

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 4 December 2023
1.00pm

Santiago Cañón-Valencia cello
Naoko Sonoda piano

Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)	From <i>5 canciones populares argentinas</i> Op. 10 (1943) <i>Zamba • Triste arranged by Pierre Fournier</i>
Arturo Márquez (b.1950)	Lejanía Interior (2006)
Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)	Cello Sonata in D minor Op. 40 (1934) <i>I. Allegro non troppo - Largo • II. Allegro • III. Largo • IV. Allegro</i>
Gareth Farr (b.1968)	Shadow of the Hawk (1997)


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In his early phase of what he called 'objective nationalism', **Ginastera** used themes and idioms from Argentine folk music directly, a prime example being his set of songs *5 canciones populares argentinas* from 1943. The second and third numbers of this set are laments well suited to the cello's voice; this afternoon's arrangement of the former, *Triste*, was published by **Pierre Fournier**. The *triste* is a type of gaucho song, typically of lost love, as here, where the recurrent motif in the accompaniment, insisting on a resonating G, speaks of space and solitariness. Later, after the cello has moved into a higher register, Ginastera underpins it with a six-note chord that reproduces the tuning of a gaucho guitar and, implanted here, was to recur often in his music. The *zamba* is another Argentinian genre, a dance song, and again the subject of the original song is the feeling of aloneness after a love affair.

A longer Latin American soliloquy follows, but this time one designed specifically for cello: *Lejanía Interior* ('Inner Distance') by the Mexican composer **Arturo Márquez**. He had to wait until he was well into his 50s before he gained international renown, thanks to Gustavo Dudamel taking his *Danzón No. 2* on a tour of the United States and Europe with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra in 2007 (including a performance at the Proms). *Lejanía Interior* comes from the year before and was written for the Mexican cellist Carlos Prieto. Its seductive opening gives way to hectic dance, and this happens again on the way to an evolving middle section that takes us back to the initial materials.

Shostakovich composed his two cello concertos when he was in his 50s and his sonatas for violin and viola in his last years, but his Cello Sonata comes from much earlier, from 1934, between the première of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* in January 1934 and its denunciation two years later. Though the composer made his Fifth Symphony a public apology for the opera's 'errors', the Cello Sonata suggests that he was calming his style well before the notorious editorial appeared in *Pravda* - that, at the age of 27 he felt maturity beckoned.

The first movement begins in restless fashion, until the cello comes up with a tag that the piano takes as a cue for something very like a popular song of the period. This, providing the lyrical contrast common in a second subject, the cello happily takes up. Even more in keeping with tradition, a repeat of the exposition is indicated. The development is occupied with the first theme, leaving the song to reappear in the piano part, to announce the recapitulation. This

gambit is again not extraordinary, but what follows is: a reprise of the first subject in slow motion. Suddenly we are carried right through to the wintry landscapes of late Shostakovich.

Then the scherzo romps in with twirling from the cello and the piano dancing, the two roles soon being exchanged and intermingled. The short movement has space for a middle section, starting out with cello harmonics, but seems impatient to get back to the robustness with which it began.

Entering alone, the cello initiates a slow movement in which wandering is a way of life. Once more, with each note, each chord, each phrase crisply and coldly clear in an almost immobile tempo, we are close to the atmosphere of works lying 30 years and more in the future. The piano comes in as partner and, as if reassured, the cello starts to sing. Its song comes to a climax halfway through the movement, dies away, and is taken up by the piano, at first in a high register. As the piano resolves the harmony, the cello comes wandering in again to convey the music to a close.

The piano then comes up with a happy, skipping tune to serve as theme for the final rondo. As the end approaches, there is a move in a more troubled direction, but the instruments pull back just in time.

Both players are pushed hard, in terms of both expression and technique. At the first performance, given in Moscow on Christmas Day (western style) 1934, Shostakovich was at the piano, with the foremost Soviet cellist of the time, Viktor Kubatsky.

Our three-quarters circuit of the globe ends up in New Zealand with a work by **Gareth Farr**, composed for the New Zealand cellist James Tennant. A driving line goes right through the piece, most often at speed and with power. There are occasional references to Shostakovich and Malay Gamelan music - sometimes to the two combined. About two-thirds of the way into the roughly ten and a half minute composition, time almost stops for a lyrical episode where the gamelan is closely evoked. Then it's back to the beginning and high octane.

Farr writes: 'The shadow of the hawk rises and falls as the landscape gently undulates beneath it. One moment it is indistinct and unfocussed, the next it snaps into clear definition as the ground rises. A rocky outcrop thrusts up towards the sky - the shadow is suddenly crystal-clear. Slowly it slides away again as the hills recede, and the hawk ascends soundlessly back into the sky.'

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