

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 23 May 2022 7.30pm

## Wigmore Soloists

Isabelle van Keulen violin

Benjamin Gilmore violin

Rachel Roberts viola

Adrian Brendel cello

Tim Gibbs double bass

Michael Collins clarinet

Fiona Kelly flute

Robin O'Neill bassoon

Phil Cobb trumpet

Alberto Menéndez Escribano horn

Michael McHale piano

CLASSIC *f*M

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

**Johann Nepomuk Hummel** (1778-1837)

Septett militaire in C Op. 114 (1829)

*I. Allegro con brio • II. Adagio •*

*III. Menuetto. Allegro • IV. Finale. Vivace*

**Leoš Janáček** (1854-1928)

Concertino (1925)

*I. Moderato • II. Più mosso • III. Con moto • IV. Allegro*

*Interval*

**Bohuslav Martinů** (1890-1959)

La revue de cuisine (1927)

*I. Prolog • II. Tango • III. Charleston • IV. Finale*

**Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904)

Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Op. 81 (1887)

*I. Allegro ma non tanto • II. Dumka. Andante con moto •*

*III. Scherzo 'Furiant'. Molto vivace - Poco tranquillo • IV. Finale. Allegro*

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All four composers featured in this evening's programme hailed from the historic Central European territories of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, which at the time of the composers' births were all ruled over by Austria's Habsburg monarchy. By the late 18th Century, the Austrian capital was the undisputed hub of Central European art music, but its wider hinterland – especially the Slavonic territories that formed a substantial part of the Habsburgs' vast domains – spawned an incredible wealth of musical talent, much of which gravitated towards Vienna.

One notable example was **Hummel**. A native of what was then known as Pressburg (today the Slovak capital Bratislava), while still a child Hummel moved to Vienna, where he studied with Mozart and Haydn and later became a friend of both Beethoven and Schubert.

Unlike the latter composers, Hummel lived well into the Romantic era, and the transition from Classical to Romantic styles can be clearly traced in his output. Both Classical and Romantic elements can be heard in his Piano Septet No. 2, composed in 1829 and published the following year with the title *Grosses Septette militaire*. With its prominent trumpet part, the work harks back to the vogue for military-tinged works that prevailed in Vienna around the turn of the century. Its scoring for mixed ensemble also places it in the tradition of such genial Classical chamber works as Beethoven's Septet (1799-1800) and Schubert's Octet (1824). At the same time, the dreamy slow movement and the exuberant *Finale* show why Hummel had such a profound influence on the next generation of Romantic composers – Chopin and Mendelssohn in particular.

One of the later musical manifestations of the Romantic era was the emergence of national styles distinct from the musical mainstream represented by the Austro-German tradition. Dvořák, Janáček and Martinů were much more aware of their Bohemian and Moravian identities than earlier composers from the same region had been and were proud to give voice to these identities in their music.

Both Dvořák's Piano Quintet No. 2 Op. 81 and Janáček's *Concertino* were written at their composers' country retreats (at Vysoká in Central Bohemia and Hukvaldy in North Moravia respectively) and both attest to their creators' delight in the beauty of their surroundings.

For **Dvořák**, the success that finally came his way in the mid-1880s meant that he was able to have a summer home built on the country estate that belonged to his sister-in-law Josefina and her husband, Count Kounic. From then on, the composer and his family spent practically all their holidays at this rural idyll, where Dvořák found the atmosphere more conducive to creativity than anywhere else.

His feeling of contentment at Vysoká is abundantly clear from the Piano Quintet No. 2 (1887), one of the many pieces he composed there during the last two decades of his life. Its warm-hearted

lyricism and infectiously vivacious rhythms make it one of his most deeply personal and at the same time most popular chamber music works.

Like Dvořák, **Janáček** acquired his country cottage at a time when he had finally achieved international recognition and was enjoying a new-found contentment. Janáček's rural retreat from 1921 onwards was in his birthplace, the picturesque village of Hukvaldy, to which he would escape whenever his busy schedule allowed. Removed from the distractions of city life, he enjoyed the closeness to nature, and several works written during this period reflect this. His sense of affinity with the natural world and his delight in the Moravian countryside bore fruit first in the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1922-3) and then in the *Concertino*.

While staying in Hukvaldy in April 1925, Janáček wrote to his muse Kamila Stösslová that he was working on 'a piano concerto', to which he intended to give the title 'Spring'. This was the work that later became the *Concertino*, and although the published version gives no hint of a programme, Janáček clearly suggested elsewhere that he associated certain passages with various woodland creatures – including a deer, a squirrel and a hedgehog.

While the Dvořák and Janáček works in this programme are the products of the composers' love for their native countryside, **Martinů's** *La revue de cuisine* owes its existence to a much more cosmopolitan source of inspiration. Though Martinů always acknowledged his roots in the small town of Polička in the Czech-Moravian highlands, from an early age he felt the need to spread his wings and experience the latest international musical trends.

This urge to explore the world of music beyond the Central European tradition he had grown up in led him to move to Paris in 1923. The city was then a magnet for modernists of all kinds – a teeming metropolis where artists were no longer in thrall to stale traditions, and where irreverence was for the first time regarded as a virtue.

For Martinů, the French capital's willingness to embrace musical modernism was like a breath of fresh air, and he enthusiastically adopted the iconoclasm that characterised its artistic life. One of the first exciting new genres he encountered in Paris was jazz, and elements of jazz were to become a hallmark of his style for most of the 1920s.

Martinů considered *La revue de cuisine* – which began life as a score for an absurdist ballet – to be his best jazz-inspired work, and after hearing his delightful take on James P Johnson's classic *Charleston*, few would argue with him. The musical idiom may seem worlds away from the style of his earlier compatriots, but with its irrepressible spontaneity and rhythmic verve, the work is still very much in the Czech tradition of chamber music.

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