

The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust Concerts 2016

Thursday March 24 at 7:30 pm at St. Mary's Church Hall, Stoke D'Abernon

Friday March 25 at 7:30 pm at The Musical Museum, Brentford

Saturday March 26 at 7:30 pm at Farnham Methodist Church, Farnham

MAIASTRA

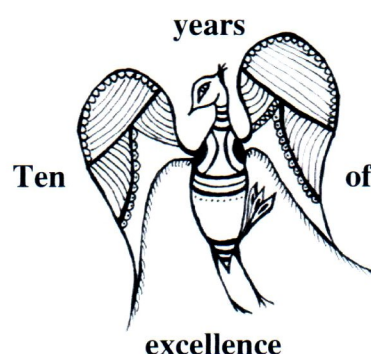
Arisa Fujita - violin

Laia Braun - violin

Ana Alves - viola

Tom Widdicombe - viola

Akito Goto - cello



Programme

String Quintets

The mainstay of the chamber music repertoire for strings is undoubtedly the string quartet, comprising two violins, a viola and a cello. Haydn, realising the potential of this combination of instruments, wrote sixty-eight pioneering works for the medium. Since then, all the great composers have written string quartets and these days about two hundred are regularly performed on the concert platform.

By contrast, string quintets proved less popular among composers although Boccherini did compose more than a hundred in which he added an additional cello to the string quartet. Schubert also adopted this grouping of instruments to achieve one of the greatest pieces in the chamber music literature. Sadly, there was only a small number of other composers who wrote 'cello' quintets.

It was Mozart who pioneered a different form of string quintet by introducing an additional viola to the string quartet to produce the 'viola' quintet. Of the six he wrote, four are mature works each of which contends to be a desert island disc. Brahms wrote two towards the end of his life. He told a friend that he was pouring his heart and soul into his second viola quintet which he expected would be his last composition. (It turned out that Brahms went on to write a few more masterpieces.) Clearly, this medium proved to be a vehicle to allow composers to create some of their most personal and emotional music. Almost forty other composers have written viola quintets but only those written by Beethoven (one), Mendelssohn (two), Dvořák (one) and Bruckner (one) form part of the standard repertoire.

Mozart (1756 - 1791)

viola quintet in C K.515

allegro Menuetto **allegretto** andante **allegro**

The C major quintet was completed in 1787. It is a standard four movement composition but unusually the slow movement relinquishes its usual second movement position by swapping places with the minuet. The first movement is massive in scope and is the largest sonata-allegro movement

written before Beethoven. The initial idea, where the first violin answers a rising question in the cello, is destined to undergo various rhetorical shifts: first it will come to an abrupt halt, with a silence; then the two instruments reverse their roles; then a short while later they will try again, only to interrupt each other one bar too early with the next question. The texture in this movement is generally simple and homophonic but, just as the ear has become used to this simplicity, Mozart abandons it altogether, especially in the coda which features complicated counterpoint among the voices, inviting a darker tenderness to offset the sunny, C major quality of the movement. The rather blithe minuet employs a teasing device: a melody, which crescendos to a surprising subito piano, but which on its second attempt attains the forte for which it was aiming. This is the first of several dynamic surprises, which crop up everywhere in the movement. The trio, unusually, shifts to F major. The slow movement takes the form of a tender duet between the first violin and first viola. Here we have very much the reverse of the teasing, hesitating minuet. All the elements of an operatic aria are here: a beautiful melodic contour richly adorned with ornaments and arabesques. The form is simple and without development, befitting the music's straightforward message. The dialogue is as emotionally charged as that of the solo instruments in the slow movement of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola. In the finale, his operatic genius is again in evidence, but now the mood is decidedly effervescent and humorous; the five parts are sometimes united festively, sometimes scurrying about conspiratorially, handing messages back and forth.

~ Interval ~

Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

viola quintet in B flat Opus 87

allegro vivace andante scherzando adagio e lento allegro molto vivace

It was in 1845 that Mendelssohn composed his second string quintet in B flat. One of eight chamber works he wrote in the 1840s, it holds several distinctions – not least that Mendelssohn chose not to publish it. The reason, it seems, was because he simply didn't like it enough. Mendelssohn reportedly said that he considered the finale, in particular, "not good". It was published posthumously in 1851. The quintet was, nevertheless, a signpost of an evolving style, the growing pains of a composer freeing himself from contrapuntal writing and classical embellishments and pursuing more overt and dramatic expression.

The prominent attribute of the quintet is energy. Immediately, fierce tremolo gales blow through the first movement ushering in a sprightly rising theme. The andante scherzando changes the pace – mixing a light, courtly waltz theme with moments of devilish pizzicato. Some of Mendelssohn's most sober, tragic writing is contained in the adagio e lento – weighty chords swelling over a trudging cello line. The allegro molto vivace is what, apparently, gave Mendelssohn enough trouble to abandon the work. Ignoring his disappointment, however, the finale hurls the quintet back into action, serving up the most blazing rhythms yet for a rapid dash towards the finish line.

Mendelssohn himself should be allowed to have the last word on programme notes! "So many words are uttered about music, and yet so little is said. I think words are not enough. If I thought they were, I would stop making music. People complain that music is so open to interpretation and that they don't know what they are supposed to think. Words, on the other hand, they think, can be understood by everyone. For me it's exactly the other way around, and not just with long speeches, but with single words too. What music expresses for me, what I love, are not ideas that are too indefinite to put into words, but too definite." And on yet another occasion: "A word never means to one person what it means to another. Only a song can say the same thing to everyone, can awaken the same feeling -- a feeling that cannot be expressed in words."

PROFILES

ARISA FUJITA is a member of the Fujita Piano Trio, the leader of the Swiss Gémeaux Quartett and a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Following the release of a critically acclaimed CD of chamber works by Toru Takemitsu on the ASV label, Arisa has recorded the Ysaÿe Solo Sonatas and piano trios by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Ravel, Schubert, Dvořák and Smetana.

LAIA VALENTIN BRAUN is studying for his Bachelor of Music degree with Professor Detlef Hahn at the Royal College of Music. From an early age he had an interest in chamber music, playing trios with his two sisters. He performs regularly with his string quartet, the Arcos Quartet, which in 2015 won the RCM's prestigious Boconnoc Music Award.

ANA ALVES started learning the viola in Portugal when she was five, and since 2012 she has been studying at the Royal College of Music under the supervision of Jonathan Barritt. She has performed extensively both as a soloist and an orchestral player in Portugal, Switzerland and London.

TOM WIDDICOMBE studied with Mark Knight at Junior Guildhall where he was awarded the viola scholarship. In September 2013 Tom played in a masterclass with Lawrence Power, and he was commended by Paul Silverthorne for his performance of Martinu's Rhapsody Concerto in the final of the Max and Peggy Morgan Award.

AKITO GOTO, born in 1995, studied at the Toho Gakuen school of Music in Japan. At thirteen he was accepted by the Purcell School of Music and, since 2013, at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in the class of Louise Hopkins. He has won numerous prizes and awards and has given solo and chamber music performances in major venues.

The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust was established in 2001 with general musical objectives but focusing from 2006 on providing advanced level courses in chamber music for post-graduate music students, particularly those intent on adopting a professional performing career with chamber music as a component. The Trust has been running these courses for eight years, and the courses in their present particular form are believed to be unique in the UK.

The aims of the courses are to give participants the opportunity to get to know works in the main chamber music repertoire, and to achieve a standard that will allow audiences to enjoy the performances as musical events memorable in their own right.

The main courses are residential lasting ten days each and are held four times a year at Little Slyfield, Stoke D'Abernon, in Surrey. Each course is directed and led by an established professional player and culminates in the latter part of the course in a series of public concerts by the group performing under the generic title, MAIASTRA. In addition, shorter courses are held for very advanced students with two days' rehearsals only, and based on a more professional model of preparation.

For further information on MAIASTRA, including some recordings of past concerts, please look at the web site www.maiastra.org. If you would like to make a donation to support the training of classical music students by the Trust, you can either find out what you need to do from the website or send a cheque, payable to 'The Aidan Woodcock Charitable Trust', to Aidan Woodcock, Little Slyfield, Cobham Road, Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey KT11 3QE. All donations can be gift aided and payments can be either one-off or regular. The trustees are most grateful for any contribution you would like to make.