

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 11 November 2022  
7.30pm

Supported by the Rubinstein Circle

Martin Fröst clarinet  
Antoine Tamestit viola  
Shai Wosner piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Clarinet Trio in E flat K498 'Kegelstatt' (1786)

*I. Andante • II. Menuetto •  
III. Rondeaux. Allegretto*

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Piano Trio in D minor Op. 120 (1922-3) *arranged by  
Shai Wosner*

*I. Allegro, ma non troppo • II. Andantino •  
III. Allegro vivo*

Interval

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Clarinet Trio in A minor Op. 114 (1891) *arranged by  
Michael Tree*

*I. Allegro • II. Adagio •  
III. Andantino grazioso • IV. Allegro*

2 Songs with viola Op. 91 (1863-84) *arranged by  
Martin Fröst*

*Gestillte Sehnsucht • Geistliches Wiegenlied*

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Modern utopian ideals of *werktreu* – ‘fidelity to the work’ – always clashed with the reality of arrangements and transcriptions made by performers in the past for practical or artistic reasons. This evening’s programme opens with **Mozart**’s music for the rather rare grouping of clarinet, viola and piano, his favourite instruments. It stands together with sympathetic arrangements for the same combination, each charged with an extraordinary, often unexpected range of tone colours and textures.

Mozart’s Clarinet Trio in E flat K498 was supposedly written during a game of skittles. It seems unlikely, even by the composer’s fluent standards, that such a complex piece was the product of an outing to a Vienna *Kegelstatt* (or ‘bowling alley’). According to Mozart’s catalogue of works, the piece was finished on 5 August 1786; his student Caroline Pichler recalled that it was written to display the talents of one of his most accomplished pupils, Franziska von Jacquin, daughter of the director of the botanical gardens at the University of Vienna. The ‘Kegelstatt’ Trio was probably first performed at the Jacquins’ home, with Franziska at the keyboard, Mozart on viola and the clarinet part played by Anton Stadler, a member of the imperial court orchestra and one of the instrument’s first great virtuosos. One can sense here the joy of music written to be played by friends.

The interaction between each of the Clarinet Trio’s instruments also includes abundant opportunities for individual display. Mozart establishes the model in the opening movement, an *Andante* carefully crafted in sonata form. The swift melodic turn or *grupetto*, announced in unison by viola and piano in the first bar and echoed by the clarinet soon after, serves as the movement’s defining thematic idea. Mozart allocates just over three pages in his autograph manuscript to the work’s minuet and trio, sufficient to hold a movement of remarkable musical substance. It ends with a compelling coda, short yet perfectly balanced, that marries ideas from the minuet and trio sections. The rondo finale is hallmarked by a strong main theme and the witty contrasts of its episodes; fleet-footed decorative passages for piano; exquisite dialogues between various permutations of the three instruments; and a seductive lyricism that pervades the movement.

While Paris between the two world wars earned its reputation as the centre of innovation in the arts, it was also home to such relics from an earlier age as **Gabriel Fauré**. The Piano Trio in D minor Op. 120 is an outstanding representative of its elderly composer’s mature style, a captivating blend of subversive, free melodic invention and traditional formal structures. Fauré began drafting its score in August 1922, within two years of his retirement as head of the Paris Conservatoire, and completed it the following year ready for its first performance in May 1923. He originally planned for its upper line to be played either by clarinet or violin, before settling on the latter in company with cello and piano.

Fauré’s feeling for song courses through the lyrical cello theme and delicate piano accompaniment of the

Piano Trio’s opening bars. The movement’s development of melodic ideas sounds as if each instrument has chosen to follow its own path; Fauré, however, collects their disparate thoughts within the framework of sonata form, albeit a version of it loose by textbook standards. The *Andantino* offers a reverie on two themes, the first stated by cello and violin, the second outlined by piano before both are transformed with subtle melodic variation. There is no trace in the music of the ‘perpetual fatigue’ that dogged Fauré while composing the piece; indeed, its rondo finale contains a surfeit of energy, channelled here into melodic motifs that drive the movement towards its ecstatic conclusion.

With the death of friends and age weighing heavily upon him, **Brahms** decided it was time to retire from composition, although not before completing his Clarinet Trio, Clarinet Quintet and two Clarinet Sonatas. Richard Mühlfeld, principal clarinettist in the Meiningen court orchestra, inspired these four late masterworks. Brahms visited Meiningen in March 1891 where, not for the first time, he was enchanted by the melancholy nature of Mühlfeld’s playing. The private performance Mühlfeld gave for the esteemed composer appears to have convinced Brahms to enlarge the instrument’s repertoire. On returning to Meiningen in November 1891, Brahms presented Mühlfeld with the Clarinet Trio in A minor Op. 114 and the Clarinet Quintet in B minor Op. 115, both completed in Ischl during the summer.

The Clarinet Trio grows from simple thematic material, stated by solo cello and extended in dialogue with the clarinet and piano. Brahms treats the first movement’s main theme to prolonged contrapuntal development, occasionally lightening the music’s gravity with a songlike episode. The *Adagio* amounts to a study in textural and tonal contrasts, presented as a wordless song that threads through each instrumental part, while the opening of the *Andantino grazioso* echoes the waltz craze so expertly serviced by Brahms’s famous colleague and friend Johann Strauss II. An echt-Viennese *Ländler* evokes times past in the third movement’s trio, creating a charming preface to the work’s rustic rondo finale.

Brahms’s Op. 91 songs, ‘Gestillte Sehnsucht’ (‘Assuaged longing’) and ‘Geistliches Wiegenlied’ (‘Sacred Cradle-song’), were originally written in 1863–64 for contralto, viola and piano. It appears that ‘Gestillte Sehnsucht’, revised for publication in 1884, was composed as a means of reuniting the singer Amalie Joachim with her estranged husband, the violinist Joseph Joachim. Brahms had presented the couple with an early version of ‘Geistliches Wiegenlied’ as a wedding gift in 1863. It includes a quote for viola taken from the hymn ‘Joseph, lieber Joseph mein’, a German version of the medieval carol *Resonet in laudibus*. ‘Gestillte Sehnsucht’, especially in its contrasting central section, speaks more of yearning than of desire at rest.

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