

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 26 March 2023
7.30pm

Supported by the Sir Jack Lyons Charitable Trust



Avi Avital mandolin
Ksenija Sidorova accordion

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)	Praeludium and Allegro in the style of Pugnani (pub. 1905)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)	Sonata in E minor K304 (1778) <i>I. Allegro • II. Tempo di Menuetto</i>
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	Suite italienne (1932) <i>I. Introduzione • II. Serenata • III. Tarantella • IV. Minuetto e Finale</i>
Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	6 Romanian Folk Dances BB68 (1915) <i>Stick Dance • Sash Dance • In One Spot • Horn Dance • Romanian Polka • Fast Dance</i>
Interval	
Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)	7 canciones populares españolas (1914) <i>El paño moruno • Seguidilla murciana • Asturiana • Jota • Nana • Canción • Polo</i>
Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)	Aria (Cantilena) from <i>Bachianas Brasileiras</i> No. 5 (1938)
Manuel de Falla	Danza española from <i>La vida breve</i> (c.1904-13)
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)	Introduction et rondo capriccioso in A minor Op. 28 (1863)

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Recycling has been at the heart of western music for more than a thousand years. This evening's programme embraces some of the many ways in which composers have used existing material as the stock for new works or otherwise engaged in creative dialogue with the past. It also celebrates the venerable art of transcription, an essential lubricant in the development of a classical canon for instruments that until recent years were rare visitors to the concert hall. Works that began life for various permutations of violin, voice, piano and cello ensemble sound here like pieces conceived for mandolin and accordion.

Beyond being an outstanding violin virtuoso, **Fritz Kreisler** was also a veritable master of musical deception. *Praeludium and Allegro*, allegedly arranged from an original work by the 18th-century Piedmontese composer Gaetano Pugnani, is among his most attractive hoaxes. Its appeal rests on the artless strength of Kreisler's chordal introduction and darting melodic elaborations on a simple harmonic progression. When challenged about the ethics of passing off fake compositions, Kreisler responded in unrepentant terms: 'Whoever had heard a work by Pugnani, Cartier, Francoeur, Porpora, Padre Martini or Stamitz before I began to compose in their names? They lived exclusively as paragraphs in musical reference books, and their work, when existing and authenticated, lay mouldering in monasteries and old libraries.'

While **Mozart's** two-movement Sonata in E minor K304 was written in Paris in August 1778, its expressive language owes much to lessons learned in Mannheim, home to music marked by striking dynamic contrasts and grand rhetorical gestures. Above all, it reflects the young composer's grief at the recent loss of his mother, who died during their stay in the French capital. The sonata, observed the musicologist Alfred Einstein, 'springs from the most profound depths of emotion, and goes beyond the [conventional] alternating dialogue style to knock at those gates of the great world of drama that Beethoven was to fling wide open.'

In the wake of the First World War, aggressive modernism felt out of tune with the times. **Stravinsky** was among those who turned to the past for models of a new music, supposedly objective and free from emotional excess. His ballet *Pulcinella*, first staged in Paris by the Ballets Russes in 1920, evoked the high spirits of the 18th-century *commedia dell'arte* with help from music then attributed to the famous Neapolitan composer Pergolesi (but now known to be the work of, among others, Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer and Domenico Gallo). Stravinsky later recycled up to half-a-dozen movements from *Pulcinella* in several versions of the *Suite italienne*.

Bartók was spared military service during the First World War on health grounds. He spent the conflict

collecting folksongs, at first from the Austro-Hungarian Army's diverse ranks, later on field trips to Slovak villages, Romanian-speaking parts of Transylvania and Hungarian peasant communities. The *Romanian Folk Dances*, destined to become one of his most popular works, demonstrate Bartók's fascination with modal melody and harmony. He composed the set in 1915 as six brief piano pieces and arranged it for orchestra two years later. Bartók follows the rules of modal harmony to give each of his folk-tune settings a wholly authentic flavour.

Manuel de Falla achieved prominence as composer and pianist after moving to Paris in 1907. He returned home to Spain seven years later at the start of the so-called Great War, carrying the recently finished manuscript of *7 canciones populares españolas* with him. Falla's imaginative harmonies enhanced the already appealing melodies and rhythmic élan of his selection of traditional Spanish folksongs. According to one commentator, they were greeted at their première in 1915 'with clear indifference, with polite scorn and complete incomprehension.... Today they are the recording maker's most profitable business. The amount their author earned from them in rights over fifteen years would not even have bought him a bottle of champagne.'

Largely self-taught, **Heitor Villa-Lobos** mined Brazil's native musical resources to create a synthesis of styles that at first attracted critical derision and later, widespread popularity. Colourful instrumental effects, strong rhythms and affecting melodies are among the enduring hallmarks of his musical language, harnessed to powerful effect in his nine *Bachianas Brasileiras*. 'The dual, "bi-cultural" titles given to most of the movements in the [*Bachianas*] series,' notes Villa-Lobos scholar Simon Wright, 'provide the real clue to what Villa-Lobos was about: a true synthesis of Brazilian and European musical language.' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5* for solo soprano and cello orchestra comprises two movements, written in 1938 and 1945 respectively, of which the first, the melancholy *Cantilena*, spins an introspective saudade.

Marcel Proust modelled the character Vinteuil, composer of the celebrated 'little phrase' in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, in part on **Saint-Saëns**. The non-fictional composer's *Introduction et rondo capriccioso* was written in 1863, originally for violin and orchestra. It was inspired by and dedicated to the Spanish virtuoso violinist Pablo de Sarasate, who had asked Saint-Saëns to compose a concerto for him. Sarasate's astonishing technical facility was ideally suited to the bold tunes, swift passagework and vertiginous leaps of the *Introduction et rondo capriccioso*, a showpiece that soon became a popular favourite.

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