



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

Thursday 22nd October 2020, 1.05pm

The Minerva Piano Trio

Michal Cwizewicz - violin

Richard Birchall - cello

Annie Yim - piano



PROGRAMME

Ravel (arr. David Knotts) - Scenes from 'Daphnis and Chloe'

1. Nocturne
2. Pantomime
3. Danse Guerrière

Schubert - Piano Trio No.1 in Bb major D898

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante un poco mosso
3. Scherzo. Allegro
4. Rondo. Allegro vivace

The Minerva Piano Trio returns to St John's Smith Square with a programme featuring Schubert's Trio in B-flat major and an arrangement of selected scenes from Ravel's ballet Daphnis and Chloe, which was commissioned and premiered during the Trio's Young Artist residency at St John's Smith Square in 2016/17.

Arranged by composer David Knotts, Scenes from Daphnis and Chloe (2017) include three movements from Ravel's original orchestral score: Nocturne, Pantomime, Danse Guerrière. Ravel's ballet was inspired by the ancient Greek love story Daphnis and Chloe - a goatherd and a shepherdess - written by Longus in the 2nd Century AD. Longus explained in the prologue that he stumbled across a beautiful fresco cave painting on the Greek island of Lesbos, illustrating a story of two foundlings, Daphnis and Chloe, who are destined for each other. The fresco inspired him to write this coming-of-age pastoral romance about the discovery of love.

Ravel's score was originally commissioned by the Ballets Russes with libretto and choreography by Michel Fokine, premiered in 1912. In 2017, as part of the MusicArt project, the Minerva Piano Trio collaborated with choreographer Patricia Okenwa to premiere a non-narrative contemporary version with dancers Thomasin Gülgeç and Estela Merlos, achieving a reimagined, condensed reading of this great work.

The title of the work Scenes from Daphnis and Chloe distinguishes it from the two orchestral suites by Ravel and the complete ballet, and other transcriptions for solo piano. The 'Nocturne' and 'Danse Guerrière' come from the first Orchestral Suite. The middle 'Interlude' is replaced by 'Pantomime', which comes from the second Orchestral Suite. 'Pantomime' is a dance between only Daphnis and Chloe in the ballet, and its music is full of sensuality. The three selected movements in the new arrangement offer a thematic trajectory drawn from the actual novel about the discovery of love: innocence, awakening, touch, and passion.

Robert Schumann said of Schubert's Piano Trio in B-flat major, D.898: "One glance at Schubert's Trio and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again."

Written in 1827, this late large-scale work by Schubert, along with his monumental Piano Trio in E-flat, encompasses a full spectrum of expressions from unbridled joy to other-worldly lyricism.

The first movement opens with *joie de vivre*, characterised by a triplet motif in the strings that bounces off a dotted rhythm motif in the piano bass. This takes us from B-flat major to C minor and back in an irregular 5+ 6 phrasing. A chromatic scale in the piano transitions to the second theme, a beautiful song melody introduced by the cello in the dominant key of F major. The development section turns the sunny opening theme into a dark, brooding tonic B-flat minor, which then goes through a series of keys in a strident manner. The song melody re-emerges in the cello and metamorphoses sequentially, building to an emotional climax. Just as we are expecting the recapitulation in the original key, we instead hear the opening theme whispering in the distant (false recapitulation) keys of G-flat, and D-flat plus their companion renderings in minor modes. The real recapitulation continues imperceptibly in this gentle, congenial character.

The second movement is in a lilting 6/8 time. The E-flat major theme has an expansive, luminous quality to it that foreshadows Romantic composers like Schumann and Brahms. The middle section in C minor introduces a more agitated mood characterised by syncopated rhythm and an impassioned gypsy flair. The fluidity between major and minor keys throughout this movement can perhaps be seen as a poignant reminder of Schubert's own description of pain and love, "Whenever I attempted to sing of love, it turned to pain. And again, when I tried to sing of pain, it turned to love. Thus were love and pain divided in me."

Dance elements are always within reach in Schubert's music, and they feature in abundance in the Scherzo movement in the form of the *ländler* - a rustic, folk-dance - and the waltz. The imitations between the strings and the piano highlights the equality of roles and dialogues between the instruments. Indeed this became a defining feature of Scherzo movements in the piano trio genre, thus having far reaching influence on composers of future generations.

The finale is a dance-like rondo, full of good-natured fun, punctuated by occasional mischievous pronouncements. A whirlwind of intoxicating, rhythmic motifs then transition seamlessly to a pastoral theme in 3/2, with a drone bass and yodelling contours, first in D - flat major, then again in G-flat and F, just before the Presto coda section propels the dance forward to a jovial cadence.

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The Minerva Piano Trio have established themselves as one of the UK's most exciting young trios whose playing has been described as "wonderfully rich, thunderous, and lyrical" (Classic FM). They are known for their innovative approach in programming, from collaborating with dance and combining art forms such as photography to championing leading young composers by commissioning new works. They have recently been chosen as Making Music UK Selected Artists 2018 and St John's Smith Square Young Artists in residence 2016/17. Having made their debut at the Southbank Centre's Purcell Room in 2014 as Park Lane Group Young Artists, the Trio have broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. Acclaimed for their performances of the richly varied traditional repertoire, the Trio are equally passionate about reviving important but rarely performed works. Through workshops and pre-concert talks, they share their passions for historical research, new music, and creative collaborations. The Trio have worked closely with contemporary composers including Roxanna Panufnik, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Gavin Higgins, and David Knotts. They have received coaching from Gordon Back, members of the former Florestan Trio, and Gábor Takács-Nagy.

Violinist **Michal Cwizewicz** has given concerts across Europe, the Middle-East and USA, and his playing has been broadcast on BBC television and Radio and Polish national television. He performs frequently in the violin duo Cwizewicz Brothers, directs the Ognisko Chamber Ensemble and is the concertmaster of the Górecki Chamber Orchestra. Numerous awards enabled his studies at the Royal College of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Paris Conservatoire, the Escuela Superior de Musica Reina Sofia in Madrid and with celebrated musicians Itzhak Rashkovsky, Krzysztof Smietana and members of the Ysaÿe and Alban Berg Quartets. Before completing his postgraduate studies in music Michal read aeronautics, receiving his Masters in Engineering from Imperial College in 2007. He performs on a 1731 Nicolò Gagliano violin kindly on loan from a private collection. He is Head of Strings at Uppingham School has been teaching at the Royal College of Music since 2012.

Annie Yim is a pianist and founder of MusicArt. Known for her wide-ranging solo and chamber music repertoire that encompasses canonic works and new music, Annie has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, and national radios in Canada and Portugal. Passionate about collaborations and commissioning new works across art forms, Annie founded MusicArt in 2015, an initiative to create original artist-led performance projects. From London to Berlin and Salzburg, her performances with artists and art spaces were featured in New York T Magazine, Artnet, and Gramophone. Her book chapter 'MusicArt: Creating Dialogue Across the Arts' has been published by Palgrave Macmillan in an edited volume in July 2020. In August 2020 she launched an open-air festival, Concerts on the Farm, in Vancouver, Canada, a non-profit project in collaboration with Inner City Farms, an organic farm where she had volunteered. Annie is founding member of the Minerva Piano Trio and made her UK concerto debut at LSO St Luke's. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Vancouver, she studied piano at the University of British Columbia with Robert Silverman. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree and completed her performance-based research on Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms at the Guildhall School of Music, studying piano with Joan Havill and musicology with Christopher Wiley at City, University of London.

Richard Birchall read Music at Cambridge University (studying composition with Giles Swayne) and then studied as a postgraduate cellist at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, under Louise Hopkins. Richard pursues a varied and colourful career as cellist, composer, arranger, and orchestrator. As no. 3 cello in the Philharmonia Orchestra he performs regularly in the great concert halls of the world; he has appeared as Guest Principal cello with the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia and Irish Chamber Orchestra, and as concertmaster of the London Cello Orchestra. Richard's solo and chamber work has ranged from Wigmore Hall to the catwalk at London Fashion Week. Compositions include a cello concerto Labyrinth; Perhaps for soprano and orchestra (commissioned by De Montfort University); two string quartets; Abstracts for solo piano; Sonata for solo cello; and two story pieces Alice in Wonderland & The Wind in the Willows for eight cellos and narrator, recorded and released by Cellophony Cello Octet with Simon Callow. Richard has also completed commissioned arrangements for the Philharmonia, the BBC, violist Lawrence Power, the Doric quartet, and others. Richard has served as Deputy Chairman of the Philharmonia and on the Artistic Committee of the Park Lane Group, and currently sits on the Advisory Board of MusicArt.

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