

WIGMORE HALL 125

Wednesday 15 July 2026
7.30pm

Alena Baeva violin
Kyril Zlotnikov cello
Vadym Kholodenko piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Trio No. 2 in G K496 (1786)
I. Allegro • II. Andante • III. Allegretto

Max Bruch (1838-1920)

8 pieces Op. 83 arranged for violin, cello and piano (1910)
*Andante • Allegro con moto •
Rumänische Melodie. Andante •
Nachtgesang. Andante con moto •
Allegro vivace, ma non troppo*

Interval

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Piano Trio No. 2 in E flat D929 (1827)
*I. Allegro • II. Andante con moto •
III. Scherzo. Allegro moderato •
IV. Allegro moderato*



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It's often said that chamber music is the music of friends, and the opening and closing works of this evening's programme certainly testify to the validity of that adage. Sandwiched between them, we have something that could perhaps be seen as the next-best thing – music written for a family member.

Among the most cherished members of **Mozart's** inner circle after his move to Vienna in 1781 were the Jacquin family, headed by the Dutch-born botanist Nikolaus von Jacquin. The composer spent many happy hours at the Jacquin residence, giving piano lessons to Nikolaus's daughter Franziska (who appears to have been one of his favourite students) and developing a close friendship with his son Gottfried.

Mozart was a welcome participant in chamber music sessions hosted by the family, and soon felt encouraged to return to the medium of the keyboard trio. In 1776, while still resident in Salzburg, he had produced his first trio involving a keyboard instrument (K254 in B flat): this work harked back to a time when such trios were still essentially 'accompanied keyboard sonatas', with string parts supplied to provide contrasting instrumental colour but not yet fully independent. A decade later, both Mozart's keyboard style and his recognition of the importance of creating a genuine dialogue between the three instruments had evolved considerably, as is immediately evident from the opening movement of K496, the first of his mature keyboard trios. This work came hard on the heels of some of his finest piano concertos, designed as showcases for his own keyboard skills, and although the scale of the trios is more intimate (as befits music intended for domestic music making), some of the exuberant display of the concertos spills over into K496, which begins with a lengthy piano solo, the string instruments only joining in after the first 17 bars. However, once the opening is out of the way, a genuinely conversational interplay between the instruments is quickly established. The majestic slow movement is a masterful exercise in contrapuntal writing, while the cheerful finale brings the work to an exhilarating conclusion – with some semi-operatic moments reminding us that *The Marriage of Figaro* had received its first performance shortly before the composition of K496.

Bruch is today best known for his tuneful and warmly coloured works for solo instruments and orchestra, chief among these being the Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor (1866). Though he was drawn to chamber music in his youth, the demands of a busy international performing career meant that his output of chamber works dwindled significantly from 1860 onwards, and it was not until he was in his early seventies and on the verge of retirement that he returned to the genre in earnest.

The immediate impetus for the composition of the Eight Pieces, Op. 83 – originally written for clarinet,

viola and piano – was the playing of Bruch's son Max Felix, who was then embarking on a career as a professional clarinettist. In this respect the Eight Pieces belong to the tradition initiated by Mozart and continued by Weber and Brahms, all of whom wrote important works for the clarinet as the result of being inspired by the sound of a particular performer. Bruch's Op. 83 followed in the footsteps of Mozart's 'Kegelstatt' Trio (K498) (which incidentally was dedicated to Franziska von Jacquin and was almost certainly first performed at one of the Jacquin family's concert parties) in that the clarinet's mellifluous voice was paired with the mellow tone of the viola. However, Bruch was by no means averse to the idea of his trios being played by other combinations of instruments. He also saw the work as a set of independent pieces rather than as an integrated cycle, and indeed advised against the performance of the entire set in one go – perhaps because the preponderance of minor keys (only No. 7 is in a major key) risks creating a certain melancholy monotony of mood.

Like Mozart, **Schubert** derived great pleasure from making music in an intimate setting with and for close friends. From 1815 onwards, several of Schubert's Viennese friends and patrons regularly organised informal gatherings at which his music was performed, usually with the composer at the piano. The last of the *Schubertiaden* at which the composer himself was present was hosted by his great friend Josef von Spaun in January 1828 and was put on to celebrate Spaun's engagement. It was on this occasion that the Piano Trio in E flat received its first performance, when it was played by three of the composer's closest friends: the pianist Carl Maria von Bocklet, the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and the cellist Josef Linke. Schubert died in November 1828, and so the trio was one of the few of his late works that he had the opportunity to hear.

The E flat Piano Trio is unquestionably one of the greatest masterpieces of chamber music ever created. It broke new ground in terms of its originality, intensity and extraordinary scale, and was described by Schumann as being 'like an angry thunderstorm... inspired by deep indignation and boundless longing'. The richness of Schubert's musical invention in this work is almost overwhelming. The trio contains so many achingly beautiful passages that it's difficult to know which to single out for special mention, but perhaps the most memorable and breathtaking is when the main theme of the slow movement – a sombre lament in C minor – returns in the finale, first in the even darker key of E flat minor, before suddenly shifting to the major for the work's gloriously affirmative conclusion. The emotional charge of this moment has few rivals in the entire chamber music repertory.

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