

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 24 October 2023  
7.30pm

## Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

Alec Frank-Gemmill horn  
Ben Goldscheider horn  
Elena Urioste violin  
Savitri Grier violin  
Edgar Francis viola  
Laura van der Heijden cello  
Chi-chi Nwanoku double bass  
Tom Poster piano

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Sextet in E flat Op. 81b (?1795)  
*I. Allegro con brio • II. Adagio • III. Rondo. Allegro*

Carl Goldmark (1830-1915) Piano Quintet No. 2 Op. 54 (1914)  
*I. Sehr mässig - Allegro non troppo • II. Adagio •  
III. Sehr langsam - Allegro moderato •  
IV. Moderato assai*

### Interval

Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942) Jagdstück (1939)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Piano Quintet in A D667 'Trout' (1819)  
*I. Allegro vivace • II. Andante •  
III. Scherzo. Presto • IV. Thema. Andantino - Allegretto •  
V. Finale. Allegro giusto*

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**Beethoven** didn't think much of this piece – in fact, he didn't even think very much *about* it. Its opus number is wholly misleading. 'Sextet of mine' he scribbled on the manuscript first horn part. 'God knows where the rest of it is'. Beethoven seems to have composed the piece in Vienna in late 1794 or early 1795. He simply didn't bother publishing it for 15 years, presumably after a thorough rummage around his famously chaotic apartment.

Commentators often write of Beethoven's early music 'straining the bounds of classical form', and while that's not really true here – the Sextet's three short movements are deftly and stylishly proportioned – it's definitely the case that the Sextet requires some skilled players. The result gives us a spirited and entertaining portrait of a young composer paying his dues, and gives horn players then and now an irresistible workout. And it does it all with wit, enthusiasm and (in the poised, Haydn-like *Adagio*) real beauty. The 25-year old Beethoven aims to charm, amuse and delight – and more than two centuries later, he still does exactly that.

Many young composers have posed as rebels. The young **Carl Goldmark** was unlucky enough to be mistaken for one, and in the aftermath of the unsuccessful 1848 revolution in Hungary, while working as a theatre violinist in Győr, he narrowly avoided execution by firing squad. This son of a Hungarian synagogue cantor made a career in Vienna: he went on to become an admired violin teacher (his pupils included the young Sibelius), an associate of Brahms and the composer of seven operas, of which the first, *Die Königin von Saba* (1875) was highly popular in Germany and Austria until the 1930s, when Nazism drove Goldmark's music from the repertoire.

Goldmark composed chamber music throughout his long career. The Second Piano Quintet dates from the very end: 'Last work' proclaimed the cover of the first edition when it was published in a war-stricken Vienna in 1916, a year after Goldmark's death at the age of 84. Expansive and virtuosic, it's the work of a composer who'd spent his life at the heart of Central European Romanticism. Sweeping outer movements are punctuated with moments of high – one might even say operatic – drama; while the two central movements (an overcast *Adagio* and a featherlight slow-fast scherzo) evoke the worlds of Schumann and Brahms. But the ideas are all Goldmark's own: and the proud Hungarian rhythms that open the first movement come full circle in the Quintet's finale – as sunlight breaks through rolling stormclouds in the very last bars.

Alma Mahler's memoirs are peppered with anecdotes about **Alexander Zemlinsky**. One concerns the dinner party in Vienna in November 1901 at which, aged 22, she met her first husband:

There was a discussion about beauty. 'Beauty!' Mahler said. 'The head of Socrates is beautiful'. I agreed and added that in my eyes Alexander von Zemlinsky, the musician, was a

beauty. He was almost the ugliest man I had ever seen – and yet the force of his intellect was felt in every glance of his eyes and every one of his abrupt movements.

As conductor, composer and teacher, Zemlinsky was at the centre of musical life in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna; and like many of its survivors, he died in exile (in his case, in New York). Despite everything, it was 'in a mood of complete happiness' (according to his wife) that he agreed to write this short, exuberant 'Hunting piece' for two horns and piano for an American publisher of educational music in the summer of 1939. The horn has been the instrument of the hunt since before the Baroque era, and in a strange land, Zemlinsky draws cheerfully on a tradition that extended through Mozart, Weber and Wagner to the symphonies of Mahler, which he knew so well.

Friendship inspired **Schubert's** 'Trout' Quintet. It was written at the request of Sylvester Paumgartner, the assistant manager of an iron mine in Steyr, Upper Austria and a keen amateur cellist. Schubert and his friends often stayed with Paumgartner during their summer rambles through Austria – after all, as Schubert put it, 'the countryside round Steyr is unimaginably lovely'. The friends regularly entertained themselves with chamber music, and on one of these visits (most probably in 1819) Paumgartner requested a piano quintet from Schubert with the same instrumentation as Hummel's recently published Quintet Op. 87. He also requested that one of the movements use the melody of 'Die Forelle' – like many of Schubert's friends, he was 'quite taken with the delicate little song'.

But that's all we know of the Quintet until it appears for sale, a year after Schubert's death, in a catalogue issued by the Viennese publisher Joseph Czerny. No analysis, then – just a few waypoints worth mentioning, on this happiest of summer journeys. The exuberant opening flourish and its lyrical answer set the tone for the whole of the *Allegro vivace*, which bubbles along on a crystal-clear stream of piano semiquavers and triplets. The sweet, songful *Andante* opens in F major – the key of Beethoven's 'Pastoral' symphony – and Beethoven would have approved of the *Scherzo's* energy, too – as well as its gleeful humour.

And then we're into the famous 'Forelle' variations, during which the melody is shared, naturally, between all five instruments. It's so infectious that the *Finale* – after beginning as the least martial *Marche Militaire* ever penned – can't help but find room for the 'Forelle' theme as well. This is the kind of detail that musicologists like to hail as evidence of a formal breakthrough. If they haven't, maybe it's because it's so indisputably clear that Schubert's only serious purpose, as he brings his Quintet to a close, is to give delight.

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