

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 18 June 2023
7.30pm

Alina Ibragimova violin

Basel Chamber Orchestra

Kristian Bezuidenhout fortepiano, director

Anne Freitag flute

Regula Bernath flute

Philipp Wagner oboe

Francesco Capraro oboe

Konstantin Timokhine horn

Mark Gebhart horn

Daniel Bard violin

Eva Miribung violin

Nina Candik violin

Elisabeth Kohler violin

Antonio Vinales violin

Regula Keller violin

Tamás Vásárhelyi violin

Katya Polin viola

Bodo Friedrich viola

Christoph Dangel cello

Georg Dettweiler cello

Stefan Preyer double bass

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782)

Symphony in G minor Op. 6 No. 6 (pub. 1770)

*I. Allegro • II. Andante più tosto adagio •
III. Allegro molto*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Violin Concerto No. 3 in G K216 (1775)

I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Rondeau. Allegro

Interval

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Symphony No. 27 in G K199 (1773)

I. Allegro • II. Andantino grazioso • III. Presto

CLASSIC *f*M Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM

Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable.

To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/support-us/wigmore-hall-audience-fund>

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

 Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

 ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

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

 Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Christian Schubart died in the same year as **Mozart**, 1791: dissolute blasphemer, free thinker (and imprisoned or expelled from multiple territories as a result), he was also a remarkable keyboard player, poet, critic, theorist and mystic. One poem of his was made famous as a song by his near namesake, Schubert: *Die Forelle*. Among his other works is a theoretical treatise, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, in which he sought to pin down the expressive, emotional or spiritual characteristics of every key and list them. Tonight's programme is entirely in the keys of G major or minor, so we have a prime opportunity to test his instincts. As translated by the eminent Canadian musicologist Rita Steblin, he proposes:

G minor: Discontent, uneasiness, worry about a failed scheme; bad-tempered gnashing of teeth; in a word: resentment and dislike.

G major: Everything rustic, idyllic and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, every tender gratitude for true friendship and faithful love - in a word every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart is correctly expressed by this key.

Draw your own conclusions, but certainly G minor is famously a key of troubled music for Mozart - witness the Symphony No. 40 or Piano Quartet K478 - as it also seems to have been for **Johann Christian Bach**.

Bach was 21 years older than Mozart and belonged to a generation that reacted against the elaborate complexities of its immediate predecessors: composers like his famous father. In place of counterpoint and cerebral numerology, rhythmic chords and arpeggios support melodies that are rarely anywhere but in the top line and always seek the most immediate impact. Counterpoint is not entirely absent (in the finale you hear the top line and bass imitate each other) but this music rises out of the theatre and has a license to thrill. Spiritually, it belongs to the same strand of 18th-century art as much of Schubart's poetry - *Stürm und Drang*: stormy, anxious, histrionic music which, even in its quieter moments exudes 'uneasiness' and 'gnashing of teeth'.

Born a generation later, the teenage **Mozart** fell very much under the spell of JC Bach. His 27th symphony is one of three he wrote in April-May 1773 in Salzburg and it is a lovely example of the lucid, gallant style you hear in most of Bach's symphonies: beautifully proportioned, immediately understandable and genial. The juxtaposition of the two symphonies tonight exaggerates the differences between them, but in fact they are very much of the same ilk until, in the finale, Mozart departs surprisingly from the path. He opens it with a *fugato* - music that begins as a fugue with a series of voices entering one after the other with the same melody - but then does not take it any further. Mozart, like any superb keyboard player of the day, could improvise fugues, and the Mass he wrote around

the same time as this symphony (*Missa in honorem Sanctissimae Trinitatis*, K167) has much *fugato*, so in principal there is nothing surprising in him writing it here, but in an elegant, courtly symphony it simply is very unusual. Satisfyingly, the shape of his fugue subject, the opening four notes, strikingly anticipates the famous (and more properly fugal) four notes that open the finale of his last symphony, the 'Jupiter' written 15 years later.

Mozart was no mean violinist, and not modest: 'I played as though I were the finest fiddler in all Europe' (1777), yet he wrote five violin concerti over the course of one year, 1775, then never returned to the genre. The natural explanation would be that he wrote them for himself to play in the hope of furthering his career as a violinist, but then shifted focus to the keyboard. Yet even in the year he wrote them there is no evidence of him championing them, and 1775 was one heck of a busy year for him, with numerous public and private performances in Salzburg. This seems an oddly obscure fate for pieces that must have cost him many hours of work. Only once, two years later, does he mention tonight's concerto:

'...at supper I played my Strasbourg concerto which went like oil: everyone praised my beautiful tone.' (Oct 1777)

'Went like oil' is a wonderful phrase for this music: Schubart could have written his definition of G major especially for it. Even his 'rustic' may hit a mark here as Mozart called the piece his 'Strasbourg concerto' apparently because he based the finale on an Alsatian folksong (though nowhere have I found the song identified). Joyous and sublime, it is very much 'idyllic and lyrical.' The opening melody even has its origins in a blissful aria from the opera *Il re pastore*: 'Aer tranquillo e di sereni'.

On listening, it is worth considering the few comments Mozart made in his letters about violin playing and players. One striking thing (which aligns him with JC Bach's hostility to the immediate past) is a negative attitude towards Tartini, the most influential violinist and teacher of the earlier 18th Century. Mozart damns several players with faint praise along the lines of 'a little bit in the old-fashioned Tartini manner.' He also comments on the violinist Ignaz Fränzl, saying: 'You know that I am no great lover of difficulties: he plays difficult things but his hearers are not aware that they are difficult...That is real playing.' This last quote is something of a key to K216: for all its wonderful invention and display it is no flashy showpiece like Tartini's 'Devil's Trill' Sonata. Its ideas, the interplay of solo and orchestra, even the quirky shifts in tempo in the finale all flow with a naturalness and beauty quite free of 'difficulties.'

© Svend McEwan-Brown 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.