

# WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 3 November 2022  
7.30pm

Isabelle Faust violin  
Antoine Tamestit viola

- Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe (c.1640-1700) Concert No. 41 'Le retour'  
*I. Le retour • II. En gigue en menuet •  
III. En gigue en courante •  
IV. Balet tendre en pianelle*
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Duo for violin and viola in B flat K424 (1783)  
*I. Adagio - Allegro • II. Andante cantabile •  
III. Tema con variazioni*
- György Kurtág (b.1926) Szigorouan Magánlevél a 80 évesnek (2001)  
Ligatura Y (1993 rev. 2003)
- Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) 3 Madrigals for violin and viola (1947)  
*Poco allegro • Andante • Allegro*
- Interval
- Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe Concert No. 3 'Le tendre'  
*I. Le tendre • II. Sarabande du tendre •  
III. Gavote la ferme • IV. Menuet du tendre*
- György Kurtág Vie silencieuse – Franz Emlékére (2001)  
Eine Blume für Tabea (2000)
- Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe Concert No. 44 'Tombeau les regrets'  
*I. Tombeau les regrets • II. Quarillon •  
III. Apel de Charon • IV. Les pleurs •  
V. Joye des Elizées • VI. Reprise: Les pleurs*
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Duo for violin and viola in G K423 (1783)  
*I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Rondeau. Allegro*

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While all composers must find practical ways to realise imagined sounds, some are compelled to redraw the boundaries of convention. **Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe** did so by adding a string to his bass viol, inventing sophisticated playing techniques and using so-called overspun bass strings - essentially gut strings wound with fine silver or copper wires. The instrument's enriched range of colours influenced his subsequent compositions and those of other musicians associated with the court of Louis XIV, Marin Marais among them. Sainte-Colombe also loosened the rules of composition, notably so in his 67 *Concerts à deux violes esgales*. Their unresolved dissonances and unexpected harmonic progressions help raise the expressive temperature of works that could otherwise pass as cold exercises in counterpoint. There's nothing cold about Concert No. 3, the aptly named 'Le tendre', with its meandering opening and echo passages, sudden silences in the *Sarabande* and melancholy *Menuet*.

Sainte-Colombe's volatile counterpoint commands attention in his Concert No. 41 'Le retour', in which he sweeps away a rather formal opening idea with a Cook's Tour of contrasting moods and textures. The movement's improvisatory feel flows through the blink-and-you'll-miss-it gigues that frame the more reserved menuet and resurface in the brief *Balet tendre*. The work closes with a graceful *pianelle*, a triple-time dance form apparently of Sainte-Colombe's invention. There is romanticism *avant la lettre* about Concert No. 44, 'Tombeau les regrets', or at least about its opening movement and *Les pleurs* ('The cries'), and a delightful sense of release in the final *Joye des Elizées*.

**György Kurtág's** search for new sonorities led him to deconstruct music's basic elements and rebuild them in strikingly original ways. His mature works often comprise musical fragments condensed within the span of a single piece to produce complex, kaleidoscopic layers of expression and meaning. These qualities coalesce in Kurtág's series of 21 string duos, part of his ongoing *Jelek, játékok és üzenetek* ('Signs, games and messages') for various string instruments. *Szigorouan Magánlevél a 80 évesnek* ('A strictly personal letter to the 80-year-old'), the penultimate piece in his collection of duos, was written in 2001 as a birthday tribute to the composer and musicologist András Szöllősy, creator of the 'S' number index system devised to catalogue Bartók's music. *Ligatura Y*, originally composed for string trio in 1993 and revised for violin and viola 20 years later, is a study in the counterpoint of sound and silence, its progress as natural (and susceptible to sudden changes of mood) as breathing. Originally a viola solo for Tabea Zimmermann, *Eine Blume für Tabea* was reimaged in 2000 to become the nineteenth *Jelek, játékok és üzenetek* duo.

Kurtág first met György Ligeti in September 1945 together with another young composer, Franz Sulyok, while they were waiting to take the entrance examination for a composition class at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. The city was in ruins;

food and accommodation were scarce; fuel for heating was non-existent. 'We hardly noticed the harshness of everyday life, however,' Ligeti recalled. 'The war was over and the city was pulsating with the variety and colour of its cultural and artistic life.' The three students, who spent cold evenings singing Mozart operas, became close friends and remained so after Sulyok and Ligeti fled Stalinist Hungary for respective refuge in France and Austria. 'Despite this geographical separation, our friendship has survived entirely intact,' noted Ligeti. 'When we meet up from time to time, we still recognise the consistency of our musical ideals, irrespective of the different ways in which we have developed since the years we spent together in Budapest.' The last of Kurtág's *Jelek, játékok és üzenetek* for string duo, *Vie silencieuse - Franz Emlékére*, written in memory of Sulyok in 2001, pays homage to his friend's gentle spirit.

In the summer of 1783, illness prevented Michael Haydn from meeting an order from the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg to supply several duets for violin and viola. **Mozart**, aware that his older colleague would lose his salary if he did not deliver, wrote two duos in haste and gave them to Haydn to present under his own name. 'In later years,' recalled two of Michael Haydn's pupils, 'we reminded ourselves with delight of this wonderful example of brotherly love; our master kept the original manuscript as a sacred relic, honourable to the memory of the immortal Mozart.' The two 'forgeries' set high technical demands for the violist. They were intentionally crafted in Haydn's style, signalled in the first duo by Mozart's choice of an *Adagio* rather than his customary andante and the popular melodies of its *Rondeau* and in the second by its theme and variations finale, perhaps more Joseph than Michael Haydn but nevertheless a departure from the Mozartian chromaticism of the work's opening *Adagio*.

Following a near-fatal fall from a balcony in Tanglewood in the summer of 1946, **Bohuslav Martinů** began his slow recovery with an extended stay in the United States. Despite bouts of depression and illness the following year, he worked on his *3 Madrigals* for violin and viola. His spirits were lifted by a return to the territory of English madrigals, which Martinů had studied in depth in the early 1920s, and the chance to explore the ideals of virtuosity, equality and thematic interplay present in Mozart's 'Michael Haydn' duos. The first madrigal combines symphonic swagger with the lightness of chamber music, the former marked by bold melodic gestures and double-stops, the latter by the playful dialogue between violin and viola. Martinů's central madrigal introduces shades of Mozart into its ghostly opening to form a lilting *Andante*, sublime in the eloquent simplicity of its final section. Mozart's spirit appears to meet the world of Moravian folk music in the final madrigal, tempered in the movement's mysterious moderato before returning for a headlong dash to the finish line.

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