

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 4 October 2025
7.30pm

Nash Ensemble

Simon Crawford-Phillips piano
Philippa Davies flute
Richard Hosford clarinet
Ursula Leveaux bassoon
Richard Watkins horn

Benjamin Nabarro violin
Jonathan Stone violin
Rachel Roberts viola
Adrian Brendel cello
Graham Mitchell double bass

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Flute Quartet No. 1 in D K285 (1777)

I. Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Rondeau

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Introduction and Allegro (1932)

Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Phantasie Piano Trio in C minor (1907)

I. Allegro moderato ma con fuoco • II. Andante con molta espressione • III. Allegro scherzoso • IV. Andante • V. Allegro moderato

Interval

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Octet in F D803 (1824)

I. Adagio – Allegro • II. Adagio • III. Allegro vivace • IV. Andante • V. Menuetto. Allegretto • VI. Andante molto – Allegro



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While in Mannheim in 1777, **Mozart** met the principal flute of its celebrated orchestra. Through this connection he was commissioned by a wealthy amateur flautist, Ferdinand Dejean (or de Jong?), to compose some pieces for him. The widely held misconception that Mozart disliked the flute arose from an irritable remark he made when pressed for time. The Flute Quartet in D has an opening movement of melodic abundance and elegance, but has a development preoccupied with minor keys. Not too distant from Gluck's *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* in character is the other-worldly *Adagio* in B minor, a sustained flute melody accompanied by pizzicato strings. It ends without resolution, giving way to a sparkling *Rondo* which equals the opening *Allegro* in its seemingly inexhaustible succession of melodies. The strings maintain the buzzing energy, but Mozart especially favours the viola in some lively dialogue with the flute.

The 18-year-old **Britten** composed his *Introduction and Allegro* for piano trio while studying at the Royal College of Music. Completing the piece in two weeks, he originally considered calling it *Phantasy-Scherzo*, with an eye to Cobbett's chamber music prize for Phantasies. From the tentative, exploratory opening, punctuated by little flourishes on the piano, a four-note motif on the cello (thereafter intermittently recurring) gradually crystallises and becomes more insistent when adopted by the piano. The piece emerges into increasingly vivid daylight, then briefly reverts to the original mood. A lively dance-like section is initiated by the violin but, in spite of the indicated bipartite form of the title, the alternation of tempos continues. There are warmly pastoral moments, a sprightly pizzicato passage and hints of full-blooded eloquence, pitted against a restless piano part. The ending is characteristically fidgety. This expressively wide-ranging and remarkably mature piece was lost for more than 50 years then rediscovered. Of the various early works by Britten which have posthumously resurfaced, this *Introduction and Allegro* is one of the most engaging. It received its première at Wigmore Hall in 1986.

Dating from 1907, **Bridge's** *Phantasie* for piano trio was the second of his three compositions of this name. In 1905 Walter Willson Cobbett, a businessman, amateur violinist and chamber music enthusiast, had announced a competition for British composers. The chamber format he required was a 'Phantasy', maximum 12 minutes' duration, its character a revival of the fantasies for viol consort by British composers of the 16th and 17th centuries, comprising different sections varying in tempi and rhythm. In this *Phantasie* (prize-winning in a crowded field of more than 60 entries) Bridge creates a structure approximating to sonata form but compressed into a single movement and of cyclic unity. It begins in declamatory manner ('con fuoco') but gives way to an expressive passage accompanied by a rocking piano accompaniment. There is a slow section which encloses a scherzo and

the piece concludes with a short coda. Cobbett admired the work's 'remarkable beauty and brilliance' ...'thematic material more than sufficient for a lengthy work in sonata form'.

Count Ferdinand Troyer, an amateur clarinettist and composition pupil of Beethoven, commissioned **Schubert** to compose an octet modelled on his teacher's phenomenally popular Septet of 1800. Schubert kept to the same style – tuneful, relaxed and entertaining, intellectually undemanding. The *Adagio* introduction anticipates the opening theme of the following *Allegro*, in which the second subject is a clarinet melody of buoyant character, initially swinging between only two notes. Throughout the work a dotted rhythm – in one form or another – becomes something of an obsession, appearing in many themes. One unexpected touch is Schubert's recall of the introduction before the recapitulation. The lyrical and expansive slow movement (B flat major) begins with an extended clarinet melody, a rewarding opportunity for Count Troyer. Following a typically poetic modulation, the second theme appears in the key of G flat. The lack of a development section is another sign of the music's predominantly relaxed character. There follows an exuberant, bucolic *Scherzo*, in which dotted rhythm is again prominent. The lyrical melodic line of the relaxed trio section is underpinned by the cello's staccato crotchets.

For the theme of the variation movement Schubert salvaged a love-duet melody from his youthful singspiel *The Friends from Salamanca*. This melody is of the simple, 'tuneful' kind, with the first violin bearing the brunt of the technical demands, while there are rewarding solos for horn and cello respectively. Of the variations the first four are attractively decorative, whereas the fifth in C minor introduces a new, shadowy feeling of unease. In Variation 6 Schubert takes a little excursion into A flat major, before (Variation 7) the violin adds a brilliant accompaniment in demi-semiquavers. The reflective coda has a rather eccentric accompaniment of chains of repeated notes.

Charming and graceful, the F major *Minuet* again features a dotted rhythm, usually as an up-beat. In the delightfully insouciant trio section in B flat major Schubert's supreme and seemingly effortless melodic gift is at its most beguiling. The severe F minor introduction to the finale is a striking departure from the serenade character of the work, with the strings' tremolando and crescendos creating a dramatic atmosphere. In common with that of the first movement, the ensuing *Allegro* is generally amiable, though with a well-defined rhythmic character. Its progress is rudely interrupted prior to the recapitulation, as Schubert dramatically recalls (as in the first movement) part of the slow introduction, now enhanced by the first violin's flourishes, before resuming at a faster tempo for the bustling coda.

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