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PIXELS ENSEMBLE

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Wednesday 16th January 2019



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TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Debussy

Cello Sonata in D minor
(Last performance at ICC 05/05/1993)

Mozart

Flute Quartet in D major, K285
(Last performance at ICC 16/01/1991)

Debussy

Sonata for flute, viola and harp
(Last performance at ICC 01/12/2010)

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

Françaix

Quintet no. 1 for flute, harp and string trio
(Last performance at ICC 01/12/2010)

Debussy

Violin Sonata in G minor
(Last performance at ICC 11/04/2001)

Mozart

Piano Quartet in G minor, K478
(Last performance at ICC 13/03/2013)

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The Club records its appreciation of the invaluable assistance and support given by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council.



PROGRAMME NOTES

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

Cello Sonata in D minor

Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto

Sérénade: Modérément animé

Finale: Animé, léger et nerveux

In 1914, the music publisher, Jacques Durand, suggested to Claude Debussy that he compose a set of six sonatas for various instruments in homage to French composers of the 18th century, including Rameau and Couperin. Debussy was already suffering from terminal colon cancer and his strength had been sapped by the disease. He accepted the project out of respect for his 'dear publisher' and, as the war dragged on and commissions dried up, he continued to work on it out of financial necessity. However, with France in deep peril, he also felt the need to differentiate his native culture from that of the Austro-German aggressor. 'Where is the French music? Where are all the harpsichordists who had so much true music? They had the secret of gracefulness and emotion without epilepsy which we have neglected like ungrateful children,' he wrote to a friend. The sonatas are filled with the fleeting light and shade of autumn but eschew strict Germanic sonata structure, utilising instead modal forms and, occasionally, the harmonies of Japanese and Balinese gamelan music; they look back to the lost age of Couperin but also forward to the neo-classicism of Stravinsky.

Tonight, we enjoy a rare opportunity to hear, in the order in which he composed them, the three sonatas which Debussy managed to complete before he died, within earshot of the guns bombarding Paris, on 25 March 1918. Sonatas for oboe, horn and harpsichord and trumpet, clarinet, bassoon and piano existed only as sketches at his death. He insisted that the published scores be inscribed, 'Claude Debussy, Musicien Français'; these are also the only words engraved on his modest monument in the Paris suburb of Passy. 'This music is so terribly melancholy', he wrote to a friend, 'that I can't say whether one should laugh or cry. Perhaps both at the same time?'

Described by Debussy as 'almost classical, in a good way' the sonata for cello and piano was completed in 1915. It adopts a monothematic structure which would have been familiar to composers of the French Baroque with strikingly modern string techniques; pizzicato, strumming, harmonics, bowing over the fingerboard and near the bridge to produce strange timbres; everything, indeed, except the soaring *legato* lines usually associated with the cello. The work's brevity, combined with the rapid sequencing of the musical ideas, give it an almost neurotic intensity. The last two movements are played without a

break. Debussy originally intended to call the piece ‘Pierrot angry with the moon’; he had a lifelong fascination for the characters of the vanished world of the Harlequinade, ‘the feverish ghosts leading their vast, dismal dance’.

(Duration: approx. 11 minutes)

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)**

**Flute Quartet in
D major, K285**

**Allegro
Adagio
Rondeau**

The flute was considered the instrument of a gentleman – King Frederick the Great of Prussia spent hours every day practising – but it was not one of Mozart’s favourites. Commissioned in 1777 by an enthusiastic amateur, Ferdinand Dejean, to write several pieces for the instrument, the 21-year-old composer piled up the excuses in letters to his father: ‘I never have a single quiet hour here ... besides, I’m not always in the mood for working ... I could scribble off things all day long, but I don’t want to send off something of which I would be ashamed.’ In the end, he admitted, ‘You know I am quite powerless to write for an instrument I cannot bear’. Notwithstanding these protestations, Mozart completed two concertos and two quartets for the flute and they are works filled with charm, invention and idiomatic parts for the instrument although the hard-pressed composer was not averse to the occasional short cut; the second movement of this quartet is simply an arrangement (possibility not even by Mozart) of the sixth movement of his celebrated ‘Gran Partita’. The *Allegro*, a crystalline movement in sonata form, opens with a dashing melody on the flute which then dominates in the manner of a concerto soloist. The *Adagio* is ‘suffused with the sweetest melancholy and is, perhaps, the most beautiful accompanied flute solo ever written’ as Albert Einstein wrote in his biography of the composer. The buoyant *Rondeau* finale is enlivened by breezy dialogues between the flute and the first violin.

(Duration: approx. 15 minutes)

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)**

Sonata for flute, viola and harp

**Pastorale: Lento, dolce rubato
Interlude: Tempo di minuetto
Finale: Allegro moderato ma risoluto**

Composed in 1915, this sonata did not receive its public premiere until March 1917. Originally conceived for flute, oboe and harp, Debussy later decided that the viola was a better match for the timbre of the flute. The ethereal opening *Pastorale* unfolds as a series of five fragmentary but distinct themes which are

later recapitulated in a different order. A quicker, dance-like section occupies the centre of the movement. In its evocation of the minuet, the *Interlude* is Debussy's most obvious homage to French predecessors who knew the 'secret of gracefulness and emotion'. However, its whole-tone theme, parallel chords and modal harmonies together with a soupçon of Far Eastern rhythms mark it out as a product of the 20th century. The *Finale* presents three motifs in rapid succession; sharp viola pizzicatos, falling arpeggios on the flute and a more substantial viola melody anxiously mixing duple and triple rhythms. Towards the end, the tempo slows to allow a reminiscence of the flute theme which opened the *Pastorale* before a brief, lively coda brings the sonata to a close.

(Duration: approx. 17 minutes)

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

JEAN FRANÇAIX Quintet no. 1 for flute, harp and string trio (1912-1997)

Andante tranquillo
Scherzo
Andante
Rondo

The parents of the precocious Jean Françaix arranged for their son to have lessons with the celebrated Nadia Boulanger, the teacher of (amongst many) Philip Glass, Daniel Barenboim and Aaron Copland; she considered Françaix to be her most talented student. He adopted a neo-classical style characterised by lightness of musical texture, wit and an abundance of melody. He wrote more than 200 works ranging from symphonies to solo works for virtually every instrument. This quintet is an early work from 1934, but is a good example of his style. He wrote a second piece for the same combination of instruments in 1989 when he was in his mid-seventies.

(Duration: approx. 14 minutes)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Violin Sonata in G minor

Allegro vivo
Intermède: Fantasque et léger
Finale: Très animé

Debussy himself played the piano at the first performance of the violin sonata on 5 May 1917 at a benefit concert to raise funds for soldiers at the front. It was his last major composition and the performance his last in public. The composer's own assessment of the sonata did not assist in establishing it in the

repertoire ('I suppose it will be interesting from a documentary point of view and an example of what may be produced by a sick man in time of war') but in recent years it has come to be regarded as a masterpiece. The first movement opens dreamily but the mood swiftly shifts, each musical idea fading before it can be grasped and examined. Allusions to exotic musical traditions abound; the spirit of Spain in the first movement, short glissandos in the second evoking the gypsy music of Bela Radics, whom Debussy once heard in a Budapest nightclub and the *Finale*, with its scampering runs and trills and triple meter, evoke the Italian *Tarentella*. Ultimately, however, this is quintessentially French music in which Debussy, after decades of experimentation, sought to honour the traditions of a culture which he feared might not long survive him.

(Duration: approx. 13 minutes)

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)**

**Piano Quartet in
G minor, K478**

**Allegro
Andante
Rondo: Allegro**

'Then I shall write no more and go hungry and may the Devil take me!' So wrote Mozart to his friend and publisher Hoffmeister when in 1785 the latter complained that his new G minor Piano Quartet was so difficult that nobody would want to buy it. Audiences were unused to chamber music in which all the instruments were treated equally; hitherto the piano had appeared as a virtuoso instrument only in concertos. Mozart eventually found a publisher for this and a second piano quartet in E flat major, but thereafter he abandoned the genre, never to return to it.

For Einstein, G minor is Mozart's 'Key of Fate' and the opening motif of this quartet, played by all the instruments in unison, he compared to the hammer blows which commence Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. This motif sets the character of the *Allegro*, grumbling in the background when not dominating proceedings. A more lyrical theme introduced by the strings without piano provides relief from the storm. The *Andante* is in sonatina form (a sonata but without a development section). The mood is unsettled, the harmonies inhabiting the outer limits of Mozart's mature style. British musicologist Eric Blom said of the *Rondo* finale that it presented to the listener the 'fascinatingly insoluble problem of telling which of its melodies is the most delicious'. Following this parade of splendid melodies, sudden forceful minor chords summon a coda which recalls the troubled opening of the quartet.

(Duration: approx. 20 minutes)

Programme notes © C.N. Lane

PIXELS ENSEMBLE

Pixels Ensemble is a collective of established chamber music players with a shared passion for performing the finest repertoire, from the classical period to the present day. Vastly experienced and versatile, the group appears in a wide range of combinations and line-ups, lending itself to innovative programming and enabling huge variety within individual concerts. Engagements this year include appearances at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford and at Conway Hall in London. The group's commitment to new music continues with world premieres of pieces written for Pixels Ensemble by Liam Carey and Antonion Agostini.

As you read through the following biographies, the common threads that weave through the players' lives become apparent, notably the North of England, and specifically, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and John Wilson Orchestras!

Ian Buckle (*piano*) is the Artistic Director of Pixels Ensemble. He maintains a varied freelance career as soloist, accompanist, chamber musician, orchestral pianist, as well as a teacher at the Universities of Liverpool and Leeds. He enjoys long-standing associations with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the John Wilson Orchestra. He has appeared as soloist with the latter on numerous occasions, including on a live recording of Gershwin's *New York Rhapsody* at the Royal Albert Hall, which is featured on Warner Classics *The Best of the John Wilson Orchestra*. Ian is committed to contemporary music and has been the pianist in Ensemble 10/10 since its inception in 1997. He enjoys collaborating with poets and readers, including Andrew Motion, Roger McGough and Deryn Rees-Jones. Recent programmes include *Shropshire and Other Lads*, a celebration of A E Housman; *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, a commemoration of World War I; and *Philip Larkin's England*.

Sophie Rosa (*violin*) studied at Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. She was a recipient of the RNCM Gold Medal and the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medal. She was a finalist in the 2006 BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition and won both Second Prize and the Audience Prize at the 2nd Manchester International Violin Competition in 2011. As well as broadcasting on BBC Radio 3 and performing as recitalist across the UK, Sophie has appeared as soloist with the RLPO and Manchester Camerata. Sophie plays a Joseph Gagliano violin, dated 1795, with a Claude Fonclause bow, made available through the support of the Stradivari Trust.

Vicci Wardman (*viola*) was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition while at Chetham's School of Music and was a founder member of the Sorrel String Quartet which began life at RNCM. On leaving the quartet in 2000, Vicci took up the position of Principal Viola in the Philharmonia Orchestra,

with whom she also appeared as soloist. She has performed as Guest Principal in a variety of eminent orchestras. A committed chamber musician, Vicci is currently a member of Mobius and the Eroica Quartet and has worked extensively with Hausmusik London and the Nash Ensemble. She is active as a session musician and can be heard on many film and television soundtracks. Vicci is currently Joint Principal Viola in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Principal Viola in the John Wilson Orchestra.

Jonathan Aasgaard (*cello*) was a gold medal finalist at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He enjoys a busy international career participating in festivals across the globe. In 1999 he was appointed Principal Cello of the RLPO and has performed more than 30 works for cello and orchestra with them. He frequently appears as Principal Cello in the John Wilson Orchestra. Chamber music collaborations have taken him round Europe, the Middle East, South Korea and the USA, appearing alongside such artists as violinist Nigel Kennedy and cellist Yo Yo Ma. He has given first performances of works by Robert Saxton, Simon Bainbridge and Arne Nordheim. Recordings include Bloch's *From Jewish Life* with the RLPO and Brahms' *Cello Sonatas* with Martin Roscoe.

Fiona Fulton (*flute*) studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she won numerous scholarships and awards. She was a member of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra from 2008-2016. While there she played on Vasily Petrenko's recordings of the complete Shostakovich and Rachmaninov Symphonies. She can also be heard playing solo flute on the Jon Lord album *To Notice Such Things*. She has appeared as Guest Principal Flute with the Oslo Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, the Hallé, Aurora, BBC Scottish Symphony and Scottish Chamber Orchestras. As well as being a sought-after recitalist, Fiona is a keen chamber musician, appearing many times with the Hebrides Ensemble and Ensemble 10/10. Fiona teaches at Chetham's School of Music and tutors the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland.

Hugh Webb (*harp*) was Principal Harp in the Philharmonia Orchestra from 2001-2012. He has worked extensively in contemporary music and has had several pieces written specifically for him with support from Arts Council England. He gave the first performance of Cyril Scott's *Celtic Rhapsody* as part of Sidonie Goossens' 100th Birthday Celebrations at Wigmore Hall in 1999. Hugh also performs as a jazz harpist and has given recitals at the European Harp Symposium and the World Harp Congress. He is active in television, film and popular music and has composed music for a show for children based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*. Hugh has given masterclasses and lectured at the Royal Academy of Music, the Paris Conservatoire and the Sweelinck Conservatoire in Amsterdam. He freelances in all the London orchestras and appears as Principal Harp in the John Wilson Orchestra.

(Biographical notes edited by Sarah Warnes)

CLUB NOTES

OUR NEW WEBSITE

Just over a year ago we refreshed our website (now at the new address – www.ilkeleyconcertclub.org.uk) and we hope that, for those of you who use it, you find the site a useful source of information. Did you know that, in addition to details of the programme for the Current Season and the Next Concert, more information about each concert is added a few days after it has taken place? In Concert Reviews under the Archives tab you will be able to find the review as published in the *Ilkley Gazette*, the recommended recordings and a downloadable version of this programme.

Under the About Us tab we have recently added details of the 2018 AGM: currently there are the AGM papers and, once checked by the Committee, the draft AGM minutes will be added. Even if you missed the occasion itself you can still read about the current state of your club on-line!

GOOD CONCERT PLANNING CREATES FULL HOUSES

It has been very pleasing to see so few empty seats at all three concerts this season. This always delights our artists, who regularly comment about the enjoyment they take in playing to a full house – a relatively rare event at other venues apparently! Most of the credit for this goes to our concert planning committee led by Sarah Warnes working closely with Josephine Wesley and David Pyett. They work on a timetable which is nearly three years ahead of real time. For them, next season's programme is already complete and they are already planning for our 75th season starting in 2020 and the one after that!

Our planners look to attract not only artists with international careers but also mid-career soloists and ensembles as well as the up-and-coming talents emerging from our conservatoires. We aim for a balance of instruments and ensembles and of styles both within a season and across seasons. We recognise the widely varying tastes of our loyal members and try to provide music that is either tried and tested, immediately attractive or new and worth investigating. It has been a thrill over the past few seasons to experience the willingness of Ilkley audiences to listen to and appreciate twenty-first century music alongside the more familiar repertoire.

I know that this season's programme has already amply demonstrated the skill of our concert planners. I am sure the next few concerts and next year's programme will continue to delight.

Chris Skidmore (Chairman of ICC)

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Debussy: A recently issued CD from Harmonia Mundi, at full price (HMM 902303), has superb performances in excellent sound of all three of tonight's works. Isabelle Faust (violin) and Alexander Melnikov (piano), together with their friends are the performers, and this is, without doubt, one of the best Debussy CDs of his anniversary year.

Mozart: Flute Quartet – a Chandos disc (CHAN 10932), at full price, is my first choice, with Lisa Friend (flute) and the Brodsky Quartet performing all four Flute Quartets. An alternative, at medium price, is a very satisfactory Naxos CD (8.550438), where all the Flute Quartets are performed by Jean Claude Gerard (flute) with the Ensemble Villa Musica.

Françaix: The work is available on a well performed Naxos disc (8.570444), at medium price, entitled 'French Flute Chamber Music', performed by the Mirage Quintet. The other composers are Tournier, Schmitt, Pierné and Roussel.

Mozart: Piano Quartet – Paul Lewis (piano) and the Leopold String Trio perform both Quartets on a well recorded Hyperion CD (CDA 30011) at full price. A good alternative, at medium price, performed by the Menuhin Festival Piano Quartet, again containing both Quartets, is on Naxos 8.554274.

Raymond Waud. rayward@gmail.com

NEXT CONCERT – WEDNESDAY 13th FEBRUARY 2019 AT 8PM



STEPHEN HOUGH

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Bach/Busoni | Chaconne in D minor |
| Hough | Sonata no. 4 |
| Chopin | Sonata no. 2 in B flat minor, op 35 |
| Busoni | Sonatina no. 6 [Carmen Fantasy] |
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Friday 22 February 2019 7.30pm

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