

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 14 January 2023  
1.00pm

## European Chamber Music Academy Showcase 2023

### Kebyart

Robert Seara Mora tenor saxophone  
Pere Méndez Marsal soprano saxophone  
Victor Serra Noguera alto saxophone  
Daniel Miguel Guerrero baritone saxophone

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Passacaglia in C minor BWV582 (?1708-12) *arranged by Kebyart*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) Andante sostenuto and Variations Op. 81 No. 1 (1847)  
*arranged by Kebyart*

Scherzo Op. 81 No. 2 (1847)

Fugue Op. 81 No. 4 (1827)

Capriccio Op. 81 No. 3 (1843)

Bernat Vivancos (b.1973) Ay luna que reluces (2022) *England première*  
*Commissioned by Kebyart*

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) Pulcinella suite from the ballet *arranged by Kebyart*  
*I. Sinfonia (Ouverture) • II. Serenata •*  
*III. Tarantella • IV. Toccata • V. Minuetto e Finale*

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This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

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*The programme has changed since these programme notes were written.*

The last substantial work that **Felix Mendelssohn** completed was his String Quartet in F minor Op. 80. It was written in response to the sudden death of his beloved sister, Fanny, on 14 May 1847, due to a stroke. On hearing the news of her passing, Felix screamed and fell to the floor. He described the months that followed as 'grey upon grey'. After finishing the F minor Quartet he composed a few songs and two further movements for string quartet which may have been intended as the first half of a four-movement work. But barely six months after his sister's demise, Felix himself had been claimed by a stroke.

As so often happens, the composer's early death (he was 38) led to renewed public interest in his work. In response, the publishing firm of Breitkopf & Härtel posthumously brought out the two quartet movements of 1847 together with two unpublished pieces from earlier in his career. The application of the opus number 81 was likely to give the impression that these were all 'late' works, and that the composer saw them as an entity. Whether or not the deception was deliberate, it has certainly allowed some good music to be heard.

The *Andante sostenuto and Variations* and the *Scherzo* are the two works from Mendelssohn's final months. The first has a slightly Schumannesque quality, the other is written in his highly individual 'fairy music' style. Both seem to represent a determined effort to move away from the grief-laden intensity of the F minor Quartet. The *Capriccio* dates from 1843; it begins as a wistful barcarolle, but erupts into an urgent *fugato*. The more gravely dignified *Fugue* in E flat, which comes from 1827, is probably a nod to Beethoven, whose late quartets (including the *Grosse Fuge*) Mendelssohn was among the first to truly appreciate.

The melody 'Ay luna que reluces' is found in a songbook compiled at the court of Ferdinand of Aragon, Duke of Calabria, in Valencia, between 1526 and 1554. It was published in Venice in 1556. At the time the Valencian court was one of the Iberian peninsula's most important cultural centres. The only known copy of the *Cançoner del Duc de Calàbria* was discovered in the Library of the University of Uppsala, Sweden, in 1907 by the musicologist Rafael Mitjana; hence the collection is sometimes known by the rather misleading title *Cançoner d'Uppsala*.

This song was chosen by the Catalan composer **Bernat Vivancos** to underly his new work when he received a commission from Kebyart. The resulting piece was premièred at the Festival de Torroella de Montgrí on 5 August 2022. The composer says:

'Ay luna que reluces' is a simple four-part vocal composition of exquisite poetry by an anonymous author. I wanted to embellish this music for saxophone quartet, offering a song dedicated to beauty, to unconditional love, to the contemplation of the ideal and most desired – a song also to seduction, to an experience beyond falling in love, blind adoration that leaves us speechless day and night... It is a song, therefore, to infinity, almost utopian, where the voices of the saxophone quartet seek to emphasise the worship of sound, to concentrate on the poetry of the essential, uncomplicated by too many displays of technique or bold timbres – communicating to the soul of each listener, in the simplest and most direct way possible, obsessional contemplation that only the purest and most authentic beauty can provoke.

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