

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 13 October 2024
7.30pm

Soloists of the Kronberg Academy

Sarah Jégou-Sageman violin

Oliver Neubauer violin

Bryan Cheng cello

Alexander Warenberg cello

Enrico Pace piano

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Violin Sonata in G minor (1916-7)

*I. Allegro vivo • II. Intermède. Fantasque et léger •
III. Finale. Très animé*

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Piano Trio No. 3 in G minor Op. 110 (1851)

*I. Bewegt, doch nicht zu rasch • II. Ziemlich langsam •
III. Rasch • IV. Kräftig, mit Humor*

Interval

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in B flat Op. 97 'Archduke' (1810-1)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Scherzo. Allegro • III. Andante
cantabile ma però con moto - • IV. Allegro moderato*



SUPPORT OUR AUDIENCE FUND: EVERY NOTE COUNTS

Ensure Wigmore Hall remains a vibrant hub of musical excellence by making a donation today.
wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate | 020 7258 8220



Join & Support
Donations

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Debussy's Violin Sonata was the third of a projected series of six chamber sonatas, initially conceived in the summer of 1915 in a moment of patriotic fervour during the First World War. They were intended to invoke the glories of the old French Masters, with Debussy himself adding the designation 'musicien français' to his name when the scores were published. After completing a Cello Sonata and a Sonata for flute, viola and harp in 1915, however, progress stalled on account of an operation late that year to try and alleviate the colon cancer from which he was suffering. Debussy endured a colostomy and radium therapy that left him in long-term agony – months of morphine barely helped, he said. Matters were further compounded by the financial burden that his treatment brought with it. He nevertheless summoned up the strength to embark on his next chamber sonata in early 1916: this time it was a sonata for violin and piano. It is cast in three movements, just like his Cello Sonata of the year before, though this new work is more overtly cyclical in form, with the two fast outer movements beginning with the same chain of descending thirds in a hemiola rhythm. They enclose a central, improvisatory *Intermède* in which Debussy explores pizzicato textures, just as in his Cello Sonata (the middle movements of both sonatas are also marked 'whimsical and light'). Despite Debussy's unambivalently patriotic declarations at the time, the spirit hovering behind much of this sonata actually seems to be that of Johannes Brahms.

The ravages of his illness and its treatment notwithstanding, Debussy managed to accompany the first performance of this Sonata at a charity concert on 5 May 1917 (the audience, as it happened, included the young Francis Poulenc). It was the last work that he completed. His cancer soon robbed him of the strength to work, and he died ten months later.

Robert Schumann composed his four-movement Piano Trio Op. 110 – his last in the genre – in just over a week in early October 1851, a year after he had taken up his position as Music Director in Düsseldorf. His wife Clara played the piano part at an initial run-through with friends on 27 October (with Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski on violin, Christian Reimers on the cello). Afterwards, she wrote in her diary that it had made a 'mighty impression' on her: 'It's ingenious, full of passion through and through, especially in the Scherzo, which tears you along with it, even down into the wildest depths'. Many later commentators were less effusive, for this Trio is one of those late works by Schumann that were long seen as somehow tainted by the mental decline that culminated in his breakdown and incarceration in early 1854. Opinions have since shifted, however. This Trio is admittedly

unusual for its overabundance of ideas and formal quirks. Fugal passages come and go, and new themes can appear then disappear with little apparent impact on the rest of the work. But Schumann's art of thematic development is in other aspects remarkably economical. In the first movement, for example, he has barely begun his second subject when he starts incorporating elements of the first in it; and the rising syncopated theme that forms the first episode in the sonata-rondo finale (and which returns to help bring the movement to a close) is in fact a barely disguised transformation of material from the slow, second movement. If we approach this late Trio of Schumann's on its own terms, one begins to realise that Clara was probably right about it all along.

Beethoven's Piano Trio in B flat Op. 97, sketched in 1810 but mostly composed in a burst of activity in March 1811, was also his final contribution to the genre – one that he had cultivated since his youth. It was dedicated to his friend and only-ever composition pupil, Archduke Rudolf, the youngest brother of the Austrian Emperor and the obvious reason for this work's later nickname, the 'Archduke'. This name has proven durable, no doubt because it seems to reflect the work's monumental 'nobility'. It is conceived on a larger scale than most of Beethoven's symphonies, is full of dense thematic development, and its four-movement form has much in common with the later Ninth Symphony (both here and there, the *Scherzo* is placed second, and is followed by an expansive, slow variation movement featuring ever-more elaborate figurations around a theme). But the 'Archduke' is most notable for its other harbingers of things to come. Its many rapid scalic passages in contrary motion sound remarkably modern, almost as if they'd been composed by an algorithm, and in his textures, Beethoven combines his strings with the extremes of the keyboard in a manner that would later inspire Franz Schubert and others. Listen, for example, to how he constructs a kind of 'piano duet' texture in the *Scherzo*, with the strings playing the 'secondo' part beneath the pianist, both of whose hands are busy playing 'primo' in the upper registers.

The first performance of the 'Archduke' took place at a charity concert in April 1814 organised by Beethoven's friend Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who played the violin part, with Joseph Linke on the cello and Beethoven at the piano. The violinist Louis Spohr was in attendance, and wrote of how painful Beethoven's playing had become on account of his advanced deafness. Beethoven never played in public again.

© Chris Walton 2024

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.