

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 6 March 2023  
1.00pm

Tine Thing Helseth trumpet  
Kathryn Stott piano

Arne Nordheim (1931-2010)	Den første sommerfugl (1982)
Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)	Sonatina for trumpet and piano (1956)
Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)	4 Romances on Poems by Alexander Pushkin Op. 46 (1936-7) <i>Regeneration • Jealousy • Premonition • Stanzas</i>
Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992)	Café 1930 from <i>Histoire du Tango</i> (1986)
Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)	6 songs Op. 48 (1884-8) <i>Gruss • Dereinst, Gedanke mein • Lauf der Welt • Die verschwiegene Nachtigall • Zur Rosenzeit • Ein Traum</i>
George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Prelude No. 2 in C sharp minor (c.1923-6) By Strauss (1936)
Kurt Weill (1900-1950)	Youkali (1934)
Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)	Toy Soldiers March (pub. 1917)



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

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Rapid tonguing and flashy finger-work are often less testing of a trumpeter's mettle than playing six verses of a hymn or shaping a big legato tune. Tine Thing Helseth's programme, built mostly from transcriptions of songs or works conceived for other instruments, turns the spotlight on yearning melodies and music rich in expressive light and shade. Her choice of repertoire ranges from the unsettling introspection of Shostakovich's *Romances* and delicate beauty of Grieg's Opus 48 Songs to the seductive sweep of Gershwin's *By Strauss* and timeless charm of Fritz Kreisler's *Toy Soldiers March*.

While **Arne Nordheim's** aesthetic was securely rooted in the language of the modernist avant-garde, he remained open to influences from early music and folk traditions and to the spirit of romanticism. His ascent of the international league table of composers during the 1960s and beyond, propelled by pioneering electro-acoustic pieces and orchestral works such as *Epitaffio*, *Floating* and *Greening*, secured his status as Norway's leading composer. In 1982 he was handed the keys to Grotten, the Norwegian state's honorary residence in the grounds of the royal palace in Oslo. To mark the occasion, Nordheim set exquisite lyrics by a former resident of Grotten, the poet and playwright Henrik Wergeland (1808-45), for soprano and harp. *Den første sommerfugl* ('The first butterfly'), based on four verses from Wergeland's eponymous poem, marries a simple melody and its rippling accompaniment to express the poet's gentle invitation to the fragile butterfly to 'fly in and sit on my pen'.

The Sonatina for trumpet and piano was written early in 1956 while **Martinů**, an often homesick Czech national living in exile in the United States, was resident at the Great Northern Hotel on New York's 57th Street. It opens with a sonorous piano introduction, the short preface to a sprightly trumpet theme marked by repetition and syncopations. Martinů's score comprises a cosmopolitan mix of jazz-inflected rhythms, Moravian lyricism and the surging energy of Slavic folk dance. He expands the trumpet's basic timbre with help from a straight mute and flutter-tonguing before exploring the unmuted instrument's singing qualities. The Sonatina's close is introduced by a solo trumpet tune reminiscent of those performed by watchmen from the church towers and town ramparts of Eastern Europe and crowned by a final chorale-like melody.

**Shostakovich's** *4 Romances* Op. 46, begun in December 1936 for the forthcoming centenary of Alexander Pushkin's death, marked the end of a turbulent, terrifying year for the composer. He had been denounced 11 months earlier in an editorial in *Pravda* as the perpetrator of 'Muddle instead of music', possibly penned by Stalin or at least at his command, and thereafter became increasingly aware of the Soviet dictator's bloody purges of perceived enemies. 'Rebirth', the first of the *Romances*, opens with Pushkin's image of an 'artist-barbarian' scrawling 'over a painting made by a genius'. The melancholy

nature of the cycle's verse is intensified by the pangs of nostalgia stirred by Shostakovich's melodic lines.

**Astor Piazzolla** recalled the Argentinean tango's origins and development in *Histoire du Tango*. The four-movement work, written in 1986, opens with an evocation of the dance form's original home in the bordellos of Buenos Aires. Tango began life one hundred years earlier as a dance accompanied by flute and guitar; it was later adopted and arranged by concertina players, pianists and others to suit their instruments. *Café 1930*, the composition's second movement, conveys the intense romanticism of a tango written to arouse a listening rather than a dancing audience.

Within the brief span of his six Opus 48 songs, **Edvard Grieg** corralled a multitude of contrasting emotions. The cycle, first published in Leipzig in 1889, begins with a jovial greeting, complete with echoes of pealing bells from the piano, before changing in a heartbeat to portray a tormented lover's prayer for eternal rest. The free-flowing beauty of the composer's writing, like that of so many of his 170 songs, was directly inspired by what he described as the 'wonderful voice' and 'equally wonderful gift of interpretation' owned by his wife Nina, a fine lyric soprano.

**Gershwin**, famed both as an innovator and melodist, gave fresh life to one of the oldest surviving forms of keyboard music in his three *Preludes* for piano. The *Prelude No. 2 in C sharp minor* was conceived in 1923 and first performed three years later as part of a mostly classical recital programme. Its sultry blues tune rises from lugubrious left-hand chords, before the melodic interest moves in the composition's central section to the bass line. The song *By Strauss*, to lyrics by Gershwin's older brother Ira, has fun at the composer's expense with its rejection of Broadway in favour of the 'three-quarter time' charms of the Viennese waltz. Gershwin, so the song goes, 'is only for night-clubbing souses', so 'Go tell the band if they want a hand/The waltz must be Strauss's'.

**Kurt Weill**, a synagogue cantor's son, fled Germany following Hitler's seizure of power in January 1933 to find temporary refuge in Paris. He wrote 'Youkali' the following year, originally as an instrumental interlude for Jacques Deval's *Marie Galante*. Although the play proved a box-office flop, Weill's tango habanera became a popular hit following its publication in 1935 with the addition of lyrics by the actor, poet and songwriter Roger Bertrand, better known as Roger Fernay.

*Toy Soldiers March* was published in 1917, three years after **Fritz Kreisler's** discharge from the Austrian Army following wounds sustained on active service during the First World War. Although the violinist and composer created his delightful miniature for teaching purposes, it soon acquired an independent life in the concert hall as an encore piece.

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