

Farnham Sinfonia



Soloist: Coco Tomita
Conductor - Matthew Taylor
Leader - Elizabeth Cooney

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Programme

Robert Simpson (1921 -1997)

Allegro Deciso for Strings

Paradoxically, the most pertinent appraisal I have ever read regarding the British composer Robert Simpson's achievement came from an American critic. 'This is serious music... a lifetime's inspiration... through which one determined Englishman hurled down the gauntlet to the self-regarding second half of the 20th Century and helped justify once more music's claim to be the most elevating, questing and stimulating accompaniment to the life we all need.'

During his lifetime Simpson's music remained cussedly unfashionable. He was unconvinced by Schoenberg, derisive of the gimmickry of the 60's and 70's avant garde, and if he'd lived into the early 21st Century would have no doubt been a trenchant critic of both the soft-centred, diluted, easy-listening 'muzak' and the decorative, intricate prettiness that conceals any real substance that pervades our current climate. Neither was there any obvious sense that he represented a continuation of an essentially English lyrical idiom, though he responded warmly to much of the work of Vaughan Williams and Tippett.

Bob Simpson's ideal was to recreate something of the energy, momentum and life force of Beethoven, never to write in the style of Beethoven but to bring the spirit of the German composer closer to modern consciousness. Allied to that, he showed a great spiritual kinship to Sibelius and Nielsen through which he cultivated a musical expression almost without precedent in the late 20th Century.

The Allegro Deciso is a reworking of the finale of Simpson's 3rd Quartet from 1954. It is a big-hearted, expansive, exhilarating work lasting about twelve minutes, whose momentum is propelled towards an emphatic close which must be one of the most radiant endings to any piece of post-war music.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Violin Concerto no.1 in B flat major K.207

Soloist – Coco Tomita

Allegro; Andante; Vivace

The great popularity and success of the later Violin Concertos of Mozart, particularly the celebrated No.5 with the Turkish Finale, has tended to overshadow the remarkable achievements of the first two. Written in 1775 the First Violin Concerto in B flat is no student work but more a piece which already proclaims the young composer's astonishing maturity and originality of expression. Though the work obviously embraces the Concerto design formally and stylistically, much of the writing has an intimacy of feeling which suggests chamber music.

After a bright, open Allegro, the Andante in slow three-time reveals the heart of the music as the violin solo assumes an almost operatic quality. The Finale is spirited and dance-like, offering plenty of witty interplay between the oboes, horns and strings.

-----Interval-----

Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

Symphony no.49 in F minor 'La Passione'

Adagio; Allegro; Minuet; Finale - Presto

This Symphony is one of the finest products of what is known as Haydn's 'Sturm und Drang' (Storm and Stress) period, a term initially associated with literature in the mid 18th Century where intensity of feeling, greater emotional range and often a sense of tragedy are paramount. Haydn's music embraced these qualities during the late 1760's and early 1770's and his range widened yet further as a result. Consequently, many of the Symphonies, String Quartets and Keyboard Sonatas from these years are in minor keys and there is greater sense of experimentation than in any of the earlier music. →

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The Symphony opens unusually with a very solemn, slow deeply felt lament, dominated by broadly flowing melodic lines and an almost ceremonial feel to the music. The following Allegro, almost as a sense of protest is highly charged, volatile and turbulent with an energy that I'm sure Robert Simpson would have admired. Next comes a Minuet, serene and graceful but more austere than we might expect. The finale, though brief is a real tour de force whose sense of perpetual motion and drive surpasses all of Haydn's contemporaries.

It is astonishing to consider that such a work as this was composed two years before Beethoven was born.

Programme notes by Matthew Taylor

Coco Tomita

The UK based Japanese violinist Coco Tomita is a winner of the BBC Young Musician 2020 Strings Category. She has also won other top prizes at international competitions and festivals. Born into a musical family, Coco began to play the violin when she was four years old. At the age of ten, she made her debut at the Cadogan Hall, London, performing as a soloist with the Southbank Sinfonia. Since then she has performed and appeared in many prestigious venues in the UK and abroad.

After the success of the BBC Young Musician 2020, Coco has signed an exclusive agreement with the Orchid Classics to record her debut album due to be released in early 2022 and has numerous concert engagements lined up including appearances in music festivals across the UK and a tour of Japan in the 2021/2022 season.

Last year, Coco completed her study at the Yehudi Menuhin School and is currently living in Berlin studying at the Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler". Needless to say, Coco's life centres around her musical activities, but she enjoys socialising, reading, photography, painting and exercising.

Matthew Taylor

Matthew Taylor was born in London in 1964 and won a Music Scholarship to Queen's College Cambridge where he studied with Robin Holloway. He later received special encouragement from Leonard Bernstein conducting concerts in Germany with Bernstein, and from George Hurst who championed Matthew's First Symphony. But it was his association with Robert Simpson's music that proved the most lasting impact on his creative outlook. Matthew's Hyperion world premiere recording of Simpson's 11th Symphony won the Gramophone Record of the Year in 2004.

Matthew is now widely regarded as one of Britain's leading symphonists; the release of his 4th and 5th Symphonies on Nimbus has gained many awards and his recently commissioned 6th Symphony, premiered by BBC NOW in May is being recorded for Toccata Classics in 2022.

Matthew has also written 8 string quartets, piano trios and several Concertos. His recently commissioned Oboe Concerto was premiered in August at Hereford Cathedral as part of the Presteigne 2021 Festival.

Matthew teaches and conducts at Yehudi Menuhin School, is on the Composition staff of the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Department, and is active as a lecturer and conductor. Forthcoming commissions include a Concerto for Orchestra of the Swan.

Farnham Sinfonia

First Violins

Elizabeth Cooney (leader)
Julia Wilson
Juliet Warden
Diane Wakefield
Viviane Plekhotkine

Second Violins

Sarah Wormell-Evans
Jane Gomm
Nick Barnard
Mira Marton

Violas

Ursula John
Sarah Malcolm
Peter Fenech

Cellos

Judith Fleet
Miriam Lowbury

Bass

Nicola Davenport

Oboes

Marjorie Carrington
Sylvia Ellison

Horns

Alexei Watkins
Fabian van De Geest



www.farnhamsinfonia.org.uk

Elizabeth Cooney - Violin

Elizabeth feels lucky to have been immersed in the Japanese Suzuki method of learning the violin from the age of five in her native Cork, Ireland. The focus on the method of learning music by memory contributed to her enjoying the process of learning symphonies by memory with the dynamic Aurora Orchestra whom she has toured with all over Europe, Australia and Mexico. She appeared at the BBC Proms in Aurora playing Stravinsky's Firebird Suite at the Royal Albert Hall this August. Elizabeth studied with Itzhak Rashkovsky on scholarship to the Royal College of Music and is laureate of several international competitions including second prize and audience prize at the Sion-Valais International Competition for Violin, Switzerland.

She has toured internationally with the English Chamber Orchestra and has played solo at the Royal Festival Hall, Wigmore Hall, Weill at Carnegie Hall to name but a few. She is now living in Farnham and is director of the new Farnham Chamber Music Festival.

Farnham Chamber Music Festival

Director: Elizabeth Cooney

*All concerts below are at
Spire Church (URC), South Street, Farnham, GU9 7QU*

7-30 pm Friday 22 October 2021

String Trio

Schubert, Dohnanyi and Beethoven

7-30 pm Saturday 23 October 2021

Alexander Sitkovetsky (violin) & Wu Qian (piano)

Schubert, Klouda and Beethoven

2-15 to 6-00 pm Sunday 24 October 2021

Masterclasses for Young Talented Violinists

7-30 pm Saturday 30 October 2021

Carducci String Quartet

Haydn, Glass and Beethoven

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Future Conservatoire Concerts

7-00 pm Saturday 16 October 2021

Godalming Baptist Church GU7 1BA

Charlotte Spruit - violin & piano

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