

WIGMORE HALL 125

Sunday 5 October 2025

Soloists of the Kronberg Academy

11.30am

Michael Shaham violin
Hana Chang violin
Noga Shaham viola
LiLa cello
Manuel Lipstein cello
Avery Gagliano piano

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) Avery Gagliano piano
Novellette in F sharp minor Op. 21 No. 8 (1838)

Ernő Dohnányi (1877-1960) Michael Shaham violin Noga Shaham viola LiLa cello
Serenade in C for string trio Op. 10 (1902)
*I. Marcia. Allegro • II. Romanza. Adagio non troppo •
III. Scherzo. Vivace • IV. Tema con variazioni. Andante
con moto • V. Finale. Rondo*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Hana Chang violin Manuel Lipstein cello Avery Gagliano piano
Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor Op. 101 (1886)
*I. Allegro energico • II. Presto non assai •
III. Andante grazioso • IV. Allegro molto*



Help us raise £125,000
for 125 years of music

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate



Join & Support
Donations

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](https://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

Robert Schumann composed his eight *Novelletten* in early 1838. Like his *Kreisleriana* Op. 16, *Carnaval* Op. 9, the *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12 and other works of this time, they were inspired in part by literature (as their title suggests – ‘little novels’), but also by Clara Wieck, with whom Robert had secretly become engaged in 1837 but whose father remained implacably opposed to their union. The eighth and last *Novellette* reveals Schumann’s fascination with establishing large-scale unity amidst diversity, incorporating quotations not just from earlier pieces in the set, but also from compositions by Clara herself, most notably from her *Notturmo* Op. 6 No. 2, appropriately marked here – given their separation – as ‘a voice from the distance’.

Ernő Dohnányi was the oldest member of the musical triumvirate that dominated music life in Hungary in the first half of the 20th Century – the others, of course, being Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Like Bartók after him, Dohnányi first found success as a brilliant concert pianist – a career that he pursued to the end of his life, even after emigrating to the USA in the late 1940s. But Dohnányi was also a prolific composer who when still in his teens attracted the admiration and support of no less a figure than Johannes Brahms himself.

When he composed his *Serenade for String Trio* Op. 10 in 1902, Dohnányi was taking up a genre that had largely fallen out of fashion in the 19th Century. This is also why his work is clearly modelled on older works by Mozart and Beethoven, especially the latter’s *Serenade for String Trio* Op. 8, which like Dohnányi’s also begins with a march and features a variation movement before the finale. Where Kodály and Bartók early on committed themselves to a Hungarian nationalist aesthetic, Dohnányi the composer never lost touch with the late-Romantic world of Brahms and his peers. But it would be erroneous to label Dohnányi a conservative, as this Trio amply confirms. The opening movement might be a ‘march’, but its syncopations would flummox any company of soldiers, and there are moments in the harmony that sound like the music Bartók would be writing several years into the future. The second movement, *Romanza*, has a hypnotic charm reminiscent of Dohnányi’s French contemporaries (and we can be pretty sure that George Gershwin liked it too, for the opening of his *American in Paris* quotes its main theme at the same pitch). But it is the technical mastery on show in this work that is breathtaking – from the superb fugal writing in the third and last movements to the manner in which

themes reappear in new contexts within movements and across them. See, for example, how the theme from the March’s middle section reappears several times later – providing the theme for the fourth movement’s variations and resurfacing again in the coda to the Finale. It is hardly surprising that many consider this Trio to be the work with which Dohnányi attained true compositional maturity (though still aged only 25!)

The Piano Trio Op. 101 by **Johannes Brahms** belongs with his F major Cello Sonata Op. 99 and his A major Violin Sonata Op. 100 to the works that he composed in the Swiss lakeside town of Thun in the summer of 1886. Brahms had chosen it for his holidays on the recommendation of his friend, the Swiss writer Joseph Viktor Widmann, who lived and worked in nearby Bern. Brahms didn’t stay in Thun’s latest fancy hotel, but instead hired a simple three-room apartment. He took his meals in the local beer gardens and brewed his own coffee in a pot brought especially from Vienna. He also went on day trips – hiking up the Niesen mountain, visiting a local wrestling festival and popping across to Bern to see Widmann. It was also chez Widmann that Brahms gave the first (private) performance of his new Piano Trio Op. 101, together with the local Swiss musicians Friedrich and Julius Hegar (violin and cello respectively). The official première took place in Budapest in December 1886, with Jenő Hubay on violin and David Popper on cello, and Brahms published the work with Simrock the following spring.

This Piano Trio Op. 101 is remarkably concise – its four movements last no more than about 20 minutes. The opening bars – in heroic, stormy mood – present much of the motivic material for the rest of the first movement. But what really struck the critics at the time was how accessible Brahms had become. The second subject of the first movement is essentially a Viennese waltz, while the slow movement exudes the naïve charm of Mendelssohn’s songs without words. This work even won over several of Brahms’s former critics, such as the Wagnerian commentator Wilhelm Tappert, who breathed a sigh of relief that Brahms (in his words) had ceased ‘brooding’ and left all ‘acerbity’ behind. Listeners have since been largely unanimous that this Trio is one of Brahms’s loveliest inspirations, managing to combine formal rigour with surface charm in equal measure.

© Chris Walton 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

7.30pm

Hana Chang violin
Guido Sant'Anna violin
Michael Shaham violin
Noga Shaham viola
LiLa cello
Manuel Lipstein cello
Sir Andrés Schiff piano

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) Hana Chang violin LiLa cello Sir Andrés Schiff piano
Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor Op. 49 (1839)
*I. Molto allegro agitato • II. Andante con moto tranquillo
• III. Scherzo. Leggiero e vivace • IV. Finale. Allegro assai
appassionato*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Guido Sant'Anna violin Sir Andrés Schiff piano
Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Op. 47 'Kreutzer' (1802-3)
*I. Adagio sostenuto. Presto • II. Andante con variazioni •
III. Finale. Presto*

Interval

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) Michael Shaham violin Noga Shaham viola
Manuel Lipstein cello Sir Andrés Schiff piano
Piano Quartet in E flat Op. 47 (1842)
*I. Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo •
II. Scherzo. Molto vivace – Trio I – Trio II •
III. Andante cantabile • IV. Finale. Vivace*

To Robert Schumann, **Mendelssohn** was ‘the Mozart of the 19th century’. These words – published, as it happens, in 1840 in a review of the Piano Trio on our programme here – are often misunderstood as comparing the two foremost *Wunderkinder* of music history. In fact, Schumann was referring specifically to Mendelssohn the adult – the conductor, composer, pianist and organiser who bestrode the music world of his time like a Colossus. Although he had just turned 30 when he composed his Piano Trio Op. 49 in D minor in the spring and early summer of 1839, Mendelssohn was at the height of his powers. This was his first-ever essay in the genre, though it is clear from his correspondence that he had been planning such a work for several years. He had explored the solo potential of the cello in his First Cello Sonata Op. 45 the previous year, and it is the cello that also takes the lead in the first movement of this Piano Trio, marked *Molto allegro ed agitato*, where high drama alternates with sumptuous lyricism. The second, slow movement is a ‘song without words’ in all but name, while the *Scherzo* is a fine example of Mendelssohn’s filigree ‘fairy’ music that he had more or less invented in his Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* a decade-and-a-half earlier. In the closing *Allegro*, Mendelssohn refers back to the thematic contours of his earlier movements in order to sum up all that has gone before and provide a sense of catharsis. At the suggestion of his friend Ferdinand Hiller, Mendelssohn reworked this Trio before its first performance and publication in 1840 (making the piano part if anything even more virtuosic). This Trio enjoyed mixed fortunes over the ensuing years, though Gustav Mahler for one must have admired it, for he quotes from its closing pages at the end of his own Fifth Symphony. Today, this Trio enjoys the firm place in the repertoire that it deserves.

Beethoven’s ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata ought really to be known by a different name altogether, for the soloist at its first performance in May 1803 was a violinist named George Bridgetower (1778-1860). Born in Poland to a German mother and a Black father from the Caribbean, Bridgetower had gone to England as a child prodigy on the violin and won the patronage of the Prince Regent. In the spring of 1803, Bridgetower travelled to Vienna, where Beethoven was delighted with his playing and promptly offered him his new sonata in A minor. They played it, but fell out before it went to press (over a girl, claimed Bridgetower in later years). Out of pique, Beethoven dedicated it instead to the star violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer. Sadly for Beethoven, Kreutzer was unimpressed at getting another man’s cast-off sonata and allegedly never played it. But the name stuck.

The final movement of this sonata was the first to be written, as Beethoven had originally intended it to close his Sonata Op. 30 No. 1. He added two movements to proceed it and gave it the new opus number 47. The first movement has a gripping sense of drama that was new in Beethoven’s music. So it is all the more surprising that the second movement consists of a series of virtuosic variations not far removed from the mood of the many operatic variation sets that were popular chamber pieces at the time. Richard Wagner was shocked when he first heard this movement, for he felt as if his hero Beethoven had somehow lapsed from his sublimity. But Beethoven had no such worries, nor should we, and few would today contest that the outer movements and the central variation movement balance each other perfectly.

Both Beethoven and Mendelssohn hover in the background of the final work on today’s programme, **Robert Schumann’s** Piano Quartet Op. 47, composed in 1842. After having composed primarily piano solo works in the 1830s, Schumann decided that he needed to branch out. He now proceeded as if ticking one genre off after another – thus 1840 was devoted largely to song composition, 1841 to symphonies and 1842 to chamber music, with three string quartets and a piano quintet followed by this Piano Quartet. Schumann apparently sketched it in just six days in late October 1842, then wrote it up over the course of the next month. The opening chorale-like passage with its slow ascending sixth in the piano is surely a reminiscence of the ‘Holy song of thanksgiving’ from Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 132, though Schumann breaks off after just 12 bars to embark on an *Allegro* whose theme is a variation of the chorale. The chorale itself reappears twice, each time leading off in a different direction, but then resurfaces again in the coda, this time marked ‘più agitato’, and helps to end the movement with a bang. The next movement is a *Scherzo* with two Trios that owes much to Mendelssohn’s fairy music. If Schumann’s elves occasionally sound as if they prefer galumphing in Wellington boots, the music is all the more delightful for it. The slow movement is one of Schumann’s loveliest creations with its effortlessly unfolding melodic line of rising and falling sevenths. The *Vivace* final movement, in contrast, is a compositional *tour-de-force* that combines rondo with sonata form while featuring brilliant fugal and canonic passages, all interspersed with lyrical interludes and even a reminiscence of the *Scherzo*. This movement culminates by presenting its main theme in a stretto, underpinned by chugging semiquavers as it careers to its brilliant close.

© Chris Walton 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.