

Ilkley Concert Club



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NATALIE CLEIN cello
with
KATYA APEKISHEVA piano

Schubert

Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in A minor, D821

Clarke

Viola sonata (cello version)

Bloch

From Jewish life

Wednesday 16th February 2022

King's Hall

PROGRAMME NOTES

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)

**Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in
A minor, D821**
Allegro moderato
Adagio
Allegretto

Invented in 1823, the *arpeggione* was a six-stringed hybrid, a cross between a cello and guitar, similar in appearance to a viol or viola da gamba. Unfortunately, its Viennese inventors, the luthiers Stauffer and Teufelsdorfer, misread the musical instrument market; old-style instruments were regarded as *passé* and, after a brief burst of interest, the *arpeggione* sank into an obscurity from which it has never recovered. Schubert's A minor Sonata of 1824 is the only extant work for the instrument. Today, the sonata is played on either the cello or viola, despite the problems thrown up by transcribing a work for a six-stringed instrument to one with four strings and a smaller compass.

The *arpeggione* was tuned like a guitar and its six-string arrangement facilitated flexible virtuosic arpeggio-like passages that Schubert, who one suspects rather liked the instrument, exploits to the full. In one passage, in the first movement, for example, he covers a four-octave span in just two bars and the extended ranges of the *arpeggione* enabled his melodic genius to expand and develop freely. Dramatic changes of mood, indicative of Schubert's depressed state of mind at this time, occur throughout. When he wrote the *arpeggione* sonata in 1824, he was exactly two years into the progression of a primary syphilitic illness and his periods of relatively good health were becoming progressively shorter. To know Schubert's frame of mind here should inform our aesthetic reading of the sonata with its light dark contrasts that accurately reflect his physical and emotional mood swings. As always with Schubert, much more than with almost any other composer, an understanding and appreciation of the music requires a sympathetic understanding of the man.

Last performance at ICC 09/12/1998

Duration: approx. 24 minutes

REBECCA CLARKE
(1886-1979)

Viola sonata (cello version)
Impetuoso - ma non troppo Allegro
Vivace
Adagio

The career of Rebecca Clarke was beset by a litany of setbacks no doubt wearily familiar to many women artists in the twentieth century. Born in Harrow, Middlesex of an American father and a German mother, Clarke showed great musical promise as a child but her time at the Royal Academy of Music was cut short when her teacher proposed marriage. She then became the first female pupil of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. In 1912, she had to endure abuse in the national press when, with five female colleagues, she ended a male monopoly by joining the viola section of Sir Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. Her composing career was developing throughout this period and reached its zenith with the Viola Sonata of 1919. A chance meeting in Massachusetts with the wealthy patron of the arts, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, led Rebecca to enter the Sonata in a composition

competition promoted by Coolidge. However, she was runner up (Ernest Bloch took first prize) following allegations of favouritism and the suspicion that she was a male composer entering under a pseudonym; several of the (male) judges simply refused to believe that a woman was capable of writing such a complex and powerful work. The title page of the score of the Viola Sonata is inscribed with a quotation from a poem by French Romantic, Alfred de Musset, which leaves one in little doubt as to the nature of the music to follow: *Poète, prends ton luth; le vin de la jeunesse fermente cette nuit dans les veines de Dieu.* (Poet, take up your lute; The wine of youth is tonight fermenting in the veins of God.)

The first movement opens with a vibrant fanfare solo on the viola which returns repeatedly. The harmonic language is strongly reminiscent of both Debussy and Vaughan Williams utilising modal techniques and the occasional passage of intense chromaticism. The second movement *Vivace* is a spiky scherzo dominated by virtuoso effects; right and left hand pizzicato, piano glissandos, natural and false harmonics. The slow movement comes last, a passionate *Adagio*. Passages of emotional intensity alternate with interludes of ethereal calm culminating in the return of the Sonata's opening melody on the viola played sul ponticello (right on the bridge of the instrument, the bow creating a breathy, metallic sound). The opening theme now dominates through to the work's jubilant conclusion.

This cello version of the Sonata performed by Natilie Clein was made by the composer herself with the assistance of her friend, the cellist May Mukle.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 28 minutes

ERNEST BLOCH (1880-1959)

From Jewish life

Prayer (Andante moderato)

Supplication (Allegro ma non troppo)

Jewish Song (Moderato)

Ernest Bloch was born in Geneva and emigrated to America in 1916, returning to Switzerland in 1930. In 1939, he returned to America where he settled in Oregon and built up a distinguished composing and teaching career. Bloch's pre-1939 compositions drew heavily on his Jewish heritage. From Jewish Life, a set of three short pieces for cello and piano, was written in 1924 and dedicated to the famous Dutch-American cellist Hans Kindler. The pieces cover the entire range of the cello and use a distinctive Eastern European Ashkenazi modality incorporating quartertones, within relatively simple musical structures.

Prayer is in ternary form with two contrasting themes. In the final section the opening melody is repeated an octave higher and extended into a free recitative style. Bloch incorporates the synagogue modes Magen Avot and S'lichah with a third mode, Ahava Rabba, predominating in the coda.

Supplication is based on a two-part single theme. It combines elements of the Av Harachamim (Mi Shebeirach), Adonai Malach and Ahava Rabba modes in rapid succession and with syncopations that suggest Jewish dance rhythms.

Jewish Song, in the Ahava Rabba mode, is based on another repeated two-part single melody incorporating many quartertones. The overall effect of this movement is melancholy and solemn, the theme eventually fading away to nothing.

Last performance at ICC (Prayer) 10/01/1996

Duration: approx. 11 minutes

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NATALIE CLEIN cello

Since winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year at the age of 16 as well as the Eurovision Competition for Young Musicians in Warsaw, **Natalie Clein** has built a distinguished international career. She frequently appears as concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician with many of today's leading orchestras and artists. Her recordings for EMI and Hyperion, including her most recently released discs of the Haydn cello concertos, are widely acclaimed. A strong advocate for new works, Natalie has given world premier performances of compositions by Sir John Taverner and Charlotte Bray and has commissioned works by Brian Elias and Thomas Larcher. In December 2020 ICC members were treated to a specially recorded podcast from Natalie with pianist Cédric Pescia featuring works by Schubert and Shostakovich. As the musical world tentatively returns to some kind of normality and international travel has become a little easier Natalie was able to perform the Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No.1 in Milan and Padua last month.

In 2021 Natalie was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours list.

KATYA APEKISHEVA piano

Described as a 'profoundly gifted artist' by Gramophone magazine, **Katya Apekisheva** was born in Moscow and made her stage debut at the age of 12 before continuing her studies in Jerusalem and later at the Royal College of Music in London. In 1996 she was a prize winner in the Leeds International Piano Competition and since then she has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras. Katya's critically acclaimed discography includes solo and chamber works by Mussorgsky, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Dvorak and Rachmaninov. Katya has collaborated with Janine Jansen, Guy Johnston, Maxim Rysanov, Jack Liebeck, Nicholas Daniel and many others. She also has a highly successful piano duo partnership with Charles Owen. Together they are Co-Artistic Directors of the London Piano Festival which began in 2016.

NEXT CONCERT – 23rd MARCH 2022

NOTE: RETURNING TO NORMAL CONCERT TIME

8:00pm (Doors Open 7:30pm)

PAUL LEWIS piano

DAVID PYETT (1928-2021) MEMORIAL CONCERT

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