

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 22 November 2021 7.30pm

Truls Mørk cello

Håvard Gimse piano



Supported by CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust

**Robert Schumann** (1810-1856)

Fantasiestücke Op. 73 (1849)

*Zart und mit Ausdruck • Lebhaft, leicht • Rasch und mit Feuer*

**Richard Strauss** (1864-1949)

Cello Sonata in F Op. 6 (1880-3)

*I. Allegro con brio • II. Andante ma non troppo • III. Finale. Allegro vivo*

Interval

**Ernest Chausson** (1855-1899)

Pièce Op. 39 (1897)

**César Franck** (1822-1890)

Sonata in A (1886) *arranged by Jules Delsart*

*I. Allegretto ben moderato • II. Allegro •  
III. Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato - Molto lento •  
IV. Allegretto poco mosso*

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Besides works in conventional genres, such as the piano trio, **Schumann** wrote sets of pieces with more fanciful, more Romantic titles. *Fantasiestücke* was one that reminded him of his favourite writers, ETA Hoffmann and Jean Paul. Equally though the three movements of his Op. 73, dating from 1849, might suggest a sonata without an opener, going straight into its slow movement and so to its scherzo and finale. Schumann's first thought was to give his melodies, whose contours subtly connect the movements, to a clarinet, but he provided options for viola or cello.

From the teenage **Richard Strauss** we have a full-blown sonata, which he wrote in 1881 at the age of 16, and revised with a new finale two years later. The intended recipient, and dedicatee, was Hanuš Wihan, then a member of the court orchestra in Munich and subsequently honoured with another major item in the cello repertoire: the Dvořák concerto.

An imposing opening is neatly wrapped up by the cello's first extended phrase, whose ending gives a hint of the Strauss to come. There is another hint, of the scherzo from Borodin's Second Quartet, in the main theme, but since that work also dates from 1881 and was not yet published, the resemblance must be coincidental. The piano's characteristic dotted rhythm takes the music down into C minor and on into murky chromatic waters, from which it is rescued by a somewhat Mendelssohnian staccato third theme. Development ensues, its closing fugal passage carrying the movement into its recapitulation and coda.

The slow movement is in the relative minor, D minor, and begins rather in the manner of a funeral march, the cello repeating its melody an octave up. With a turn to B flat major, the music opens into warmer territory, where cello and piano sing to one another, before returning to complete a ternary form.

Strauss's first finale was a sonata movement where delicate playfulness, again with shades of Mendelssohn, was offset by solid song. These are again the features of his replacement, but now with stronger elements and a firmer form – as well as touches of humour in how the first theme keeps butting back in – to give this robust and appealing sonata a thoroughly fitting close.

The *Pièce* by **Chausson** was the last he completed, dating from August 1897. It begins in transparent C major, then wanders on until it rediscovers its opening theme in a splendiferous A flat, from which it subsides again into a reprise of the opening, now played more slowly. One might feel Chausson moving closer to Fauré and away from the sphere of his teacher Franck.

As if to demonstrate the distance travelled, the concert ends with music by **Franck**: the sonata he composed in 1886. The piece – originally, of course, a violin sonata – was arranged for cello by Jules Delsart, one of the pre-eminent French cellists of the time. As a member of the Marsick Quartet, he was playing in a concert in Paris on 27 December 1887 at which Franck's work was also on the programme. Apparently, he begged the composer for permission to transcribe the sonata, and this was granted. Franck could have been more than willing if Pablo Casals was right that the composer had intended this as a cello sonata in the first place. Certainly a ready assent is indicated by how the composition was published, as 'Sonate pour Piano et Violon ou Violoncelle', with Delsart's cello part slipped in. Apart from transposing everything down an octave, Delsart left the line almost untouched, and asked for no alteration at all to the piano's contribution.

The opening sonata movement, gently swinging in a 9/8 siciliana rhythm, introduces at once a distinctly Franckian harmonic atmosphere, simultaneously sure and equivocal. When the piano proposes a second subject – initiated by a grand, falling-scale pattern and going on to show its relation to the cello's solid but mutating theme – the cello falls silent. But it has heard, and incorporates the falling scale into its recapitulation, which follows a short development. In the coda, A major comes to represent the only possible home.

In sudden contrast, the piano starts the second movement, again in sonata form, with cascading semiquavers in what soon establishes itself as D minor. One of the problems for composers throughout the 19th Century was that of making a work in several movements tell a consistent story. Franck's solution, following Liszt, was to circle round some kind of stable thematic nucleus, and here in this sonata the second movement begins to display its relation to the first. The very ending is one place where Delsart adjusted the line to remove a leap awkward for the cello (though some cellists accept the awkwardness).

What is recitative-like in the third movement is the cello's unaccompanied music, prompted by the piano. The piano responds first time round with a clear reference back to the main theme of the first movement. Second time round the music goes a different way. A longer section, equally reminiscent, settles in F sharp minor.

The finale, all-resolving from the start, alternates a melody in canon with another, and brings back material from the third movement, besides introducing bell music that will give the work an affirmative close back in A major.

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