



Saturday, October 19th 2024, 7.30pm
Clare Hall Dining Hall

Lesley Hatfield, violin
Jams Coleman, piano

Beethoven: Spring Sonata opus 24

Clara Schumann: 3 Romances opus 22,

Elgar: Violin Sonata opus 82

Ravel: Violin Sonata

Musical evenings at the house of Count Moritz von Fries in Vienna could be lively affairs. At one such occasion in May 1800, the visiting piano virtuoso Daniel Steibelt sat yawning through Beethoven's new Op 11 clarinet trio, before a week later ostentatiously improvising a set of flashy variations on the theme Beethoven had used for his finale. Beethoven, furious, grabbed the cello part of Steibelt's own quintet, barged his way to the keyboard and, placing Steibelt's music upside down on the desk, launched into his own thunderous improvisation. Steibelt stormed out. Beethoven, however, felt no enmity towards Count von Fries—a skilled amateur violinist who'd been one of the subscribers to his Op 1 trios five years earlier. In September 1801, the Wiener Zeitung advertised 'Deux Sonates pour le Pianoforte avec un Violon', Op 23, dedicated to von Fries—although they would actually be printed as Op 23 and Op 24. And the second of the pair feels, even today, like a warm breeze blowing through a window thrown wide. The nickname '**Frühlings-Sonate**' wasn't Beethoven's (the only note he added to the manuscript was a comment in red pencil that 'The copyist who put triplets and septuplets here is an ass'). But F major had a long history as the key of rural greenery, even before Beethoven's own Pastoral symphony of 1808.

In any case, the blossoming, birdsong-like freshness of Beethoven's opening melody—now the violin's very own, with the piano supplying a gentle 'scene by the brook' accompaniment—suggests its own comparisons. It's a suitably expansive opening to Beethoven's first violin sonata in four movements. The motifs of the A minor sonata expanded and found fulfilment as the sonata continued; here, the opening melody is already the point to which each of the sonata's movements will return (in spirit, if not the precise notes). And a melody of such breadth simply demands four movements over which to work its charms.

So the serene theme that launches the three leisurely variations of the Adagio molto espressivo also begins with a sustained note and a graceful turn, over a gently rippling accompaniment. The tiny scherzo plays a cheerful game of catch-up between piano and violin, with a whirling trio section so concise that it's barely more than an ornament in its own right: the smile on Beethoven's face is plain to read. And the

finale sweeps into its amiable flow episodes of dancing glee, rustic pizzicati, and just enough of a suggestion of stormclouds to establish that this is all for real—with, just before the very end, the briefest and most unaffected possible prayer of thanksgiving. 'The original fiery and bold spirit of this composer ... is now becoming increasingly serene', wrote an approving (if over-optimistic) Leipzig critic.

Having moved to Düsseldorf in 1853, Clara Schumann produced several works, including the **Three Romances**. The romances were dedicated to violinist Joseph Joachim, and Schumann and Joachim went on tour with them. This included playing them before King George V of Hanover, who "declared them a 'marvellous, heavenly pleasure.' A critic for *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* praised them, declaring: "All three pieces display an individual character conceived in a truly sincere manner and written in a delicate and fragrant hand. Stephen Pettitt for *The Times*, wrote: "Lush and poignant, they make one regret that Clara's career as a composer became subordinate to her husband's.

The romances, scored for violin and piano, are written in three movements:

-Andante molto

-Allegretto

-Leidenschaftlich schnell

The first romance has Romani-inspired pathos amidst lyrical melodies. In the final section, Schumann references the main theme from her husband Robert Schumann's first violin sonata. The second romance is more syncopated, with many embellishments. It is sometimes considered as representative of all three, with energetic leaps and arpeggios, followed by a second theme and then a return to the first theme. The last movement is similar in structure to the first and approximately the same length in time as the first two, featuring long idiomatic melodies with intricate piano accompaniment.

Elgar's **Violin Sonata in E minor Op 82** was begun in mid-August 1918 and completed by 5 September. The next day, in his correspondence with Colvin, Elgar reported that W H (Billy) Reed, leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, had stayed at Brinkwells as the sonata took shape. 'The first movement was written', Reed later recalled; 'he finished this while I was there ... and the opening section of the finale. We used to play up to the blank page and then he would say "And then what?"—and we would go out to explore the wood or fish in the River Arun.' Perhaps the most succinct summation of Elgar's Violin Sonata is in his own words, part of a letter to confidant and sometime companion Alice Stuart-Wortley. He tells her: 'The first movement is bold and vigorous, then a fantastic, curious movement with a very expressive middle section; a melody for the violin ... they say it is as good or better than anything I have done in the expressive way ... the last movement is very broad and soothing, like the last movement of the second symphony.'

At the outset Elgar surprises us, adopting a foreign key, A minor, rather than E minor, a stratagem he upholds to within a bar of the movement's end. His tempo marking is *Allegro* and the movement begins with a vaulting *risoluto* theme leading to a

descending phrase in characteristic tripping (trochaic) rhythm at the ninth bar. Young detects a distant parallel between the second subjects of both this movement and the Romance (Op 1). In any event Elgar reaches his poetic subject via a section derived from inverting the opening statement. Thereupon the movement follows customary sonata lines (comparisons with Brahms readily spring to mind) before its stormy conclusion.

The second, more inward movement is titled Romance and prompted Young to conclude: 'This is a personal utterance, owing to no one and, for that matter, influencing no one.' It proceeds in 3/4 time and begins without sharps or flats, borrowing and reshaping Elgar's descending motif from the Allegro. There now follows a freer, more gentle B flat major theme heard first on the violin and reiterated by the piano.

After an expressive climax the Romance subsides with a reference to its opening, concluding in A major.

The solemn finale begins in E major and its broad opening theme shows Elgar's inclination towards unaccented sequence. Again there is a more animated motif and as the two contrasted themes are counterbalanced a final nod in the direction of the Romance is heard. Final impetus comes in the short-lived coda bringing the Sonata to an emphatic conclusion.

For both Debussy and Ravel, originality was important: Debussy's motto was 'toujours plus loin' ('ever further') and Ravel was fond of exclaiming about his own discoveries that 'personne n'avait fait ça' ('nobody has done that before').

Ravel said that his aim was to explore the basic incompatibility of violin and piano, and this lends an uneasy quality to much of the music. The long melodic line that starts the first movement looks, on paper, 'romantic'. But Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, the violinist to whom he dedicated the *Sonata*, felt it was suited rather to an oboe or a clarinet and spoke of the 'indifference' it requires. In any case it is soon interrupted by an angry, snapping little phrase in the piano's left hand—'You needed to hear Ravel, with his nervous fingers rather square at the ends, attacking this passage!'

In the central 'Blues', Ravel gave vent to his enthusiasm for jazz, as in the opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and the two piano concertos. He wanted the opening piano chords to sound like the plucking of metal strings and the instrument to maintain an implacable rhythm, against which the violin can indulge in freer slides and wailings. On his American tour in 1928, he used this movement to try and convince the critics that jazz was the way forward for American music, and couldn't understand why they insisted in regarding it as unrespectable. Possibly they were aware of the undertow of pain in the movement. If so, the unrelenting finale only confirmed that this was not a typical work of the Silly Twenties. An earlier version of this movement had been more lyrical but, according to Ravel, not right for the work ... and so ended in the fire.

Biographies:

Lesley Hatfield leads a varied musical life, combining her role as Leader of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with chamber music, solo playing and teaching. Her wide-ranging musical interests find her performing music from all eras and she has worked closely with many contemporary composers.

After graduating from Clare College, Cambridge, she studied at the Royal Academy of Music. During her early career, as a chamber musician and member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, she worked with Sandor Vegh and Nicholas Harnoncourt, both of whom had a lasting influence on her musical approach. She was co-Leader of the Northern Sinfonia and Leader of the Ulster Orchestra before taking up her current position.

Chamber music has always been an important part of Lesley's musical life. She is a member of the highly acclaimed Gaudier Ensemble and is regularly invited to participate as a guest in a wide range of ensembles and chamber music festivals. She has been a regular invited performer at the International Musicians Seminar Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove since 1986.

She has appeared as guest Leader, soloist and director with many orchestras around the UK and in Europe, has recorded for Chandos and Naxos labels, and is regularly heard on BBC Radio 3.

Lesley is much in demand as a teacher, and she is actively involved as Patron of 'Making Music, Changing Lives', a Cardiff-based charity which seeks to transform the lives of children and the communities from which they come, through music and providing the opportunity to learn musical instruments. Recently she was appointed Trustee of the Albert and Eugenie Frost Trust.

Lesley is a Fellow of both the Royal Academy of Music and of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

From Anglesey, North Wales, **Jâms Coleman** is a pianist who enjoys performing as a soloist, chamber musician, and vocal accompanist. He regularly performs at prestigious festivals and venues in the UK and internationally and recent highlights include recitals at the Aldeburgh Festival, BBC Proms, Champs Hill, Cello Biennale (Amsterdam), Cheltenham Festival, Kings Place, Leeds Lieder Festival, LSO St Luke's, Ortús Chamber Music Festival (Cork), Oxford International Song Festival, Petworth Festival, Prussia Cove Open Chamber Music, The Royal Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), and Wigmore Hall.

Jâms has a duo partnership with cellist Laura van der Heijden. Described as 'intriguing and beguiling' by The Guardian and as 'gently alluring, enigmatic and romantic' by Gramophone, their most recent album – 'Path to the Moon' - reached two million streams worldwide in the first week. They look forward to performing at the Wigmore Hall in November as part of the BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime recital series.

Other albums include a disc of Fanny Hensel lieder for First Hand Records (recorded in Mendelssohn Haus, Leipzig), a disc of Loewe lieder with baritone Nicholas Mogg for Champs Hill, and an album of works by Pamela Harrison with James Gilchrist, Alice Neary and Robert Plane for Resonus Classics. Future projects include an album of Bridge and Britten with Maria Włoszczowska, Hélène Clément and Steffan Morris for Champs Hill Records, and an album of works by Bacewicz with the Karski Quartet for the Evil Penguin label.

He regularly works with singers and instrumentalists at the top of the profession. Highlights include performances with BBC NOW, Britten Sinfonia, the Karski Quartet, and the Marmen Quartet; recitals with instrumentalists Hélène Clément, Simon Crawford-Phillips, Brett Dean, Vashti Hunter, Guy Johnston, Jonian Ilias Kadesha, Braimah Kanneh-Mason, Felix Klieser, Jack Liebeck, Amy Norrington, Jennifer Pike, Timothy Ridout, Colin Scobie, and Jonathan Stone; recitals with singers Claire Booth, Katherine Broderick, James Newby, Nicky Spence, Sir John Tomlinson, Sir Bryn Terfel, and Elizabeth Watts.

Jâms read Music at Girton College, Cambridge, where he was also a Choral Scholar. He graduated with a Masters from the Royal Academy of Music and was awarded an ARAM in 2023.

Forthcoming concerts:

-November 9th: Tyler Hay, piano, music by Liszt and Rachmaninoff

-November 24th: Fitzwilliam String Quartet. Bach: Art of Fugue (extracts), Mozart K421, Schubert D810 "Death and the Maiden"

Supporting Music at Clare Hall

We are immensely grateful for the support of our Music Angels and Supporters, whose generosity has greatly assisted Clare Hall in continuing to offer an outstanding programme of music for our College members and Cambridge-wide audiences.

Visit our donor website to learn more about supporting the music programme. Even a small donation can make a big difference. Donors in the current financial year will be recognised in the printed programmes for the forthcoming season, unless they prefer to remain anonymous.

Music Angels

Professor Howard & Mrs Diana Colquhoun

Professor Yale & Mrs Kitty Ferguson

Ms Anna Ahuja

Sir Martin & Lady Barbara Harris

Dame Caroline Humphrey & Lord Martin Rees

Mrs Gillian Moore & Dr Michael Nedo

Professors Eric Nye & Carol Frost

Lady Charlotte Pippard

Professors Andrew & Nancy Ramage

Professor Ekhard & Dr Lisa Salje

Professor Andrew Wernick & Dr Heather Jon Maroney

Mrs Joanna & Mr Michael Womack

Supporters

Professor Dorothy Bray

Mr Edward & Mrs Susan Coales

Dr Robert Duvall

Dr Birgitte Ginge

Dr Anthony Harris

Professor Ieuan Hughes

Mr Matthew Jones

Professor Georgia Mouroutsou

Professor Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr
Professor Roy Rotheim
Dr Atsuko Todoroki
Dr Michael Trower
Professor Guy Welbon
Drs Volker Wille & Aiping Mu