in the novella's protagonist: a young musician who leaves home to seek his fortune. Wolf had likewise left his native Slovenia to study in Vienna, though Eichendorff's eponymous 'good for nothing' ends up in Italy, where he hears the titular serenade being played by a local orchestra.

After the band has tuned up, the work launches with a jolly, unaffected theme. A cello drone indicates rustic origins, though the second section, moving towards the subdominant, is more sophisticated. This in turn tees up another modulation, as if singing to the imagined lover in yet another key might finally melt their heart. But, having failed, the music turns more hesitant. Wolf then reprises the opening theme, now cast in a new metre, with more decorative features, as well as several equivocal asides. These include a *Tristan*-esque outpouring from the cello, before the *Serenade* finally comes home to roost.

Venturing further afield than even Eichendorff's character, the programme turns to the music of Astor Piazzolla, the child of an Italian immigrant family living in Argentina. Born in Mar del Plata in 1921, Piazzolla spent some of his youth in Little Italy in New York, though it was to his birthplace that he eventually returned, settling in the capital, Buenos Aires. A prodigious bandoneon player, he was influenced by Aníbal 'Pichuco' Troilo, a leading tango bandleader in the city, and Alberto Ginastera, a classical composer. And while Piazzolla's hybrid 'nuevo tango' prompted some controversy, his tenacious belief in the style soon paid dividends.

The *Estaciones Porteñas* chart the four seasons in Buenos Aires – 'porteño' is the city's demonym, reflecting its life as a port – and were composed in two sections. Summer, originally conceived as incidental music for Alberto Rodríguez Muñoz's play *Melenita de oro*, was written in 1965, followed four years later by the three other seasons. Composed for Piazzolla's quintet of violin (doubling viola), piano, electric guitar, double bass and bandoneon, the work was then reimagined and rearranged by Leonid Desyatnikov in 1996-98. The original simply alluded to Vivaldi's seasonal group of violin concertos, but a much more direct link is provided by Desyatnikov's version for solo violin and strings, albeit deliberately mixing the cyclic references to underline the hemispheric difference between Vivaldi and Piazzolla's homes.

When Tchaikovsky made his first visit to Italy in 1874, he declared Florence to be 'very pleasant'. The composer's somewhat unassertive reaction belied his true feelings, as he would return to the Tuscan capital on several occasions. One trip, in January 1890, was made shortly after the successful premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty*, while he was working on *The Queen of Spades*, though the Pushkin adaptation would prove much less popular with the Tsar. Finishing the opera, which is now duly acknowledged to be a masterpiece, Tchaikovsky also began to plan his *Souvenir de Florence*.

The piece, without its evocative title, had been promised to the St Petersburg Chamber Music Society in 1886, with Tchaikovsky deciding upon a string sextet in 1887. Three years later, encouraged by the success of his recent ballet, he started work but struggled with the chosen form. 'One requires six independent yet homogeneous voices', Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother, Modest, in June 1890. 'This is unimaginably difficult.' And even when he completed the work, the composer remained unsure about the finale, which he then revised, along with the third movement. In its final form, however, *Souvenir de Florence* is one of the composer's most charming, intimate works, revealing the contentment he found 'where angels fear to tread'.

The opening movement is surprisingly combative, echoing the prevailingly dark tone of *The Queen of Spades*. Strident sextet textures alternate with *tranquillo* passages for a quartet of violin, two violas and cello, which in turn prepare for the sweetly sung second subject. The extended development section returns to the quarrelsome mood of the opening, though there are touching, if fleeting, reminiscences of that Lied-like theme, before an agitated recapitulation.

While some of *Souvenir de Florence* was composed in Russia, the slow movement reveals an unmistakably Tuscan charm. Characterised by a bel canto lilt, its theme also sounds in duet and provides a *souvenir* of Act II from the recent *Sleeping Beauty*, when Princess Aurora first appears to her Prince. Links to the dance prove even more germane in the third and fourth movements. The third movement has a notably Slavic edge, pointing to the homesickness that frequently accompanied Tchaikovsky's travels abroad, before a more Italianate middle section. The final movement launches headlong into a winning combination of terpsichorean tropes and contrapuntal flair, with a quasi-orchestral tutti capping the work.

Gavin Plumley

Clio Gould

Clio Gould enjoys a varied career as a violinist and performs as soloist, director and leader throughout Britain and Europe. She made her BBC Proms concerto debut in 1999 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and has made concerto appearances with the London Sinfonietta, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Hallé, Ulster Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

In 2002, Clio was appointed leader of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, becoming the first female leader of a symphony orchestra in London. She held the position of Artistic Director of the Scottish Ensemble (1993-2005) and was Principal Violin of the London Sinfonietta (1996-2010). As a leading exponent in the performance of contemporary solo repertoire, Clio has worked with many prominent composers. UK premieres she has given include John Adams's *Road Movies* for violin and piano, David Horne's Double Violin Concerto, and Boulez's *Anthèmes II* for violin and live electronics at the Southbank Centre's celebration of the composer's 75th birthday. Clio gave the UK premiere of Oliver Knussen's Violin Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the 2003 Aldeburgh Festival and has since performed the concerto with the Hallé, as well as in Japan, Finland, Sweden and Hungary.

Clio plays the 'Rutson' Stradivarius of 1694, which has generously been lent to her by the Royal Academy of Music, where she regularly directs the Sainsbury Royal Academy Soloists. In 1999, she was awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music.

Emil Hartikainen

Emil Hartikainen is one of Finland's up and coming young talents of his generation. Recent seasons have seen him performing in festivals and concerts around the world, including at the Kronberg Festival in Germany, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland, Verbier Festival in Switzerland and for two international tours as a soloist and chamber musician. Eager to expand his knowledge and skill, Emil has taken masterclasses from many distinguished instructors, including Ana Chumachenco, Mihaela Martin and Ivry Gitlis.

Emil is first violin and founding member of the Bålder Quartet, formed in 2018 in Helsinki. The group made its debut at Carnegie Hall later that same year and, in 2019, was invited to perform at the prestigious Mozarthaus in Vienna. The Bålder Quartet studied at Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival with the Quatuor Danel, Enescu Quartet and Meta4. The ensemble's activities are generously supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, and it has undertaken two international tours.

In 2018, Emil was awarded a full scholarship to study at the International Menuhin Music Academy, Switzerland, with Renaud Capuçon. In 2020, he was awarded a full scholarship to continue his Bachelor's studies at the Royal Academy of Music with So-Ock Kim.

Emil plays a Ferdinando Gagliano violin (1767) owned by the OP Art Foundation.

Francisca Caldas de Brito

Francisca Caldas de Brito is a Portuguese violinist studying for her Master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music with So-Ock Kim. An experienced solo, chamber and orchestral musician, she has performed in the UK, Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, the US and Portugal. She has won several competitions, including first prizes at the National Violin Competition, where she was awarded a violin made by Miguel Mateus, Prémio Jovens Músicos, Concurso de Música Anatólio Falé and Concurso Internacional de Cordas AFF.

Francisca has participated in masterclasses with Gerardo Ribeiro, Boris Kuschnir, Ani Kavafian, Ann Setzer, Ilya Grubert, David Lefèvre, Christian Altenburger and Axel Gerhardt. She has completed courses at the Meadowmount School of Music, where her string quartet won the chamber music competition, International Mendelssohn Festival, InterHarmony International Music Festival and Carinthische Musikakademie.

As an orchestral musician, Francisca has recently performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa and Orquestra de Câmara Portuguesa, with conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Antonio Pappano, Trevor Pinnock, Edward Gardner, Antonio Pirolli and Pedro Carneiro.

Francisca's studies are supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Iohan Coman

Iohan Coman is a Romanian violinist born in Paris, where he had his first violin lessons at the Conservatoire Rachmaninoff. After moving to Romania, he continued his lessons at the George Apostu National College, followed by studies in Chişinău, Moldova. He moved to London in 2018 after receiving a full scholarship at The Purcell School, where he studied with Nathaniel Vallois. He is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music with Remus Azoitei.

Iohan has won several national and international competitions and has performed many concerts as a soloist, including at the Milton Court Concert Hall and St Martin-in-the-Fields. He has played for Hilary Hahn, Sir Simon Rattle and Semyon Bychkov. Aside from music, Iohan enjoys swimming, cycling, football and chess.

Muriel Oberhofer

Muriel Oberhofer has performed across Europe, in such prestigious venues as Wigmore Hall, Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid and Tonhalle Zürich. Further solo performances include Vivaldi's Double Violin Concerto with Peter Zazofsky in the US and a tour with the Neues Zürcher Orchester in Switzerland. She regularly plays in masterclasses, most recently with Hilary Hahn, James Ehnes and Peter Zazofsky. Competition successes include winning first prize with distinction at the Swiss National Youth Music Competition.

Muriel has led the Academy Symphony Orchestra under Semyon Bychkov, Academy Chamber Orchestra and Zurich Youth Chamber Orchestra, and has co-led projects with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra. As a chamber musician, she plays regularly in recitals and festivals. She is a founding member of the Cobalt Piano Trio; the group has received guidance from such esteemed artists as György Pauk and Jeremy Menuhin.

Muriel is the recipient of the Calleva Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music, where she is currently studying for her Master's degree under Roman Simovic. Previously, she studied privately in Zurich with Klaidi Sahatçi and completed her undergraduate degree at the Academy under Nicholas Mill.

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