

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 19 March 2022 7.30pm

Angela Hewitt piano

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791) Piano Sonata in F K332 (1781-3)  
*I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Allegro assai*

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750) From *The Well-tempered Clavier Book II* (c.1740)  
Prelude and Fugue No. 13 in F sharp BWV882  
Prelude and Fugue No. 14 in F sharp minor BWV883  
Prelude and Fugue No. 15 in G BWV884  
Prelude and Fugue No. 16 in G minor BWV885

*Interval*

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** Piano Sonata in B flat K333 (1783-4)  
*I. Allegro • II. Andante cantabile • III. Allegretto grazioso*

**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937) Sonatine (1903-5)  
*I. Modéré • II. Mouvement de menuet • III. Animé*

**Emmanuel Chabrier** (1841-1894) Bourrée fantasque (1891)

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**Mozart** got married in August 1782. His father, back in Salzburg, gave a grumpy assent by letter. The following June, Mozart took his wife, Constanze, and their baby son to conciliate Grandad in Salzburg. During the visit, he composed three new sonatas, in C, A and F (K332), perhaps as teaching material against his return to Vienna. On the way home, he stopped off at Linz, where he wrote a symphony and the Sonata in B flat K333. The former was performed in the Theatre on 4 November, and doubtless the sonata, with its teasing cadenza in the perfectly poised rondo finale (something that Mozart made very much his own), graced some delightful public occasion too.

*The Well-tempered Clavier* was copied out complete in 1722, with the note on the title-page: 'For the use and profit of the musical youth desirous of learning, as well as the pastime of those already skilled in this study.' Part II followed some two decades later. Each part, as is well-known, consists of 24 Preludes and Fugues, one in each of the major and minor keys. **Bach** probably found this principle in the *Ariadne musica* of JCF Fischer, published in 1702, though that omits the major keys of C sharp and F sharp, and the minor keys of E flat, A flat and B flat - but throws in two different versions of E minor (Dorian and Phrygian) in partial recompense. Part of Bach's point was that he'd found a tuning scheme that had eluded Fischer, which made these keys work: but rather than dismiss yet again the fallacy that Bach was promoting today's tuning system of equal temperament, let us turn to some early judgments of musical quality.

*The Well-tempered Clavier* was not published till 1801. It appeared in England in instalments from 1810, with a grandiloquent Introduction by Samuel Wesley:

'It seems to be with some stupendous Works of Art, as with those of Nature: the Surprise and Admiration they excite render Praise not only superfluous, but also show it inadequate to the Subject producing them. Among such Instances we conceive the following Pieces of Harmony to be meritoriously enumerated. The 48 Preludes and Fugues have always been regarded by the most scientific among scientific Musicians (the Germans) as matchless Productions. These introductory Remarks are not designed as a Panegyric upon Compositions which have perpetually delighted the candid Lover of Truth, Science, Taste, and Expression, and even exerted the Approbation of those whose Prejudices had formerly superseded their better Judgment'

... and on for page after page, including remarks on the necessity of being able to play without looking at your fingers.

Goethe was introduced to Bach's music by an acquaintance who played to him every day for three weeks, for three or four hours at

a time. Goethe wrote: 'It is as if the eternal harmony were conversing within itself, as it may have done in the bosom of God just before the Creation of the world. So likewise did it move in my inmost soul, and it seemed as if I neither possessed nor needed ears, nor any other sense - least of all, the eyes.'

Mozart would be pleased to be sharing a programme with the great Cantor of the Thomaskirche. The music critic, Friedrich Rochlitz, witnessed a great occasion during Mozart's visit to Leipzig in 1789. 'The St Thomas Choir surprised Mozart with the performance of the double-chorus motet *Singet dem Herrn*. Mozart knew this master more by hearsay than by his works, which had become quite rare; at least his motets, which had never been printed, were completely unknown to him. Hardly had the choir sung a few bars when Mozart sat up, startled; a few bars more and he called out: "What is this?" And now his whole soul seemed to be in his ears. When the singing was finished he cried out, full of joy: "Now, there is something one can learn from!" He was told that the church possessed the complete collection of Bach's motets and preserved them as a sort of sacred relic. "That's the spirit! That's fine!", he cried. "Let's see them!". There was, however, no score of these pieces; so he had the parts given to him; and then it was for the silent observer a joy to see how eagerly Mozart sat himself down, with the parts all around him - in both hands, on his lap, and on the chairs next to him - and, forgetting everything else, did not get up again until he had looked through everything of Sebastian Bach's that was there.'

The Sonatine is **Ravel's** response to a newspaper competition, which he won, in 1903. (Some of Peter Warlock's loveliest songs came from the same stimulus - how things change.) Ravel's next attempt at a public competition was for a set of Don Quichotte songs to be sung by Chaliapin, in a movie. He lost, but his songs are now sung more often than Ibert's excellent winning entry. There's probably a moral there.

You can learn a great deal about **Chabrier's** music (much admired by Debussy, Ravel and Poulenc) from the story told by the rather academically-inclined French composer, Vincent d'Indy:

'Chabrier stopped me dead in the midst of the first waltz, and, addressing me a look that was both amazed and arch, said: "But my dear boy, it's not that at all!..." And then I had a marvellous lesson in playing *alla* Chabrier; contrary accents, *pianissimi* to the point of extinction, sudden fire-crackers bursting out in the middle of the most exquisite softness, and also indispensable gesturing, giving over the body, too, to the intention of the music.'

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