

WIGMORE HALL 125

Sunday 30 November 2025
7.30pm

This concert is supported by The Seguin Fides Charitable Trust

Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

Fiona Kelly flute	Rosalind Ventris viola
Cristina Mateo Sáez clarinet	Laura van der Heijden cello
Aaron Akugbo trumpet	Ruohua Li double bass
Elena Urioste violin	Jamaal Kashim harp
Nathan Amaral violin	Tom Poster piano

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)

Septett militaire in C Op. 114 (1829)

*I. Allegro con brio • II. Adagio •
III. Menuetto. Allegro • IV. Finale. Vivace*

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Piano Trio Op. 150 (1938)

*I. Allegro • II. Lento espressivo – Presto •
III. Allegro con brio*

Interval

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Serenade for flute, clarinet, strings and harp (1957)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Septet in E flat Op. 65 (1880)

*I. Prélude: Allegro moderato – Più allegro •
II. Menuet: Tempo di minuetto moderato •
III. Intermède: Andante • IV. Gavotte et Final:
Allegro non troppo – Animato*



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Please note the programme has changed slightly since these programme notes were written.

Creating a chamber programme can be a little like assembling a puzzle without knowing what the final picture will be: each piece must not only fit (without forcing, of course, something I was once guilty of) but illuminate the others, allowing the audience to discover otherwise hidden connections. There are, of course, those programmes that offer you their themes on a platter – love and loss and grief – but the real skill is in excavating hidden gems and finding the best places for them to sit alongside one another, each glinting, but never overshadowing the next. Tonight's sequence is built from works that, despite the distinction of their composers, remain relative rarities. Beach and Saint-Saëns are familiar names, known for other pieces written at other points in their respective careers. And while Hummel and Still surface from time to time, they aren't programmed nearly enough to be considered truly familiar. It is precisely in this territory that Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective excels: uncovering undervalued repertoire, and finding resonances among seemingly disparate composers. Framed by two septets that each feature the trumpet in refreshingly unexpected ways, this programme traces shifting conceptions of instrumental colour and character across more than a century.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel – Mozart's young protégé and later Beethoven's colleague – grew up dazzling audiences before he was tall enough to see over a keyboard. Once he had debuted as a performer at the age of nine, and gone on to work as a konzert- and kapell-meister across Austria and Germany, he distilled his experience into major chamber works, including the *Grand Trio Concertant* and *Grand Quintetto*. His *Septett militaire* of 1829 joins the era's taste for ceremonial splendour, its unusual mix of piano, winds and strings bringing outdoor pomp and brilliance into the salon. The *Allegro con brio* opens with a glittering piano call answered by the treble instruments, a sparkling start, until the clarinet offers a first moment of inwardness. The *Adagio* retreats further, before the trumpet resurfaces in the *Menuetto* with gentle humour, closing with a playful flourish. In the *Vivace*, Hummel marries Beethovenian drive to

airy lightness, ending with a gesture that seems almost to evaporate.

William Grant Still – another ground-breaking composer, often called the 'Dean of African American composers' – reshaped 20th-century American music. He, and the music he wrote, broke barriers for many composers to follow him; he was the first African American to conduct a major US orchestra, and the first to have a symphony performed by one. He wrote nine operas and arranged music for film but, like Beach, was plagued by ignorance along the course of his career. Nonetheless, he was prolific, and before he died in 1978, his pieces had been heard across the world. Still's *Serenade* (1957), written for the Great Falls High School in Montana, is a moving example of his understanding of orchestral colour and instrumentation, and the value of popular song influence in classical music. Scored for flute, clarinet, strings and harp, his *Serenade* is full of characteristic tenderness; it is a true *serenata*, or night song, sung perhaps by a man to his lover under the shade of a beautiful evening.

Camille Saint-Saëns's Septet in E flat, Op. 65, returns us to the joyful (if unexpected) presence of the trumpet in chamber music. Written for Émile Lemoine's society La Trompette, it began as a single *Préambule* offered as a Christmas gift in 1879, before later begin expanded into a four-movement work for trumpet, piano and strings. Lemoine had, it is said, been begging the composer for a work that involved the trumpet for some time – the mathematician had helped to find the important chamber music society while a student at the École Polytechnique in Paris. Premiered in 1880 with Saint-Saëns at the piano, the septet blends 17th-century dance forms with an elegance that the composer is known for in his more popular works – one could imagine his swan from *Carnival of the Animals* here. The trumpet appears sparingly but with sparkle, brightening rather than dominating, creating an ebullient character of its own.

Together, these four pieces reveal the imaginative possibilities that arise when composers expand the boundaries of chamber music tradition; when they push against the odds; and when we allow their music to speak, at last, for itself.

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