

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 22 April 2024
7.30pm

Trio Gaspard

Jonian Ilias Kadesha violin
Vashti Hunter cello
Nicholas Rimmer piano

Helena Winkelman (b.1974)

Threesome in a high-den (2024) *world première*

I. Xanthippe and the holy brothers (homage to Maria Anna Aloysia) • II. Gone is all my strength/old and weary I have become (his last business card) • III. Pay'd in wine (and other Esterházy scandals)

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Piano Trio in E HXV/28 (c.1795-7)

I. Allegro moderato • II. Allegretto • III. Finale. Allegro

Sándor Veress (1907-1992)

Piano Trio '3 Quadri' (1963)

I. Paysage de Claude Lorrain • II. Et in arcadia ego • III. Der Bauerntanz

Interval

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

From *21 Hungarian Dances* WoO. 1 (1868-80) arranged by Trio Gaspard

No. 16 in F minor • No. 4 in B minor • No. 10 in F

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Piano Trio No. 2 in F Op. 80 (1847)

I. Sehr lebhaft • II. Mit innigem Ausdruck - Lebhaft • III. In mässiger Bewegung • IV. Nicht zu rasch

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This new piano trio by **Helena Winkelman** is a homage to Joseph Haydn. Elements of his music – particularly his piano trio in E, next up in tonight's concert – appear with humorous puns and references. The first movement is a pompous *grave*, in reference to the fact that the brother of Haydn's wife was a clergyman who regularly came with his brothers to feast at Haydn's house, which annoyed the composer greatly. The second is dedicated to a weary, old Haydn who, when he didn't feel inspired, had the habit of playing the hymn he had composed for his emperor, *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*, which seems to have had an uplifting effect on him. The last movement portrays some of the happenings at the castle of Esterházy, Haydn's workplace – especially with regard to the fact that Haydn's salary partially consisted of enormous quantities of wine, and what effect this might have had on his band of musicians.

Haydn composed his E major piano trio shortly after his return to Vienna from his final visit to London in September 1795, and he dedicated it to Therese Jansen, a young London pianist of German birth and a pupil of Muzio Clementi. Haydn had been a witness at Therese's wedding to the art dealer Gaetano Bartolozzi at St James's, Piccadilly in May 1795. She was an outstanding player, and her sympathetic musicianship prompted him to confide something very special.

Straight away, he invents a playful, wholly new trio texture: strings playing pizzicato and the piano's left hand following suit *staccato assai*, while the right hand alone sings the melody. There's a comparable quirkiness to the *Finale*: buried deep beneath those stop-start cross-rhythms, and the brief Romantic storm of a central section, are the outlines of a minuet. But richest and strangest of all is the central *Allegretto*; one of Haydn's rare passacaglias, whose sombre austerity finally achieves release in a miniature piano cadenza that breathes the air (no longer quite so distant) of Hungary.

Sándor Veress was born in Kolozsvár in Hungary (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania), a city, with its Hungarian elite, sizeable Romanian community and German and Roma minorities, where a cosmopolitan outlook was a necessity as much as a virtue. He studied with Bartók and Kodály in Budapest, later assisting them in their research into folklore. Despite his leftist principles, he survived Hungary's pre-war fascist régime, but was driven into exile by the postwar Communist dictatorship.

Veress emigrated to Bern, Switzerland in 1949, and the works of his exile years include a cantata on poems by Herman Hesse and this piano trio, composed in 1963 and inspired (as its Italian title implies) by three late-Renaissance paintings. An unspecified *paysage* ('landscape') by Claude Lorrain suggested the first: flowing, and glinting with the distant luminosity of sunlight on the sea. The central movement is marked *quieto*: a sinister meditation on Poussin's scene of brightly-clad ancients uncovering a reminder of mortality. The finale ('Peasant dance') takes its cue from Brueghel,

but its spirit from the Hungarian countryside: a spiky, deadpan dance that never quite goes where you might expect.

As a student the violinist Ede Reményi (1828-98) was banished from Hungary for his revolutionary activities. He was flamboyant, lively and a phenomenal player, but even a close friend described him as 'a boastful, temperamental, opportunistic person'. Eventually he dropped dead on stage in San Francisco – but not before he'd discovered, in Hamburg, a superb 19-year old pianist called **Johannes Brahms**. The pair toured together in 1853, Brahms improvising madly to stay ahead of Reményi's wild, Gypsy-inspired solos.

They soon parted – but Reményi's Hungarian melodies and improvisations stayed with Brahms. In 1869, his memories crystallised into 10 *Hungarian Dances* for piano duet; he published eleven more in 1880. They were a Europe-wide smash, and to this day, no-one is quite sure which are based on Hungarian melodies, and which are Brahms's own work (Brahms never let on). Authentic or spurious, their sultry, catchy tunes and dizzying switches between happy and sad, *lassú* ('relaxed') and *friss* ('fast'), simply feel exactly right.

By 1844 **Robert Schumann** was at a low creative ebb, and the noise of Leipzig contributed to the problem: 'Nature – where can I find it here?... Neither vale, nor hill, nor woods which would allow me to abandon myself to my thoughts'. In 1844, he moved with his family to the quieter Dresden, and his creativity revived. He dreamt of German operas (mulling over such subjects as Lohengrin and the Nibelung legends), and by 1847 was in the midst of another creative surge – writing his C major Symphony, and then, one after the other, his first two numbered Piano Trios. The first, in G minor, is turbulent and impassioned. Then, as if to restore equilibrium, between August and November he composed its direct opposite: in his own words, a work 'which makes a friendlier and more immediate impression'.

The first movement springs enthusiastically into life and dances forward – carrying with it a quotation from Schumann's Eichendorff song 'Dein Bildnis wunderselig' of 1840, the joyous year that saw his marriage to Clara ('I bear your beautiful likeness/Deep within my heart', runs the poem. 'It gazes at me every hour/So freshly and happily...') But as Schumann himself put it, the best ideas are those 'whose artistic roots are covered like those of a flower, so that we only perceive the bloom'. We're left to find our own meaning in the *innigem Ausdruck* ('heartfelt expression') of the slow movement, in the bittersweet lilt of the third movement (an intermezzo) and in the playful, headlong sweep of the finale ('not too fast', he warns the players) – though the final notes dispel any lingering melancholy with the force of a spring breeze.

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