

# WIGMORE HALL 125

Monday 3 November 2025  
1.00pm

Chloë Hanslip violin  
Danny Driver piano

Max Reger (1873-1916)

Suite im alten Stil Op. 93 (1906)

*I. Präludium. Allegro commodo • II. Largo •  
III. Fuge. Allegro con spirito*

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Fratres (1977)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor Op. 108 (1886-8)

*I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Un poco presto  
e con sentimento • IV. Presto agitato*



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**Max Reger** was born in Bavaria in 1873. An organist by training, his musical output was indebted to Bach and the chorale tradition, though the widespread influence of Wagner did not pass him by; in fact it was an early visit to Bayreuth that first convinced him to pursue a career in music, and the counterpoint of *Die Meistersinger* left a deep impression. Nonetheless it was in the realm of 'absolute' music rather than drama that Reger's interest lay, and he described his musical ideal as one of 'architectonic beauty, melodic and imitative magic'. Many of his works draw on traditional forms such as variations and fugue, though with a modern twist, and Schoenberg cited him as his forerunner in the use of 'developing variation' technique.

In one sense Reger's *Suite in the Old Style* for violin and piano, composed in 1906, typifies his retrospective outlook (a concerto 'in the old style' also followed in 1912). But the neo-Bachian *Prelude*, which starts with a rhythmic gesture recalling the third Brandenburg Concerto, has an obsessive contrapuntal character that defies the sectional neatness of a true Baroque form. Instead, chains of development are separated by a loosening of tempo, while the harmonic language takes an occasional Romantic turn. The expressive aria of the following *Largo* has a less obvious antique inspiration; a few progressions hint at Renaissance music, and there are possible shadows of a grave courtly dance. But there is nothing ambiguous about the final *Fugue*, which allows Reger's contrapuntal ingenuity full flight. Its winding subject starts in the piano, in quiet staccato, before a gentle *Meno mosso* section introduces a prevailing legato style that builds to a grand finish. Reger orchestrated the *Suite* in 1916, and it was the final orchestral work that he completed before his death at the age of 43.

**Arvo Pärt** celebrates his 90th birthday this year, and *Fratres* is one of the Estonian composer's most enduring works. It emerged shortly after his invention of the chant-inspired *Tintinnabuli* technique that brought his music international fame. Originally conceived without specific instrumentation, *Fratres* was premièred by the Early Music group Hortus Musicus in 1977, but now exists in many arrangements. The version for violin and piano was premièred in 1980.

The original *Fratres* consists of a recurring chordal theme over a drone, subtly varied each time according to mathematical principles, and punctuated by percussion strokes. Here, those parts are played by the piano – the inner voice is restricted to the A minor triad, while the outer voices move mostly stepwise, exploring a variety of sonorities and creating major-minor ambiguities. The closely related but distinct variations may shed light on the title, which is Latin for 'Brothers'.

The added violin part brings greater contrast to the work. A fast arpeggiated prelude outlines the theme, before the piano begins with an imitation of the

percussion strokes. As this chord sequence continues, the violin joins in or decorates it in highly varied ways. In doing so, the fascinating tension in the piece – between elements of constancy and change – is brought into stark relief.

**Brahms** was in his 40s before he began composing violin sonatas, the first of which emerged in the same year as his violin concerto. Eight years later, in 1886, he embarked on both the second and third sonatas during a fertile summer spent on the shores of Lake Thun in Switzerland – this holiday also saw the composition of a piano trio and cello sonata, so chamber music was evidently on his mind. He did not complete the third sonata for another two years, however, by which time he had sent it to his friend and former piano pupil Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, whose opinion he greatly valued. She praised the score, and suggested only a few minor amendments.

The third sonata is in D minor, and stands in contrast to its predecessor – that was a lyrical work in A major, evoking songs Brahms composed for the contralto Hermine Spies. There is an atmosphere of mystery to the opening *Allegro*, which begins softly with a drawn-out violin theme, shadowed by staggered rhythms in the piano. Though the music soon gains in strength, this curiously withheld quality reappears in the development section, which is anchored over a repeated A in the bass for 46 bars, while the violin plays bariolage – alternating the same note between different strings. It's an episode which returns for the coda, transposed to D major for a graceful close.

The following *Adagio* is song-like, with a flowing violin melody in D major over low piano chords. Its lyrical restraint soon gives way to ardent emotion, breaking out in high double-stopped thirds, stuttering rhythms and rolling arpeggios. Before taking the theme an octave higher, Brahms recycles a simple accompaniment figure in the piano part and gives it to the violin, transforming into an affecting melody of its own.

The element of mystery from the first movement returns with a *Scherzo* in F sharp minor. Its combination of tip-toeing figures and quicksilver arpeggios carry hints of a nocturnal fairytale, and while the texture stays light, both instruments are closely intertwined throughout. But such delicacy is swiftly banished by the *Presto agitato* finale, which throws piano and violin straight into big-boned chords with a motoring triplet rhythm. Even in its quieter moments, a sense of rising tension is never far away, and Brahms makes obsessive use of syncopation to drive a climax in the middle of the movement. But this dramatic culmination is also tightly controlled. Brahms resists any temptation towards the monumental, delivering instead a terse but powerful conclusion.

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