

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 26 February 2024  
1.00pm

Pieter Wispelwey cello  
Paolo Giacometti piano

- Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Sonata in A D574 'Duo' (1817) arranged by Pieter Wispelwey for cello and piano  
*I. Allegro moderato • II. Scherzo. Presto • III. Andantino • IV. Allegro vivace*
- Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849) Prelude in B minor Op. 28 No. 6 (1838-9) arranged by Pieter Wispelwey for cello and piano  
  
Prelude in A minor Op. 28 No. 2 (1838-9) arranged by Pieter Wispelwey for cello and piano
- Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953) Cello Sonata in C Op. 119 (1949)  
*I. Andante grave • II. Moderato • III. Allegro ma non troppo*



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



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



Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable. To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/audiencefund>

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



**Schubert's** Sonata in A D574 dates from August 1817, but although chronologically this is no great distance from the three Opus 137 sonatas, the advance in maturity and the more ambitious scale are striking. The leisurely initial bars for piano suggest that this will be a broad and expansive *Allegro moderato*, an impression confirmed by the long melody which follows. This is a strikingly original opening paragraph. Much is made of Beethoven's influence on Schubert, yet his own musical personality was confidently established, even in this youthful sonata. In view of its stature, publisher Diabelli's retitling with the diminutive 'sonatina' is especially misguided. Schubert's fondness for employing more than the traditional two key-centres in an exposition is exercised here, while the variety of material is impressively wide. In the development section (a mere 25 bars) a territory of new and surprising emotional scope is explored. Compared with the music of Schubert's first three sonatas, this movement breaks new ground in terms of invention, unpredictability and expressive range.

The following *Presto* is a scherzo with irregular phrase-lengths and some syncopation. Beginning wittily with a simple ascending chromatic scale, the trio feels much more relaxed, apart from a degree of restlessness created by further irregular phrasing. While the following *Andantino*, a rondo in C major, has a principal melody of charming innocence, Schubert's harmonic imagination is at its most fertile. An episode in D flat major is based on an attractive dialogue between the two instruments. The final recall of the opening melody is delightfully combined with a little accompaniment figure borrowed from the middle section. Initially sounding like a reference to the scherzo, with even more rhythmic wit, the *Allegro vivace* finale continues to show this kinship – almost as though Schubert takes elements of the scherzo material as his starting-point. In the development section there is a *pianissimo* passage in which contrary motion is treated playfully. Alternating with a capricious rhythmic character are melodies of characteristic grace and lyricism, but at the very end Schubert dismisses the previous *pianissimo* phrases with six bars of emphatic *fortissimo*.

**Chopin's 24 Preludes** Op. 28 – one in each of the major and minor keys – date from 1838-9. To escape the dampness of Paris, Chopin spent the winter of 1838-9 with his lover George Sand at Valldemossa on Majorca, taking with him his copy of Bach's *48 Preludes and Fugues*. The sixth of the Opus 28 set is sometimes called the 'Cello Prelude', as its melody – played by the left hand almost throughout – is ideally suited to that instrument. Marked *Lento assai*, this beguiling, melancholy piece was played on the organ at Chopin's funeral.

In the strange A minor Prelude Op. 28 No. 2 (marked *Lento*), oscillating quavers in the left hand precede the entry of the melody, a five-bar phrase which Chopin

repeats at different pitches. Although Chopin was significantly influenced by Bach, the dissonant left hand part of this piece reveals an advanced harmonic language which inhabits an utterly different world from that of the Baroque period.

In 1947, when **Prokofiev** first heard the 20-year-old Mstislav Rostropovich in a performance of his Cello Concerto of 1938, he was inspired to compose a sonata for him. In the compositions of his late period Prokofiev favoured the cello – he re-worked the concerto with Rostropovich's assistance, while a concertino and a solo cello sonata were left unfinished. Rostropovich's phenomenal artistry was largely responsible for keeping Prokofiev's inspiration burning at a most difficult time for Soviet composers. In 1948 he was one of the composers who suffered official criticism in the notorious Zhdanov Decree, but in answer to this humiliation he produced an affirmative, attractively diatonic cello sonata, completed in the spring of 1949. In keeping with the authorities' demand for more accessible music, this sonata is especially direct and cloudless, and almost entirely free from the subversive and abrasive elements common to many of Prokofiev's earlier works.

At the head of the manuscript Prokofiev wrote, 'Man! The word has such a proud sound!' - a quotation from Maxim Gorky's play *The Lower Depths*, aptly reflected in the noble bearing of the opening theme. At the recapitulation the melody sounds even more dignified in its sonorous octave-doubling. This first movement is blessed with an abundance of memorable material, even for such a phenomenally gifted melodist as Prokofiev. A contrasting rhythmic idea is introduced by the cello - *moderato animato* - and the coda has some manic passage-work, but the over-riding impression is of radiant eloquence and simplicity. The magically poetic ending includes the striking effect of tremolo-like oscillation between two harmonics.

The central movement is predominantly playful and childlike, lacking the malicious or sardonic undercurrents of many Prokofiev scherzos, and has a contrasting middle section based on a generously expressive melody with wide intervals. This is Prokofiev at his most endearing. The principal melody of the sonata-rondo finale, also characterised by wide intervals, establishes a genial tone, but here, as in the opening movement, the composer's fondness for unprepared shifts of key creates piquancy. One episode, marked *andantino*, introduces a rather intimate mood amidst the prevailing high spirits, before the coda recalls in grandiose manner the very opening theme of the sonata. Prokofiev was seriously ill in hospital when Rostropovich and Sviatoslav Richter gave the première of this captivating work on 1 March 1950. He died three years later, on the same day as Stalin - 5 March 1953.

© Philip Borg-Wheeler 2024

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*