

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 5 June 2023
1.00pm

Orsino Ensemble

Adam Walker flute
Nicholas Daniel oboe
Matthew Hunt clarinet
Amy Harman bassoon
Alec Frank-Gemmill horn
Peter Sparks bass clarinet

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Movement for wind sextet (1930)

Anton Reicha (1770-1836)

Wind Quintet in E flat Op. 88 No. 2 (1811)

*I. Lento - Allegro moderato • II. Menuetto. Allegro •
III. Poco andante grazioso • IV. Finale. Allegretto*

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

Mládí (1924)

*I. Allegro • II. Andante sostenuto •
III. Vivace • IV. Allegro animato*



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable.

To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/support-us/wigmore-hall-audience-fund>

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Britten's *Movement for wind sextet* came to light in 1993, when it was performed at the Aldeburgh Festival. The somewhat hastily written manuscript had, however, been sitting in the Library at The Red House, Britten's home, for many years. Begun on 5 May 1930, and completed a few months later, the work was, like Britten's *Hymn to the Virgin* and his *Elegy* for solo viola, a product of a final term at Gresham's School in Norfolk, before he moved to the Royal College of Music that September.

Evidence of Britten's private teacher Frank Bridge's continuing influence can be heard in the harmonic language of this early score. His demands for 'scrupulous attention to good technique' went hand in hand with a knowledge of contemporary repertoire, not least the Second Viennese School. But Philip Reed suggests that the *Movement's* unique scoring might also point to another Central European modernist. Janáček's *Mládí*, with which today's concert ends, had, after all, received its UK première in 1926 and Britten follows its instrumentation to the letter, perhaps having heard a broadcast of that performance. We might live in hope, then, that another young composer is listening to the radio today, ready to write their own contribution to the repertoire.

Predating Janáček by nearly a century is the Czech-born **Anton Reicha** (more commonly known during his lifetime as Antoine-Joseph). Hailing from Prague, he was the son of a piper - though eventually adopted by his uncle Joseph Reicha, a famous cellist, acquaintance of Leopold Mozart and, later, director of the court orchestra in Bonn, where his musicians included the young Beethoven. Indeed, Anton was taught alongside Beethoven in the Hofkapelle and similarly sought to make his name in Vienna. But Paris was to be Reicha's main point of orbit: between 1799 and 1801, as he sought to establish himself; and again after 1808, when he taught at the Conservatoire and enjoyed many performances and publications of his work.

Today, he is primarily remembered for having taught Berlioz, Franck and Liszt, yet Reicha nonetheless left behind a significant catalogue, including operas, large works for chorus and orchestra and several symphonies. Even more abundant, however, was his chamber music for winds, including 24 quintets. Dating from his second Paris chapter, they were released between 1817 and 1820 in four groups of six (Opp. 88, 91, 99 and 100), with many of their premières having been given in the foyer of the city's Théâtre-Italien by Conservatoire colleagues.

Like the opening work in the Op. 88 group, No. 2 in E flat major was written in 1811. It opens with a slow introduction, looking ahead to Mendelssohn's curtain-raising chords for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, before a delightfully *buffa Allegro moderato*. Its melodic material passes freely between the musicians, turning ever more liquescent and effusive as the movement progresses. And that purling quality continues in the

Menuetto, its equal, four-bar phrases becoming more uneven and playful during the Trio. Reicha's operatic skills then come to the fore in the *Poco andante grazioso*, with the heroine oboist offering an aria as playful as it is poignant. Finally, a jig-like rondo allows each musician to shine once more, though especially the clarinettist, whose hurtling runs close the work.

Reicha's compatriot **Janáček** came late to fame, when his first major opera *Jenůfa* was finally seen in Prague in 1916. But as well as deferred professional success, the sexagenarian composer was reinvigorated by his 1917 meeting with Kamila Stösslová, who became his muse. Then, the following year, the Czechs finally found independence after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the end of World War I. All these developments combined to allow Janáček to make ever bolder strides during the last 12 years of his life, not only in the opera house, his natural home, but also in orchestral and chamber music.

The wind sextet *Mládí* dates from 1924, the year in which *The Cunning Little Vixen* had its première in Janáček's adopted hometown of Brno. But, like that evergreen account of the natural cycle, *Mládí* recalls his native Hukvaldy, where he wrote what he termed in a letter to Stösslová this 'sort of memoir of youth'. The first performance, on 21 October 1924, took place, as with most of his major works, in Brno, the city to which Janáček had been sent at the age of 11 to become a chorister at the Augustinian Monastery.

These are the very places and events that are invoked during the 20-minute score, as the composer described in his own programme note, published shortly after the première in *Kurýr*, one of the Brno newspapers. According to the article, the work's first movement depicts Janáček as he 'remembers his childhood in his native school in Hukvaldy', the building in which he was both born and educated, given that his father was the village schoolmaster. The music is imbued with a Moravian folk idiom, as well as peppy, spinning ostinatos. The second movement, on the other hand, begins on a much sadder note, as Janáček bids farewell to his mother at the station - even though he did not leave for Brno by train.

The third movement, originally marked *Vivace*, recalls the composer's life as a chorister, as well as the Prussian occupation of Brno in 1866. Its music quotes from Janáček's *March of the Bluebirds*, written earlier in 1924, the title of which is taken from the nickname given to the trebles in the monastery choir. Finally, Janáček offers 'a courageous leap into life'. This last movement is not without melancholy and backward glances, though the spirit of celebration proves as palpable today as it must have done when the composer listened to the first British performance, here at Wigmore Hall, on 6 May 1926.

© Gavin Plumley 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.