

Ilkley Concert Club



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EMMA JOHNSON clarinet
RAPHAEL WALLFISCH cello
and
MARTIN ROSCOE piano

Farrenc

Trio for clarinet, cello and piano, op 44

Bax

Sonata for clarinet and piano

Fauré

Piano trio in D minor, op 120 (for clarinet)

Wednesday 10th November 2021
Kings' Hall

PROGRAMME NOTES

JEANNE-LOUISE FARRENC Trio for clarinet, cello and piano, op 44 (1804-1875)

Andante – Allegro Moderato

Adagio

Minuetto: Allegro

Allegro

Jeanne-Louise Farrenc (née Dumont) was born in Paris into an artistic family. Her father and sister were successful sculptors. She showed early promise as a pianist and, aged 15, began private lessons with a teacher at the Conservatoire; lectures in composition were open only to males. In 1821, she married Aristide Farrenc, a flute student 10 years her senior. After a brief career performing with her husband, the couple opened a music publishing house which flourished for the next 40 years. In 1842, Louise returned to the Conservatoire becoming Professor of Piano, a position she held for the next three decades. Only in 1850, following the triumphant premiere of her Nonet, championed by the celebrated violinist, Joseph Joachim, did she achieve equal pay with male professorial colleagues. She wrote three symphonies and a large number of chamber and solo piano works but her compositions vanished from the repertoire after her death. A renewed interest in female composers in the late twentieth century has led to the rediscovery and recording of her work. In December 2013, she was This Week's Composer on BBC Radio Three.

The Trio opus 44, for the highly unusual ensemble of cello, clarinet and piano, was completed in 1856 and published in 1861. The style reflects the time of its composition; a mix of Beethovenian late Classicism (in the *Adagio*, in particular) and the early Romantic idiom of Weber. Following a brief *Andante* introduction, the first movement gets under way with a lovely theme on the clarinet amid glittering triplet passages in the piano. The *Adagio* slow movement begins by highlighting the cello before the clarinet explores the same material in the minor. The clarinet dominates both the sparkling third movement (more scherzo than minuet) and the finale; Farrenc was no doubt mindful of the need to let the dedicatee, Adolphe Leroy, a colleague and professor of clarinet at the Conservatoire, take the lead in bringing this delightful piece to its conclusion.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 24 minutes

ARNOLD BAX (1883-1953)

Sonata for clarinet and piano

Molto moderato

Vivace – Pochettino meno posso (Lento)

Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax was born in Streatham, London, the son of a wealthy barrister. Although he followed in the tradition of the late romantics (Wagner was an early passion), he stood apart from his contemporaries Vaughan Williams and Holst and their interest in folk idioms; he once told a friend that, 'you should make a point of trying every experience once, excepting incest and folk-dancing.' In the years before the First World War, he became fascinated by Celtic culture and moved to Ireland, where he wrote fiction and verse under the pseudonym, Dermot O'Byrne. His private life was complex. He left his wife and children for the pianist, Harriet Cohen and, from 1925, pursued an affair both with her and the 23 year old Mary Gleaves who remained his companion until his death. Despite the championing of his seven symphonies by Vernon Handley in the 1960s, only his orchestral work, Tintagel, has kept his reputation alive in the concert hall. Happily, his characterful chamber music is now finding new audiences.

The piano and the clarinet are very much equal partners in this lyrical sonata. Two themes are developed in the first movement, both elegiac in mood, the second more introspective and chromatic.

Whilst the second theme is more extensively elaborated, it is the autumnal first theme which returns to round off the movement. Like a sudden squall scattering the autumn leaves, the shorter second movement opens breezily before a more lyrical passage brings the return of the opening theme of the first movement which quietly closes this charming work.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 15 minutes

GABRIEL FAURÉ
(1845 – 1924)

Piano trio in D minor, op 120 (for clarinet)

Allegro ma non troppo

Andantino

Allegro vivo

Fauré began his penultimate and only chamber work in this format in 1922 at the suggestion of his publisher Jacques Durand who, eight years earlier, had published Ravel's acclaimed piano trio. It was originally scored for piano, cello and clarinet or violin although he soon dropped the clarinet option and the work is now chiefly heard in the traditional trio combination of piano, violin and cello. Completed in 1923, a year before his death, its first performance was given in the May of that year to celebrate his 78th birthday. Fauré was too ill to attend, however he was present at a subsequent performance in Paris given by the famous Cortot-Thibaud-Casals trio.

Fauré wrote the D minor trio in two stages. In the summer of 1922 he completed the expansive and elegiac *Andantino* while staying in Annecy-le-Vieux, in the Savoy. While there he wrote to his wife, 'The trouble is I cannot work for long at a time. My worst tribulation is a perpetual fatigue.' He did not complete the two outer movements until the following winter. All three movements are notable for their clear lines and for the balance between the piano (Fauré's favourite instrument) and the violin/clarinet and cello.

The first movement, is Fauré's take on the sonata form. It opens with a broad swaying theme on the cello over a rippling piano accompaniment, a theme which is immediately taken up by the violin/clarinet and accompanied by piano motifs like a barcarolle, a style of which Fauré was particularly fond. The second subject is announced by the piano but the instrumentation is then reversed and the melodies evolve, through the development and recapitulation, from tiny motifs that pass from instrument to instrument.

The lovely *Andantino* begins with a wistful duet for cello and violin/clarinet, with the piano filling in the background. The mood intensifies to a spare, rather austere melodic line for the cello and violin/clarinet in octave doublings while the beautiful piano accompaniment reminds the listener of Fauré's unparalleled output of songs. Following a graceful contrapuntal episode, the gentle opening momentarily returns before another contrapuntal contrast leads to a quiet and restful conclusion.

Fauré's fatigue is certainly not evident in the dazzling finale which opens with octave doublings similar to those in the *Andantino* but which, in the last movement, are punctuated by brilliant flourishes from the piano heralding the energetic rhythms that animate the movement throughout. Fauré then combines two concepts, each with its own recurring theme: the piano constantly rushes forward in tempestuous fashion while the other instruments declaim their theme in a slower tempo.

Tonight's performance for piano, cello and clarinet gives the listener a rare opportunity to hear the D minor trio in Fauré's original scoring.

Last performance at ICC 09/01/2013

Duration: approx. 18 minutes

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EMMA JOHNSON clarinet

Emma Johnson came to prominence as the fourth winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in 1984. Whilst studying at Cambridge University she started a successful solo career which has grown until she can be described by The Times as 'Britain's favourite clarinetist', as well as being well-known across the world. She is also known for the breadth of her repertoire which encompasses concertos, chamber music and jazz. Emma is one of the of the UK's biggest selling classical artists, having sold over half a million discs .

RAPHAEL WALLFISCH cello

Raphael Wallfisch was born into a family of distinguished musicians and followed his mother's footsteps in taking up the cello. He was guided by teachers who included Amaryllis Fleming and Grigor Piatigorsky and at the age of twenty-four won the Gaspar Cassadó International Cello Competition. Since then he has become one of the most celebrated cellists performing on the international stage, famed for his oaring, singing sound. Raphael has been at the forefront of playing and commissioning new works by contemporary composers and he has recorded over seventy discs.

MARTIN ROSCOE piano

Martin Roscoe was born in Cheshire and first became serious about music at the age of 7 after being 'bowled over' by a performance of Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique. He went on to study at what is now the Royal Northern College of Music and in the ensuing forty years has built an ever more distinguished career. His enduring popularity and the respect in which he is universally held are built on a deeply thoughtful musicianship allied to an easy rapport with audiences and fellow musicians alike. He last played at Ilkley with Jennifer Pike in January 2020.

NEXT CONCERT – 8th DECEMBER 2021

NOTE TIME CHANGE—Two identical performances

6pm (Doors open 5:30pm) | 8:15pm (Doors open 7:45pm)

DORIC STRING QUARTET

Ilkley Concert Club

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