

# WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 22 October 2023  
11.30am

Soloists of the Kronberg Academy  
Dmytro Udovychenko violin  
Hans Christian Aavik violin  
Weronika Dziadek viola  
Noga Shaham viola  
Itai Navon piano

Ödön Pártos (1907-1977)	Yizkor (In Memoriam) (1947)
Clara Schumann (1819-1896)	3 Romances for viola and piano Op. 22 (1853) <i>Romance in D flat • Romance in G minor • Romance in B flat</i>
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	Intermezzo from <i>F-A-E Sonata</i> (1853)
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Scherzo from <i>F-A-E Sonata</i> (1853)
Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)	Violin Sonata in D minor 'Ballade' (dedicated to George Enescu) Op. 27 No. 3 (1923)
Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	Rhapsody No. 1 BB94a (1928 rev. 1929) <i>I. Lassú. Moderato • II. Friss. Allegretto moderato</i>



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The great fortune in the life of **Clara Schumann** née Wieck (1819-96) – as she saw it – was to fall in love and marry a composing genius, Robert Schumann. Her great misfortune in life – one might argue – was the same. Fêted as one of the leading pianists of her age, she was also a gifted composer. But since Robert made her the conveyor belt for their many babies, his superficial support of her composing endeavours was countered by concrete family demands (she produced almost as many children as opus numbers during their marriage).

Clara composed her 3 Romances Op. 22 in July 1853, dedicating them to their friend, the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. They belong among her 'last' works, for she hardly ever composed again. In stylistic terms they are indebted to the music of her husband and of another friend, Felix Mendelssohn – their intensely lyrical content is at times redolent of his 'songs without words'. But even where their mood might seem to reflect the bourgeois salon, phrases here and there are subtly elongated or shortened, little cross-rhythms come and go, and unexpected harmonies intrude that suggest a more complex sensibility. After Robert's mental decline the following year, Clara returned to her career as a piano virtuoso in order to feed the family. A pity she did not resume composing; the music world would have been the richer for it.

The *F-A-E Sonata* for violin and piano is also dedicated to Joachim. It was a composite effort, composed in mid-October 1853 by **Robert Schumann** (1810-56) and two of his younger friends. Albert Dietrich wrote the opening movement; Schumann wrote the second, *Intermezzo*, and the *Finale*; and the 20-year-old **Johannes Brahms** (1833-97) – who had only just arrived at the Schumanns' doorstep that same month – provided the *Scherzo*. 'F-A-E' is an abbreviation of Joachim's personal motto at the time – 'Frei, aber einsam' ('free but lonely') – and these three letters, turned into notes, thread their way through the movements by Schumann and Dietrich. Oddly, it's quite absent from the movement composed by Brahms, almost as if he didn't get the memo about the point of the piece. The second theme of his *Scherzo*, however, does quote from the opening of Dietrich's movement. The Sonata was presented as a surprise to its dedicatee on 28 October 1853, who promptly had to play it to Clara's accompaniment while guessing which movement was by whom. It is seldom performed complete today, the movements on our programme being the two most popular.

**Eugène Ysaÿe** (1858-1931) was a Belgian violinist and one of the most celebrated virtuosos of his day. He was in fact a multi-talented performer – after the First World War, he even accepted the post of conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra – but it is as a composer that his reputation deserves to

rest. Much of his oeuvre was focused on works for his own instrument, including the 6 Sonatas Op. 27 (1923) that were inspired by hearing Joseph Szigeti perform solo violin works by JS Bach. All six are very different, though in their use of intricate counterpoint and in their exploration of the sonic possibilities of the solo instrument, the spirit of Bach hovers behind all of them. Each is dedicated to a different colleague; the Third, on our programme today, was dedicated to George Enescu from Romania, another violinist-conductor-composer whose gifts mirrored Ysaÿe's own. This Sonata is cast in a single movement (entitled 'Ballade') and begins with strange, meandering lines devoid of any audible key or metre. It is in two distinct sections – the first slow, the second fast – though the impression it conveys is of a single sweep of music. It closes in a torrent of impossibly virtuosic notes that sound almost as if Ysaÿe were trying to recall Bach's D-minor solo *Chaconne* from memory in the midst of an inebriated haze.

**Ödön Pártos** (1907-77) was born in Budapest. He took violin lessons there with Eugene Ormandy, then studied at the local Conservatory under Zoltan Kodály in the 1920s. After playing in orchestras in Lucerne and Berlin he emigrated to Israel in 1938, working for several years as the principal violist of the then Palestine Symphony Orchestra. Pártos's early works were clearly influenced by Béla Bartók, and after moving to Israel in 1938 he was keen to achieve a Bartókian synthesis of the music of the West and of the Mizrahi, 'eastern' Jews, being convinced that Israeli music should reflect local traditions. He also played a major role in establishing the music life of the new state of Israel, presiding for many years over the Samuel Rubin Israel Academy of Music in Tel Aviv. Pártos's *Yizkor (In Memoriam)* for viola and piano was composed in 1947 under the impact of the Holocaust and is perhaps his work that is most often performed today. Its impassioned viola cantilena ebbs and flows, unfolding a compelling power that is maintained until the music subsides at the close.

**Béla Bartók** (1881-1945) wrote his two *Rhapsodies* for violin and piano in 1928. In contrast to his recently completed, astringent Third String Quartet, these *Rhapsodies* are tonal, based on folk materials, and indeed almost 'folksy' in style. Bartók here retains the slow-fast, 'lassú/friss' formal scheme of the traditional *verbunkos* recruiting dances that Franz Liszt had already employed many decades before in his own 'Hungarian' works. The first *Rhapsody* was dedicated to the violinist Joseph Szigeti (the same who had inspired Ysaÿe to his solo sonatas), though it was actually Zoltán Székely who gave its first performance, in London on 4 March 1929, accompanied by the composer.

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