

WIGMORE HALL 125

Tuesday 16 June 2026
7.30pm

Braimah Kanneh-Mason violin
Mariatu Kanneh-Mason cello
Isata Kanneh-Mason piano
Jeneba Kanneh-Mason piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Sonata in C for piano 4 hands K521 (1787)
I. Allegro • II. Andante • III. Allegretto

Violin Sonata in E minor K304 (1778)
I. Allegro • II. Tempo di Menuetto

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Piano Trio in G HXV/25 'Gypsy Rondo' (1795)
*I. Andante • II. Poco adagio •
III. Finale 'Rondo all'Ongarese'. Presto*

Interval

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

Nana from *7 canciones populares españolas* (1914)

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

III. Allegro appassionato from Cello Sonata Op. 6 (1932)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

I. Méditation from *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* Op. 42 (1878)

Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Prelude Op. 12 No. 7 (1906-13)

Juliet as a Young Girl from *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* Op. 75 (1937)

Piano Sonata No. 7 in B flat Op. 83 (1939-42)
*I. Allegro inquieto • II. Andante caloroso •
III. Precipitato*



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In the winter of 1780/81, Johann Nepomuk della Croce painted a portrait of a famous musical family. Under the gaze of the *pater familias*, Leopold – as well as an image of his wife, Anna Maria – Wolfgang Amadeus and his sister, Maria Anna (nicknamed ‘Nannerl’), sit side-by-side at a keyboard. They may perhaps be playing one of the two youthful sonatas for piano duet that **Mozart** had composed in Salzburg in the early 1770s. By contrast, the Sonata in C, K521, written in 1787, is much more ambitious. Mozart had originally planned to dedicate it to one of his gifted pupils, Franziska von Jacquin. Eventually, however, it was dedicated to Nanette and Barbette Natrop, whose father was a wealthy Viennese entrepreneur. The Natrop sisters were talented musicians, able to cope with a sonata that Mozart described to a friend as ‘rather difficult’. Its three movements – a genial *Allegro*, a lyrical *Andante* and a sprightly *Allegretto* – would surely have delighted music lovers in the salons that were such a prominent feature of social life in the Austrian capital.

In September 1777, Mozart – accompanied by his mother – set off on an extensive European tour. Passing through Munich, Augsburg and Mannheim, they eventually arrived in Paris the following March. There, Anna Maria fell ill and died on 3 July. The Violin Sonata K304 was one of a series of seven such works that Mozart composed at the time, and its minor key and introspective mood have led some to suggest it expresses the feelings of loss he must surely have experienced. In truth, the circumstances of its composition are unknown, but it is certainly one of Mozart’s most austere works. It consists of just two movements – a sonata-form *Allegro* and a minuet and trio, both of them suffused with a sense of understated melancholy.

Mozart was a youthful prodigy whose fame drew audiences around Europe. **Haydn**, by contrast, was an established master of almost 60 when he first visited London in 1791. He made a second trip in 1795, and the Piano Trio No. 39 in G is one of the works he wrote on that occasion. It is dedicated to Rebecca Schroeter (née Scott), daughter of a wealthy Scottish businessman and widow of the German composer, Johann Schroeter. A keen musician herself, she took lessons from Haydn, and a close friendship – and possibly more – blossomed between the two of them. If the trio’s first two movements bespeak the gentility of a Regency salon, its *Finale* is altogether more piquant. Marked ‘Rondo all’Ongarese’, it summons up the dashing virtuosity of Roma fiddlers that Haydn would have heard in the Hungarian plains.

Like many Spanish composers in the early 20th Century, **Falla** spent a considerable part of his life in Paris. In total, he lived for seven years in the French capital, and it was here that he wrote his 7 *canciones populares españolas*, although their première took

place in Madrid in early 1915. Here, Falla draws on Spain’s diverse folk traditions to conjure up a sonic postcard of his native land. ‘Nana’ is, according to the composer himself, an Andalusian lullaby which he heard ‘from his mother’s lips before he was old enough to think’. **Barber** travelled extensively across both his native United States and his adopted Europe, and his Cello Sonata, Op. 6, was written during a break from his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. It was begun in 1932 on a summer holiday that Barber spent on Lake Lugano in Italy with his partner, the Italian composer Gian Carlo Menotti, and it was premièred in New York the following March. March 1878 found **Tchaikovsky** in Clarens, Switzerland, where he had fled after his disastrous marriage to Antonina Milyukova. It was there that he wrote his ‘Méditation’, originally intending it as the slow movement of his Violin Concerto. He quickly discarded it in favour of a newly composed *Canzonetta*, but that summer, on the Ukrainian estate of his patron, Nadezhda von Meck, he repurposed the ‘Méditation’ as the first movement of a short suite for violin and piano, called *Souvenir d’un lieu cher*.

Prokofiev’s Ten Pieces Op. 12 consists of short movements that he composed as a student between 1906 and 1913. In the ‘Prelude’ (No. 7), glittering cascades of arpeggios suggest the harp as much as the piano. It shares its home key of C major with Prokofiev’s captivating portrait of the heroine of his ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 75, written in 1935, and first staged in Brno, Czechoslovakia three years later. Prokofiev captures both the skittish energy of his youthful heroine and a growing sense of emotional interiority that will lead to her tragic death. Prokofiev’s Sonata No. 7 was premièred by Sviatoslav Richter in January 1943. Fighting still raged for control of the city of Stalingrad. Then, on 2 February, the Germans surrendered. This historical background has meant that the seventh has sometimes been dubbed the ‘Stalingrad’ – an echo of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7, the ‘Leningrad.’ The mood of the sonata is often harsh and militaristic, and its harmonies can be unsettling and dissonant, yet its overarching narrative is heroic and resolute, and Prokofiev pays homage to the conventions of the classical sonata structure, celebrating the survival of tradition in the face of unspeakable barbarity. The third and final movement has become something of a showpiece, and when played very fast and very loud, it can sound hollow and bombastic. When performed with proper attention to Prokofiev’s scrupulous dynamics and with space between its cascading notes, it embodies if not optimism, then at least the daring of human hope and the anticipation of a victory against darkness, cruelty and barbarism.

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