



Tilford Bach Society



Elizabeth Cooney - Violin

Alison Rhind - Piano

23 February 2019

www.tilbach.org.uk

Programme

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

'Spring' Sonata no.5 in F major, Op.24

Allegro; Adagio molto espressivo; Scherzo: Allegro molto; Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Written in 1801, the Spring Sonata was given its name after Beethoven's death, perhaps because of its lyrical first movement. It was the first of Beethoven's sonatas to have the four movements, with the addition to the standard three of an extremely brief scherzo. The first movement in Sonata form moves seamlessly between two contrasting themes. It is followed by a deeply felt slow movement. The scherzo which intervenes briefly between this and the final movement has odd rhythms which almost seem to pit the violin against the piano. In the final rondo, the theme is subtly varied in each presentation satisfyingly rounding off the piece.

Arvo Pärt (1935 –)

Fratres for Violin and Piano

Despite having grown up in Estonia under Soviet constraints on musical composition, Arvo Pärt has the distinction currently of being the most performed living composer in the world. His music is partly inspired by Gregorian chant and the simplicity of the movement of chordal sequences in this work is reminiscent of that. *Fratres* was first composed in 1977 for strings, wind and percussion but Pärt produced a number of versions for different instrumental combinations, the version for violin and piano being arranged for Gidon and Elena Kremer, the dedicatees, for performance at the 1980 Salzburg Festival.

The work takes the form of a series of chordal sequences separated by two brief piano chords. The sequences are first enunciated as soft rapid arpeggios on the violin alone, then the piano enters with two chords accompanying pizzicato chords in the violin which act as punctuation between each variation. The second variation consists of soft simple notes from the chords on the violin accompanied by the piano. In the third, the violin plays broken arpeggios with much string crossing while the fourth requires a bouncing bow (*saltellato*). Notes from the chordal sequence are played on the string in the 4th variation while the 5th is declamatory high on the E string. The 6th variation has lyrical double stopping while the 7th consists of upward arpeggios which seem to continue into the stratosphere. The final variation consists of diminuendo harmonics at the limit of hearing moving to a soft close.

The cold description of the sequences belies the mesmeric effect of the music and the piece is deservedly one of his most popular.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Romance no.2 in F major, Op.50

Andante – Allegro vivace; Adagio – Tempo d'andante – Allegro vivace

This, probably the earlier of Beethoven's two Romances for violin, was originally scored for violin and orchestra (one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings). The circumstances of its composition are unclear as no notebook entries seem to refer to either this or the G major Romance. It was first performed around

1798 but not published till 1805. The Romance is a gentle lyrical piece marked Adagio cantabile in the form of a two episode rondo (ABACA) followed by a brief coda.

Interval

Matthew Taylor (1964 -)

A Reflection for Violin and Piano, world premiere

I was delighted when Elizabeth Cooney kindly commissioned this piece for her concert this evening. She expressed the wish that it might in some way reflect some aspect of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata which, I gather, was a great favourite of hers since childhood. Being a fellow Beethovenian I was instantly enthused by the idea, so this little miniature expands and 'reflects' the gentle arpeggio figures heard at the outset of the Beethoven Sonata. Though it doesn't re-create Beethoven's language - nobody can do that or should want to - it does at least pay homage to the atmosphere of the original.

Matthew Taylor

César Franck (1822 – 1890)

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano

*Allegretto ben moderato; Allegro ben moderato: Recitativo – Fantasia;
Allegretto poco mosso.*

The Violin Sonata in A was written in 1886 as a wedding present for the virtuoso violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Franck himself did not attend the wedding but the work was presented by a mutual friend on the morning of the wedding. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe and a pianist friend played the Sonata to the other wedding guests. The first public performance, again by Ysaÿe, in a museum hall was almost as memorable, as the Sonata was the final item in a long program and dusk had fallen and the gallery was bathed in gloom. The museum authorities had permitted no artificial light whatsoever, so the musicians had to play the last three movements from memory in virtual darkness. Ysaÿe kept the Violin Sonata in his repertoire for the next 40 years of his life and his championing of the Sonata contributed to the public recognition of Franck as a major composer. It has remained a firm favourite with the concert-going public and regularly appears in concert programmes.

As well as a major exercise for the violinist, the piece is notable for the difficulty of its piano part, partly because of the extended reach required – the composer himself having possessed huge hands—and virtuoso runs and leaps, especially in the second movement.

The first movement is a graceful Allegro introduced by a gently rocking theme which will recur, usually transformed, in other movements. The second movement introduces a more turbulent mood and theme before the third movement recitative which is improvisatory and free in structure. The final movement is a triumphant recasting of the main theme as a canon at the octave which propels the players to a magnificent conclusion.

Notes by Trevor Gray

Elizabeth Cooney

Elizabeth initially studied with Adrian Petcu in her native Cork in Ireland, and subsequently with Itzhak Rashkovsky at the Royal College of Music, London, where she obtained first class honours in her BMus and PGDip. Elizabeth was a laureate of the Sion-Valais International Competition for Violin, Switzerland. She then became a Junior Fellow for two years at the RCM. Elizabeth frequently performs with the English Chamber Orchestra as well as the dynamic Aurora Orchestra, performing symphonies by memory as in the BBC Proms; she will visit Singapore and Brussels with them in Spring 2019.

Elizabeth is a very keen chamber musician and has performed at the Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, and the Weill Hall at Carnegie.

Now living in Farnham, Elizabeth is delighted to collaborate with her talented colleagues as leader of the Farnham Sinfonia.

Alison Rhind

Alison Rhind is recognised as one of the leading collaborative pianists specialising in the repertoire for piano and strings. Her ability to accompany was recognised at an early age whilst still at Chetham's School of Music. She read Music at Wadham College, Oxford and completed her studies with Edith Vogel at the Guildhall School of Music before returning to be an accompanist at Cheetham's.

In 1994, she moved to the Yehudi Menuhin School where she worked for twelve years. She toured Israel and Germany with the students and was invited to accompany at the prestigious Kronberg Akademie after her recitals there with the school. During this period, she coached many young instrumentalists with whom she has since forged notable recital partnerships particularly the violinists Alina Ibragimova and Nicola Benedetti with whom she toured the USA and Japan.

The Royal College of Music recognised her work and in 2009 created a post for her as Coach for the String Department which she now combines with freelance recital work. She has a collaborative relationship with many teachers who send their students to her specifically for duo coaching.



Alison lives in Surrey with her three children.

Future Concert Dates

30 March, St Andrew's Church: **Farnham Sinfonia**, Richard Watkins
11 May, St Andrew's Church: **Pegasus Choir**

15 June, St Andrew's Church: Tilford Bach Festival
16 June, Tilford Church: Tilford Bach Festival
Handel: Choice of Hercules & Bach: Magnificat

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