



Tilford Bach Society



Finest Violin Sonatas

Alexandra Lomeiko, violin
Antonina Suhanova, piano

23 February 2018

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Programme

Generously sponsored by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Grand Duo in A major for violin and piano, D.574

Allegro moderato; Scherzo: Presto; Andantino; Allegro vivace.

Although Schubert wrote this sonata in 1817, it was not published until 1851, 23 years after his death. The title of "Grand Duo" is appropriate for the way in which Schubert makes the two instruments complement each other, but the pomposity of the title belies the exquisite stream of beautifully crafted melody which recalls his finest songs. The piece starts with a sweet constantly evolving melody enunciated by the violin over a lolling piano rhythm. The next movement is an exuberant scherzo, featuring leaping intervals, surprising changes of key and tempo. A sinuous chromatic violin scale announces a contrasting trio before the exuberance of the starting theme returns. A lyrical Andantino calms the atmosphere with a typical Schubertian song-like melody without words. Finally a whirling Viennese waltz brings the sonata to a cheerful conclusion.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano in G Major, Op. 77.

Allegretto; Blues: Moderato; Perpetuum mobile: Allegro

The sonata No. 2 for violin and piano was Ravel's last chamber work, completed in 1927 just before his successful visit to America, where he was to meet and be influenced by other key composers of the time such as George Gershwin. Ravel said the work was to explore the basic incompatibility of violin and piano and this lends an uneasy quality to the music.

The sonata consists of three very different movements in contrasting styles. The first is a floating and airy allegretto characterised by bare harmony and a difficult to place tonality. The second movement of the sonata is unusually entitled 'blues', and begins with solo pizzicato chords. The piano plays along with this for a while but provides a very subversive harmonic accompaniment. The primary melody of this movement emerges from this atmosphere with a blues-like quality as the title suggests, using syncopated rhythm and unusual playing directions such as slides to achieve this stylistic feel. The blues melody in the violin part is joined by playful counter-melodies in the piano, but the piano later takes over almost entirely as the violin assumes an accompanying role with virtuosic pizzicato chords. After a fortissimo section on the violin, the quiet, soulful melody returns with phrases exchanged between violin and piano to end the movement. The final movement is another contrast, beginning with a series of rhythmic patterns which seem to gradually get faster and faster, progressing relentlessly in the style of a Perpetuum mobile. There is non-stop flow of virtuosic passagework to test the players before the melody emerges played in octaves. This melody goes through a variety of patterns as it reaches a climax, finally resolving in a hammered repetition of the final pattern.

INTERVAL

Tea, coffee and fruit juice are served in the back hall

Donations towards refreshment costs would be appreciated

"Ladies" is along passage to left of kitchen, "Gents" through door at back of kitchen

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sonata for violin and piano no. 4 in C minor, BWV.1017

Siciliano; Largo; Allegro; Adagio; Allegro

Bach's six sonatas for violin and keyboard (BWV 1014 - 1019) were probably mostly composed during Bach's final years in Cöthen between 1720 and 1723, before he moved to Leipzig. Unusually for the time they contain fully realized harpsichord parts (as opposed to continuo parts with figured bass) and represent the real beginnings of the duo sonata as understood today. This sonata is stylistically-speaking the most unusual and forward-looking of the sonatas. Whilst its four movements are plainly of the traditional church sonata lineage, two of them especially would have turned early eighteenth-century heads.

The Sonata opens with a Siciliano, the swaying rhythm being given to the violin while the harpsichord provides arpeggiated accompaniment. The second movement (Allegro) is the weightiest of all the violin/harpsichord sonata quick movements and is a complex though melodic fugue. The Adagio third movement, is no ordinary Baroque chamber Adagio. The violin melody is accompanied by a constant triplet-arpeggio accompaniment in the keyboard right hand and a simple, streamlined bass line in the left reminiscent of the style that a composer half a century or more later might have concocted and unrivalled in Bach's sonatas. The Allegro finale is the kind of dense, quasi-fugal binary movement that Bach made his own.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

"Kreutzer" Sonata No.9, Op47

Adagio sostenuto – Presto; Andante con variazioni; Presto

This monumental work was premièred by George Bridgetower, the original dedicatee, and Beethoven on 24 May 1803, shortly after it was completed. Bridgetower sight-read the sonata, a stupendous feat - he had never seen the work before and there had been no time for any rehearsal. However, after the successful première he and Beethoven fell out and Beethoven changed the dedication to Rodolphe Kreutzer, a celebrated French violinist whose exercises have tortured aspiring violinists to this day. According to Hector Berlioz, Kreutzer's verdict on the sonata was that it was "outrageously unintelligible"!

The sonata opens with a slow 18-bar introduction, after which the piano enters, and the harmony begins to turn darker towards the minor key. The main body of the movement is an angry A-minor Presto in which the piano part matches the violin's in terms of difficulty. Near the end, Beethoven brings back part of the opening Adagio, before closing the movement in an anguished coda.

There could hardly be a greater contrast with the second movement, a placid tune in F major followed by five distinctive variations. The first variation translates the theme into a lively triple meter while embellishing it with trills, while in the second the violin steals the melody and enlivens it even further. The third variation, in F minor, returns to a darker and more meditative state. The fourth recalls the first and second variations with its light, ornamental, and airy feel. The fifth and final variation, the longest, caps the movement with a slower and more dramatic feel, nevertheless returning to the carefree F major.

The calm is broken by a crashing A major chord in the piano, ushering in the virtuosic and exuberant third movement, a 6/8 tarantella in sonata form. After moving through a series of slightly contrasting episodes, the theme returns for the last time, and the work ends jubilantly in a rush of A major. *Notes by Trevor Gray*

Alexandra Lomeiko: Violin

Alexandra was born in 1991 and began violin lessons at the age of 5 in Christchurch, New Zealand. During the following years she received many awards and prizes around New Zealand including 2nd place at the Sentinel Performers Competition (2005) and 3rd place at the National Concerto Competition (2008).

2006 brought Alexandra to London to study at the Purcell School of Music in London. Through her studies there, she had her solo recital debut at Wigmore Hall in October 2009 and, in November of the same year, at the Watford Colosseum performing Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the Purcell School Symphony Orchestra. Since then, she has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in many prestigious venues around London and the U.K, most regularly with her duo partners, pianists Gamal Khamis and Antonina Suhanova. A laureate of numerous competitions, Alex has won the Province of Terni Soloist Award from Associazione Mozart Italia (2014), Kenneth Loveland Gift Award, U.K (2016), Hattori Foundation Senior Award, U.K (2017) and the Development Prize at the Michael Hill International Violin Competition (2017).

In 2010, she was awarded "The Henry Weinrebe Award" scholarship by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (London) studying there with Professor David Takeno. Following her graduation in 2014, she commenced her postgraduate studies at The Royal College of Music with Radu Blidar and Yuri Zhislin graduating in July 2017 with a Masters in Music Performance and the Artist Diploma Qualification. She was an RCM Lark Scholar supported by a Leverhulme Postgraduate Studentship and by awards from the Countess of Munster Trust, the Martin Music Scholarship Fund, the Drake Calleja Foundation and the Help Musicians UK Foundation.

Alex performs on a violin made by Francesco Maurizi of Appignano, c.1850.

Antonina Suhanova: Piano

Antonina was born in Riga, Latvia in 1991 and started playing piano at the age of five. She studied at the Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music before moving to London in 2012 where she won a scholarship and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under the tutelage of distinguished British pianist Ronan O'Hora. She has participated in master-classes with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Dmitri Bashkirov and Richard Goode.

Antonina specialises in violin and piano duo repertoire, but has also appeared as a soloist with orchestras in Latvia, London and Moscow under the baton of Andris Nelsons and Vladimir Spivakov, amongst others. She made her debut performance at the Barbican Hall with the Guildhall Symphony Orchestra and conductor Adrian Leaper as a finalist of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama most prestigious prize The Gold Medal in May 2016, returning in December of the same year to perform a solo recital.

Antonina also won a Senior Award with the Hattori Foundation in 2017.

CD Recording of Alexandra and Antonina's performance for TBS in November 2014 available in back hall price £3-00.