

WIGMORE HALL 125

Monday 8 December 2025
1.00pm

The Romantic Flute

Elizaveta Ivanova flute
Sanja Bizjak piano

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	Der Lindenbaum from <i>Winterreise</i> D911 (1827) <i>arranged by Theobald Böhm</i>
Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)	Sonatina in G Op. 100 (1893) <i>I. Allegro risoluto • II. Larghetto • III. Scherzo. Molto vivace • IV. Finale. Allegro</i>
Franz Schubert	Das Fischermädchen from <i>Schwanengesang</i> D957 (1828) <i>arranged by Theobald Böhm</i>
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor Op. 105 (1851) <i>I. Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck • II. Allegretto • III. Lebhaft</i>
Franz Schubert	Die Taubenpost from <i>Schwanengesang</i> D957 <i>arranged by Theobald Böhm</i>



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This evening's programme highlights a less appreciated practice in the 19th Century of arranging works for an instrument for which they were not originally intended. Three songs for voice and piano by Franz Schubert will appear alongside a violin sonata by Robert Schumann and a violin sonatina by Antonín Dvořák. Instead of asking the flute to merely imitate the human voice or violin, these arrangements allow the player to explore another approach to each work that is more idiomatic to the flute and invite their audience to hear these works differently as they are reimagined on the flute. Following the Romantic ideal of songs without words (seen most clearly in Felix Mendelssohn's collection of piano pieces of the same name), these flute arrangements will allow the flute to 'sing' and wordlessly impart the affect of each piece to the listener.

Munich-born flutist Theobald Böhm (1794-1881) is best known as the inventor of the Böhm system of keys for the modern flute, an innovation that allowed for the best acoustical placement of the open holes of the instrument, rather than having to conform to the reach of the player's fingers. This allowed the instrument to play music that would previously have been technically impossible. However, Böhm was also quite successful as a virtuoso performer on the flute and even composed works for his instrument, often with piano accompaniment. Furthermore, he arranged a number of works for the flute, including the three songs by Schubert that appear on this programme. Rather than merely replicating the vocal part of these songs, the flute embellishes and ornaments the original vocal melody, allowing for virtuosic display while still preserving the expression of Schubert's tuneful melodies.

These three **Schubert** songs are drawn from two of the composer's song cycles, collections of multiple songs loosely connected by a common theme or poet. *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), D911 (1827), includes songs on texts by the poet Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827). While originally conceived for tenor voice and piano, these songs have frequently been transposed to accommodate other voice parts, including by Schubert himself, suggesting a versatility of performing forces that invites the kind of arrangement that Böhm created. The imagery of the cycle's title suggests a lonely wanderer in the depths of winter, but the song performed here, 'Der Lindenbaum', features a more reflective mood for the wanderer as he encounters a familiar tree that evokes nostalgic memories of a happier time.

The remaining Schubert songs come from another cycle, *Schwanengesang*, D957 (1828). The cycle's name, which means 'Swan Song', is not Schubert's but was appended posthumously by his publisher, although the individual song titles are the composer's. Unlike *Winterreise*, *Schwanengesang* includes texts by three poets. The two songs on this programme are 'Das Fischermädchen' to a text by Heinrich Heine

(1797-1856) and 'Die Taubenpost' to a poem by Johann Gabriel Seidl (1804-75), both young poets at the time. In contrast to 'Der Lindenbaum', these selections are more light-hearted. The former tells of a flirtatious encounter between a man and young fisherwoman, while the latter jauntily describes a carrier pigeon that delivers love letters, only to reveal in a twist that the pigeon is not real instead represents the speaker's 'Longing'.

Antonín Dvořák's Sonatina in G for violin and piano (1893) is one of the last compositions during the composer's sojourn in America. Composed in New York City, Dvořák dedicated the piece to his two children, 15-year-old daughter Otilie and 10-year-old son Toník. Written with these budding musicians in mind, the composer acknowledged that it was intended for children but could also appeal to adults. Structured in four movements like a violin sonata, the Sonatina is a miniature, simplified version of the larger genre. The melodies contained in its movements reflect Dvořák's absorption in this period of American styles of music including African-American spirituals and Native American musics, most famous heard in his Symphony No. 9, 'From the New World'. Primarily, this influence takes the form of the pentatonic scale, which evokes an openness often associated with folk and traditional musics, including the folk music of Dvořák's Czech homeland.

Robert Schumann composed his Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor in an unusually short five-day period from about 12-16 September 1851, during his tenure as municipal music director in Düsseldorf. The piece received a private première performance with Robert's wife, Clara Schumann, on the piano and Robert's concertmaster, violinist Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski. Clara recalled later that the first two movements were quite moving but the third presented some technical difficulties for Wilhelm and her to play. Despite or perhaps because of the frenzied pace of composition, Schumann self-critically denigrated his own work, even going so far as to compose another violin sonata two months later. Yet, the music itself represents Schumann at his most compositionally effective, particularly in painting striking images in music without words. The opening movement is marked *Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck* (With passionate expression) featuring a heartrending opening theme for the violin. The middle movement strikes a balance between a traditional slow movement and a scherzo, evoking Schumann's fictional personae, Eusebius and Florestan, who represent different extremes of his own personality. The third movement then launches into rapid fire rhythms in both instruments that make clear the technical obstacles that challenged Clara Schumann and Wasielewski.

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