WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 20 February 2022 7.30pm
Gidon Kremer 75th Birthday

Gidon Kremer violin
Giedrė Dirvanauskaitė cello
Georgijs Osokins piano

CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust www.cavatina.net Supported by CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	Piano Trio No. 3 in G minor Op. 110 (1851) *I. Bewegt, doch nicht zu rasch • II. Ziemlich langsam • III. Rasch • IV. Kräftig, mit Humor*
	Violin Sonata No. 3 in A minor WoO. 27 (1853) *I. Ziemlich langsam • II. Scherzo • III. Intermezzo • IV. Finale*
	Interval
Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996)	Nocturne from *3 Pieces for violin and piano* (1934)
Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)	Trio élégiaque No. 2 in D minor Op. 9 (1893 rev. 1907 & 1917) *I. Moderato • II. Quasi variazione • III. Allegro risoluto*

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Gidon Kremer talks about his 75th birthday concert

Do these works, or these composers, hold a particular significance for you?

Sure. I never wanted to be 'just' a violinist. Music always played a more important role in my life, on and off stage. Both Schumann and Rachmaninov – along with Mieczysław Weinberg, whose piece we added to the programme - are undoubtedly 'personalities', with a clear signature. I consider my birthday to be a celebration not of myself, but of music which is very dear to me along with my dear colleagues and partners — all of us closely connected to Kremerata Baltica, an ensemble I created in 1997 and have run for 25 years.

Schumann's string chamber music has often been criticised as unidiomatic, or awkwardly written for string instruments. As a violinist, do you have any thoughts on that?

I can agree that Schumann's scores are quite tricky to play. This concerns not only the violin, but other instruments as well — even his favourite, the piano. But the quality and strength of his writing is unquestionable. As a performer, one has simply to look for the right 'keys' to unlock his scores. One of them is…sincerity.

The Third Violin Sonata was never published by Schumann, and may in fact have been suppressed by either Robert or Clara. Based upon your experience of the music, do you have any thoughts about why that might have been so?

Having played a lot of Schumann's music and especially the (still not well-enough-known) Violin Concerto, I want to be an advocate of all that he has written and shared with us. Probably I am at odds here with some strange statements by Clara, and even by Brahms - despite the fact that they were both so close to him. The music itself is stronger than the opinions and prejudices (even from such close friends of Robert) which did not allow access to the scores for a long time.

What is the appeal, for you, of playing chamber music? And what – conversely – are the challenges?

For me chamber music became a wonderful source of inspiration, starting at the Lockenhaus Festival in Austria, which I ran for 30 years. Creating chamber music with my friends gives me no less satisfaction than focusing on my solo work. To be part of a process of sharing music written for a number of instruments allowed, and still allows, me to enjoy cooperation with other musicians for whom I have a great respect – including the chamber orchestra Kremerata Baltica, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this February as well. Together, my 75th anniversary and their 25th make a wonderful jubilee - 100! Having worked in my life with so many great composers, performers and conductors, I am grateful for having the chance to share part of my experiences with my partners, and with the Wigmore Hall audience.

Tonight's music

'Robert is working busily on a Trio', wrote Clara Schumann to her diary on 11 October 1851, 'but he won't let me hear any of it until it is completely finished. I only know that it is in G minor'. A fortnight later, it was done. On 15 November 1851, Clara premièred the new trio at a musical evening at their Düsseldorf home. She was overwhelmed: 'It is original and increasingly passionate, especially the scherzo, which carries one along with it into the wildest depths'. From its turbulent opening to the gloriously headstrong finale (marked 'with humour'), the trio surges with all Schumann's accustomed poetry and lyrical ardour.

Schumann's third and final violin sonata had a more troubled history. Its second and fourth movements were created in October 1853 as part of a collaborative violin sonata, written by Schumann, the young Johannes Brahms and Albert Dietrich as a homage to the violinist Joseph Joachim, and unified by the three notes F-A-E (after Joachim's artistic motto *Frei aber einsam* – 'Free but lonely'). Later that month, Schumann used his two movements as the basis for a complete new sonata of his own, in which the impulsiveness of his imagination is underpinned (some might say obsessed) by that three-note pattern. The new sonata remained unpublished in Robert's lifetime; it's possible that Clara later associated it with her husband's incipient mental illness. A reconstruction, dating from 1956, has allowed the music to be judged on its own merits.

It would hardly be possible to celebrate Gidon Kremer's birthday without something from Mieczysław Weinberg, the extraordinary Jewish, Polish-born, Soviet-resident composer, whose music Kremer has done more, perhaps, than any living artist to reinstate in the repertoire. This *Nocturne*, dating from 1934, demonstrates how – even at the age of 14 – Weinberg's voice was already fully-formed.

Rachmaninov's second (and final) piano trio, however, dates from late 1893: before the shattering failure of his First Symphony in 1897 and his subsequent reinvention of his musical language. The direct impulse was the sudden death, on 25 October 1893, of Tchaikovsky: a generous supporter of the young Rachmaninov's early works. Written in a matter of weeks and completed on 15 December 1893, the trio is a work on the grandest of scales, grounded in Rachmaninov's own virtuoso pianism, and modelled on Tchaikovsky's own epic (and elegiac) Piano Trio Op. 5 of 1881: itself a memorial work, built around a monumental set of variations. The variations come second in Rachmaninov's trio (the theme comes from his symphonic poem *The Rock*, which Tchaikovsky had been due to conduct), but the whole work is driven by the same impassioned sorrow. 'This work is a composition on the death of a great artist' wrote Rachmaninov to a friend; 'While working on it all my thoughts, feelings, powers belonged to it, to this song…'