

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 30 December 2023  
7.30pm

Tamsin Waley-Cohen violin  
George Xiaoyuan Fu piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Violin Sonata in B flat K454 (1784)

*I. Largo - Allegro*

*II. Andante*

*III. Allegretto*

David Ludwig (b.1974)

Swan Song (2013) *UK première*

*Interval*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Op. 47 'Kreutzer' (1802-3)

*I. Adagio sostenuto - Presto*

*II. Andante con variazioni*

*III. Finale. Presto*

CLASSIC *fm* 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



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



'We now have here the famous Strinasacchi from Mantua,' **Mozart** wrote to his father on 24 April 1784, 'a very good violinist. She has a great deal of taste and feeling in her playing. I am this moment composing a sonata which we are going to play together on Thursday at her concert in the theatre.'

This musician of taste and feeling was Regina Strinasacchi, one of rather few women of the period to take on the life of a touring virtuosa. According to an old tradition, Mozart did not have time to write out his own part and so placed a sheet of blank paper on the piano at the performance. The story goes on to become less likely in holding that the emperor came on stage after the performance and asked to inspect the 'music'.

What he would have heard, if not been able to view, was a slow introduction to establish the dialogue character of the work, leading into a sonata *Allegro* where the approach to the second subject comes by way of a crunch into the minor. (This juncture becomes more elaborate in the recapitulation.) There is not much difference in character between the two subjects, which may be why Mozart defines the key of the second, F major, with a folksy tune towards the end of the exposition.

Strinasacchi's - and Mozart's - sensitivity would have been on show in the slow movement, in E flat with a middle section traversing minor keys. The rondo finale gains extra humour as it comes towards its close.

Up next, *Swan Song* will probably be an introduction for many of us to the music of **David Luwig**, a grandson of Rudolf Serkin and composer of a solid output of concert works. Of this piece, dating from 2013, he has written as follows:

'*Swan Song* is one of three pieces of mine that draw directly from the materials of a past musical work, in this case Schubert's Fantasy for Violin and Piano in C major, D. 934. I felt like I was writing a play with many characters who are having separate conversations about the same piece of music.

'The work models Schubert in weaving in and out of a chain of related passages that linked together form a fantasy, playing for a little over 15 minutes. The opening passage appears several times throughout the piece, each time a little different (but always sparkling!), as if transformed by all of the music preceding it. In between are fast passages with quick exchanges between violinist and pianist, music in the extremes of volume and register, and many little games and conversations with Schubert.

'There are many characters, with their exits and their entrances, each making a statement and then stepping back for the next to take centre stage. At one point, Schubert himself makes a brief appearance, but he is a phantom who emerges into the light and returns to the background as quickly as

he appeared. Finally, after increasingly fast music that seems to plough headlong into a brusque ending, hope appears, rising toward a resolution of the quiet questions asked in the first twinkling sonorities of the piece.'

**Beethoven** completed his ninth, penultimate violin sonata in 1803, only a year after finishing his Op. 30 set but at a time of great change in his music. This is a sonata on a much bigger scale, a work bigger, too, in its passion and drama, with the length and range of a symphony. Like the Mozart sonata heard earlier, it was composed for a visitor to Vienna, here George Bridgetower, born in north-eastern Poland to a German mother and a father probably from the Caribbean. Beethoven exuberantly dedicated to him this sonata, which the two of them gave at a morning concert on 24 May 1803. However, a careless confidential remark Bridgetower subsequently made to Beethoven, concerning a lady, enraged the composer, who changed the dedication in favour of another violinist he had heard in Vienna, the Frenchman Rodolphe Kreutzer. By all accounts Kreutzer was dismissive of the work and never played it, and yet his is the name invoked every time it is now played – and recalled, too, by the story Tolstoy wrote in which the sonata has a part, and by the string quartet Janáček composed with reference to the Tolstoy story. Luckily Bridgetower, though he lived into his eighties, never realised quite how much his loose tongue had cost him.

The sonata is opened, quite unusually, by the violin alone, playing a four-bar theme in A major. This the piano repeats, also alone, but turns it toward the minor, innocence yielding to experience - and the sonata movement that soon follows is indeed in A minor, though the secondary key is E major, as would be expected for a sonata in A major. The material in this second key includes a theme in slow chords (an oasis in so much speed and turbulence) and a rollicking melody. There is a sense in the development of dynamic search; the recapitulation takes the violin super-high – though the next movement will take it higher.

This middle movement, removed to the calm of F major, expansively presents a grand melody and takes it through five variations, of which the first two progressively accelerate the surface activity to the level of triplets, then demisemiquavers, the latter carrying the violin to extreme heights. The third variation is in the minor; the fourth and fifth work to restore the music's confidence.

For the *Finale* Beethoven seized on the sonata rondo in tarantella rhythm he had originally written for the A major sonata of Op. 30, perhaps feeling that, given its scale, intensiveness and variety, his new sonata was the better home for it.

© Paul Griffiths 2023

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*