

Ilkley Concert Club



www.ilkeleyconcertclub.org.uk

GOULD PIANO TRIO
with
ROBERT PLANE clarinet



Wednesday 13th April 2022
King's Hall

PROGRAMME

Mozart

Piano trio in G major, K564

Ravel

Piano trio in A minor

INTERVAL—10 MINS

Messiaen

Quartet for the End of Time

Ilkley Concert Club

Registered Charity No. 506886

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


SUPPORTING AND CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC

PROGRAMME NOTES

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

Piano trio in G major, K564
Allegro
Andante con variazioni
Allegretto

Until the final three decades or so of the eighteenth century, a keyboard work (with the keyboard used either as a solo instrument or in combination with other instruments) was commonly understood to be a work for harpsichord (or perhaps organ) and was published as such. The piano (or fortepiano) was a comparatively new invention at this time and it was not until the late 1700s that the instrument really began its unstoppable rise to the keyboard supremacy it subsequently achieved. The harpsichord was a familiar instrument both in concert and domestic use and, with an eye to the market, composers and publishers naturally did not rush to embrace the new and relatively untried fortepiano. Indeed, throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sonatas – including even the early sonatas of Beethoven – frequently continued to be described as works for either harpsichord or piano. However, Mozart enthusiastically embraced the transition to piano. He was known to be a superb pianist, so both as composer and performer he exercised a great influence on the acceptance of the piano and contributed considerably to its steadily increasing repertoire. From the mid-1770s Mozart performed regularly on the fortepiano and, from 1778, it is almost certain that he intended all his works that included keyboard to be played on the new instrument. He actually purchased a piano on his move to Vienna in 1781.

Mozart's early works in the keyboard chamber repertoire followed the common practice of being traditional, fully worked-out keyboard sonatas, with additional instruments ad libitum taking a subservient place. This genre – known as the accompanied sonata style – was certainly continued by Haydn for some time after Mozart's death. The keyboard parts that Mozart wrote for his piano trios, however, were quickly recognised as needing a far greater expressive range and ability to blend with other instruments than was possible on a harpsichord. Rather than the keyboard predominating throughout (as in an accompanied sonata) he achieved, in the trios, a perfect artistic balance between the piano and other instruments, particularly the violin and cello, and this combination was so influential that it was to become the classic ensemble in chamber music literature.

Mozart's final set of six piano trios (K496, 498, 502, 542, 548, 564) was written in Vienna between 1786 and 1788. K564 was written in 1788, the same year as the Divertimento for string trio K563, the 'Coronation' piano concerto K537 and the final three symphonies. It was first published in

1789 but in London rather than Vienna. Mozart was in financial difficulties which has caused some critics to suggest that this comparatively direct and straightforward work was aimed chiefly at the amateur market; contemporary publishers' catalogues show that amateur musicians were among their most important and lucrative customers. Be that as it may, K564 is charming and tuneful and begins with a flowing *Allegro* in sonata form, the solo piano stating each theme before it is taken up by the violin and cello. This pattern is followed throughout the work. The second movement comprises a warm folk-like theme and variations, in which the beautiful interplay between the instruments brings out the essential qualities of each. The work concludes with a vivacious *Allegretto* in a dotted dance-like 6/8 rhythm that never loses its momentum whether in a wistful minor mood or in a lively peasant dance.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 18 minutes

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Piano trio in A minor Modéré Pantoum (assez vite) Passacaille (très large) Final (animé)

Ravel's chamber music output is small by comparison with his productivity in other musical genres – vocal, orchestral and solo piano – and comprises only nine works, the more conventional of which include three sonatas and a piano trio.

Ravel began to compose the Trio during the summer of 1914 having planned it for six years or so beforehand, at which point he said, 'I've written my Trio. Now all I need are the themes'. He drew inspiration from the French Basque commune of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, near to his birthplace. His mother was Basque and Ravel deeply identified with his Basque heritage, despite living virtually all his life in Paris with the appearance and elegant lifestyle of an upper-class Parisian. While writing the Trio, he was also working on a piano concerto based on Basque themes and with a Basque title *Zazpiak Bat* (The Seven are One). This project was eventually abandoned but its influence on the Trio remains, particularly in the first movement which uses the characteristic rhythms of a Basque dance, the *zortziko*, and which was described by Ravel as 'Basque in colouring'. Following the outbreak of the 1914-18 war, Ravel worked on the Trio at great speed as he wished to finish it before volunteering for military service, telling Stravinsky that, 'The idea that I should be leaving [for the army] at once made me get through five months work in five weeks! My Trio is finished.'

Ravel preferred traditional musical forms to the up and coming styles of

composition represented in early Modernism and the Trio follows the standard classical format of a four-movement chamber work with the first and last movements in sonata form, a slow movement and a scherzo and trio. Within this familiar format however Ravel is extraordinarily innovative. His objective was to achieve a perfect balance, particularly to ensure that the cello was not overpowered by the piano and violin (the *Passacaille* beautifully demonstrates his success in this aim). Another method of accomplishing this was by exploiting the extreme ranges of each instrument and by including ornamentation (trills, glissandos, arpeggios and so on) that demands a very high level of technique from the performers. Irregular time signatures are used extensively – for example an 8/8 bar divided into a 3+2+3 rhythmic pattern in the first movement.

The title of the second movement (*Pantoum*) derives from a Malaysian verse form in four-line stanzas, where two themes are linked together by the second and fourth lines of each stanza becoming the first and third lines of the next. Musically the movement is actually a scherzo and trio within a pantoum structure; in a particularly notable passage the strings continue to play in the scherzo's 3/4 rhythm while the piano introduces the trio melody in 4/2. The theme of the *Passacaille* is a slow version of the pantoum's opening, beginning with the solo piano, leading to a climax for all three instruments and a gradually receding back to the solo piano.

The Final follows the first movement in that Ravel uses unusual Basque-inspired rhythms and time-signatures, shifting between 5/4 and 7/4 throughout. It begins with a lovely use of ornamentation in the strings, the violin with arpeggios in harmonics and the cello at the top of its range in double stopped tremolos. By making full and extensive use of the possibilities of each instrument, Ravel achieves a truly orchestral effect throughout the Trio and especially in this final movement, which concludes with a brilliant coda.

Last performance at ICC 10/12/2008

Duration: approx. 27 minutes

INTERVAL — 10 MINS

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908-1992)

Quartet for the End of Time

Crystal liturgy - Song without words for the Angel who announces the end of Time - Abyss of the birds - Interlude - Praise to the Eternity of Jesus - Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets - Cluster of rainbows, for the Angel who announces the end of Time - Praise to the Immortality of Jesus

'And swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.'

Olivier Messiaen, a devout Roman Catholic, added this quotation from Revelation, chapter 10, verse 6 to the head of the score of this extraordinary work. Conscripted into the French infantry in 1940, Messiaen composed the Quartet in Stalag VIII following his capture by the Nazis. Fellow prisoners included a professional violinist, a cellist and a clarinetist who had managed to bring along his own instrument. Messiaen himself hammered away at a battered upright piano. Conditions in the camp were poor (temperatures plummeted below freezing in the winter of 1940-1 whilst the work was being completed) but a music-loving guard, Karl-Albert Brüll, kept the composer supplied with music paper and arranged for him to have light duties. It seems that he also protected the Jewish clarinetist, Henri Akoka, from persecution. The premiere, at 6pm on 15 January 1941, took place before an audience of prisoners. 'Never was I listened to with such rapt attention and comprehension', Messiaen commented. In later years, he gave exaggerated accounts of the performance; there is no evidence to support his assertion that the audience numbered five thousand or that the cello only had three strings. The four performers never played the work together again. Akoka managed to escape from the camp whilst the atheist violinist, Jean Le Boulaire, his confidence as musician broken by the war, became an actor. Messiaen himself was released the next month as an 'unarmed artist', his army past having been erased by forged papers supplied by Brüll.

The Quartet's eight movements include a peculiar mix of solos, duets, and even a trio; only four use the entire ensemble. The third movement (Abyss of the Birds) contains the first expression of Messiaen's obsession with bird song which would reach its apogee in 1958 in the two and half hour Catalogue d'oiseaux for solo piano. The composer's quartet colleagues would rise at dawn to help him capture the songs of warblers and thrushes. 'The abyss is Time with its sorrows and weariness' he wrote, 'the birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and joyous songs!'

Messiaen's idiosyncratic ideas of 'time' infuse the piece. In an attempt to escape the constraints of the Western tradition and to pursue 'rhythms outside of time', Messiaen turned to the 'additive rhythms' of Hindu music. This technique is used in the sixth movement; note lengths become variable and additional notes break up established rhythmic patterns. The first movement employs a 'palindromic rhythm', the harmonic progressions playing out and then cycling subtly back to the same starting point. The overall effect is often that of stasis, time seeming to stand still. In the final movement (described by Messiaen as 'the ascension of man and woman towards God'), tension very slowly builds towards a climatic, profound silence; a glimpse of Eternity.

Last performance at ICC 10/12/2008

Duration: approx. 52 minutes

(c) 2022 C.N. Lane and A. Keith

GOULD PIANO TRIO

Since their New York debut, described by the *Strad* magazine as ‘pure Gould’, the Gould Piano Trio have performed extensively across the globe. At Wigmore Hall they have presented the complete piano trios by Dvořák, Mendelssohn and Schubert as well as a Beethoven cycle to celebrate 25 years since their debut at that iconic venue. They have created a large and diverse discography which includes many neglected works by British composers as well as most of the mainstream repertoire. Sir James MacMillan, Mark Simpson and Judith Bingham are among the composers who have written pieces for the Gould.

Together with clarinettist Robert Plane, the trio are directors of the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival which celebrated its 21st anniversary with an acclaimed commission from Huw Watkins for clarinet and piano trio entitled *Four Fables*.

When asked how the trio spent lockdown Ben Frith replied: *Rob, Lucy and their bassoonist daughter, Florence, formed the Cardiff Street Orchestra with their musician neighbours, playing weekly concerts on Teilo Street where they live. It was a huge social media hit, and helped lift all our spirits!*

Our Corbridge Chamber Music Festival went on line, all our recordings being made from home, with our various family ensembles-it worked very well.

The trio gradually started rehearsing again and we streamed concerts and performed concerts twice in a day to socially distances audiences.

Otherwise it was gardening and home improvements like everyone else!

Lucy Gould *violin* has performed concerto repertoire with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and the English String Orchestra. She regularly appears as guest leader of the CBSO, BBC Phil, and BBCNOW. She is also Principal 2nd Violin of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. She teaches at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, where she lives with her husband, Robert Plane, and their three children.

Richard Lester *cello* was a member of the Florestan Trio, Domus, Hausmusik and the London Haydn Quartet. Principal Cello with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe since 1989, he has recorded the complete works of Mendelssohn for cello and piano and a disc of Boccherini sonatas on period instruments. He teaches at the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School in London. Since their last visit to Ilkley, he has replaced Alice Neary as the cellist with the Trio.

Ben Frith *piano* has given recital tours of North America, the Far East, India, Israel, Egypt and Kazakhstan. Among his acclaimed recordings are a best-selling John Field concerto cycle with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and a solo recording of Schumann’s *Davidstbindlertänze* op 6. During the latter half of his career he has concentrated on the chamber repertoire, principally with the Gould but also forming his own Frith Piano Quartet.

ROBERT PLANE clarinet

Robert has performed in Europe, Asia and USA. His wide ranging repertoire includes much British clarinet music and many new commissions. His recording of Finzi's concerto won a Gramophone Award. He has been Principal Clarinet of BBCNOW, the CBSO and Northern Sinfonia and as Guest Principal he appears regularly with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Concertgebouw, the LSO, and the Aurora Orchestra. For many years Robert has collaborated with the Gould and their recording of Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time was hailed by BBC Music Magazine as the 'finest modern recording' of this epic masterpiece!

76TH SEASON 2022-23

Dates for your diary

- 5 Oct 2022** **Brodsky Quartet + Laura van der Heijden** (cello)
to include Schubert: Quintet in C
- 2 Nov 2022** **Marsyas Trio** (flute, cello and piano)
music by women composers including Louise Farrenc
- 14 Dec 2022** **Michael Collins + London Winds**
to include Mozart: Serenade for 13 winds
- 11 Jan 2023** **London Tango Quintet**
to include Piazzolla: The four seasons of Buenos Aires
- 15 Feb 2023** **Ensemble 360** (string trio)
to include works by Beethoven and Dohnányi
- 8 Mar 2023** **Consone Quartet**
String quartets by Fauré, Haydn and Mendelssohn
- 12 Apr 2023** **Voces 8 + Rachel Podger** (vocal group and violin)
Guardian Angel
- 3 May 2023** **Noriko Ogawa + Peter Donohoe** (two pianos)
to include Rachmaninov: Symphonic dances

NEXT CONCERT – 11th MAY 2022

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

BROOK STREET BAND baroque ensemble