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JULIAN BLISS, MAXIM RYSANOV & JAMES BAILLIEU

Thursday 26 February, 7.30pm
Djanogly Recital Hall

PROGRAMME

Clarinet Trio in E flat, K498 'Kegelstatt'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Liederkreis, Op.24, 2 & 8

Robert Schumann

Dichterliebe Op.48, No.4

Adagio & Allegro, Op.70

Interval

Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen, Op.13 No.1

Clara Schumann

Stille Thränen, Op.35, No.10

R. Schumann

Fantasiestücke, Op.73

Märchenerzählungen, Op.132

Please ensure all mobile phones are switched off. Photographs and videos of the performance are not permitted. There is a Sennheiser Infrared enhanced hearing system in the Djanogly Recital Hall; please request a headset from our front-of-house staff to enhance your enjoyment of this evening's concert.

Please ensure hearing aids are switched to the appropriate concert setting.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Julian Bliss has provided the following introduction to tonight's programme:

We created this programme to highlight the richness and versatility of this instrumental combination. The Schumann works explore an exceptional range of colour and expression, from the lyrical intimacy of the songs to the vitality and imagination of the *Adagio and Allegro* and *Fantasiestücke*. Together they capture the essence of Romantic writing; poetic, expressive, and deeply personal. The programme opens with Mozart's 'Kegelstatt' Trio, perhaps the most iconic work for this ensemble. Full of charm and warmth, it provides a natural introduction to the Romantic world of the Schumann pieces that follow.

Clarinet Trio in E flat, K498 'Kegelstatt'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

1. *Andante*
2. *Menuetto*
3. *Rondeaux. Allegretto.*

The combination of piano with Mozart's two favourite melody instruments was calculated to draw something special from him, and his chosen key, E flat, often had a similar effect. This Trio, dating from 1786, is one of his most beguiling works. Whether or not any of it was written during a game of skittles, as popular legend has it (hence the German nick-name, 'skittle-alley'), the piano part was intended for Mozart's pupil Franziska von Jacquin, who is believed to have given the first performance privately with Mozart himself (viola) and Anton Stadler, whose playing later inspired his Clarinet Quintet and Concerto.

The work's mellow, autumnal quality is underlined by the moderate pace and lack of obviously virtuoso writing in the outer movements. The opening *Andante* has none of Mozart's usual lavish number of themes; instead, both the first and second main themes are based on the figure heard in the very first bar – a technique more often associated with Haydn. But, unlike Haydn, Mozart plays down the degree of expressive contrast between the two themes.

The Minuet begins in a sturdy, outgoing frame of mind, but a more poignant note begins to creep in until, in the minor-key central section, the mood has become fairly sombre, with the viola's nervy triplet figures adding a degree of restlessness. Unusually, Mozart writes a short linking passage leading to the repeat of the Minuet, and the movement ends with a coda that briefly recalls the trio section.

The Rondo (Mozart used the French spelling) is a flowing, gently-paced movement, following the usual pattern of the opening section repeated a number of times, with contrasting episodes in between. Outwardly smiling, it has a melancholy undercurrent which surfaces, briefly, in a rather stern C minor episode in which the viola takes a prominent role.

When the Trio was first published in 1788 it was issued as a work for violin, viola and piano, with the clarinet indicated as an alternative. It has been recorded in this form, but its expressive qualities are intimately bound up with the clarinet's unique tone.

Liederkreis, Op.24, 2 & 8 Dichterliebe Op.48, No.4

Robert Schumann (1810-56)
arr. Julian Bliss

The first two songs in this group come from Schumann's *Liederkreis* (Song Cycle), Op 24, to words by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) (not to be confused with his other song-cycle with the same title, Op 39).

No 2. 'Es treibt mich hin, es treibt mich her!' (I'm driven here, I'm driven there!).

The poet is eagerly looking forward to seeing his girl-friend again, but the time drags so slowly!

No 8: 'Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen' (At first I almost despaired)

Just when the poet thinks he can't bear the pain any longer, he pulls through, "but don't ask me how!"

The third song is from *Dichterliebe* (A Poet's Love), Op 48, also setting words by Heine.

No 4. 'Wenn ich in deine Augen seh' (When I look into your eyes) – a reflection on love's bitter-sweet ambiguity.

Adagio & Allegro, Op.70

Robert Schumann

In 1849 the upsurge of revolution which began in Germany the previous year reached Dresden, where Schumann and his wife, Clara, had been living since 1845. In spite of his republican sympathies, he felt no wish to become actively involved (unlike Wagner, who eventually had to escape to Switzerland to avoid being arrested). On the contrary, the upheavals of public life only seemed to drive him further into his private world. As Clara noted in her diary, "It seems to me extraordinary how the terrible events without have awakened his poetic feeling in so entirely contrary a manner." Schumann turned to the intimate, domestic field of chamber music, and for the first time began exploring the combination of a single melody instrument and piano. Following the *Adagio and Allegro*, originally for horn and piano, he produced his *Fantasiestücke* for clarinet (to be played later this evening), *Three Romances* for oboe, and *Five Pieces in Folk-style* for cello. In all four cases he indicated alternatives to the stated instrument.

The opening section, marked 'slow, with inward expression', is based on a warmly expressive theme, which is recalled in the quieter episodes in the exuberant rondo ('quick and fiery') which follows.

'Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen' (I stood in dark dreams), Op.13 No.1

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)
arr. Bliss

Making her public solo debut at the age of eleven, Clara Wieck went on to become one of the most distinguished pianists of her day, in solo, chamber and concerto repertoire. Her father, Friedrich Wieck, was a renowned piano teacher, and carefully groomed his daughter for the life of a concert soloist. Robert Schumann came to study with Wieck in 1828, and Wieck viewed the growing affection between him and Clara with increasing alarm. His doubts about Robert's character and career prospects, combined with his belief that domestic responsibilities would ruin Clara's own career, led him to put every obstacle in their way that he could think of. They were finally able to marry in 1840, after a prolonged legal battle to proceed without his consent.

Her concert appearances became more sporadic after their marriage, but following Robert's death she abandoned composition, and devoted more time to performing, including several visits to London, and teaching, both privately and at the Leipzig and Frankfurt Conservatories. Her compositions are mostly for solo piano, but also include three groups of songs, a youthful piano concerto and a piano trio.

Her Six Songs, Op.13, were written at various times between 1840 and 1843, and were put together as a group for publication probably by Robert.

'Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen' is another Heine setting. The poet recalls staring at his girl-friend's picture, which seemed to come to life. Tears run down his face at the thought that he has lost her.

'Stille Thränen' (Silent Tears), Op.35 No.10

Robert Schumann
arr. Bliss

Robert Schumann's Twelve Songs, Op.35 are settings of poems by Justinus Kerner, and are often known as his 'Kerner-Lieder'. The tenth song in the sequence compares a blue sky following a night-time's rain with someone who has wept all through the night, but who seems happy in the morning.

Fantasiestücke (Fantasy-Pieces), Op.73

Robert Schumann

1. Zart mit Ausdruck ('Sweetly, with expression')
2. Lebhaft, leicht ('Lively, light')
3. Rasch und mit feuer ('Quick and with fire').

Like most of the other works mentioned earlier in connection with the *Adagio and Allegro*, Op.73 (not to be confused with Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, Op.88, for piano trio) was designed as a unified sequence, with cross-references between themes in the three pieces. This was a particular concern for Schumann throughout much of his career. So the clarinet's opening phrase in the first piece is unobtrusively absorbed into the main theme of No.3, while that of No.2 is derived from the piano's counter-melody to the start of No.1, and is, in turn, quoted in the coda of the final piece. You don't need to follow these correspondences in any detail, but they are there.

The three pieces are marked to be played without a break. The gently lyrical first piece is followed by a scherzo and trio, whose final section is marked 'More and more tranquil'. The ending of the final piece, on the other hand, is twice marked 'quicker', bringing the *Fantasiestücke* to a vigorous and flamboyant conclusion.

Märchenerzählungen (Fairy-tale Narrations), Op.132

Robert Schumann

1. Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell (Lively, not too fast);
2. Lebhaft und sehr markiert (Lively and very emphatic);
3. Ruhiges tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck (Calmly, with sweet expression);
4. Lebhaft, sehr markiert.

In the autumn of 1853 Schumann wrote his last completed works before being overtaken by his mental breakdown early the following year. In September he and his wife, Clara, had a visit from the twenty-year-old Brahms. Schumann at once recognised a kindred spirit, hailing him in print as "the one who was to come", and it is possible that the younger man's arrival, not just on the Schumanns' doorstep, but on the wider musical scene, prompted this last upsurge of creative energy.

Märchenerzählungen, one of this final group of works, also owes something to Schumann's systematic exploration of various chamber music combinations, mainly solo wind or string instrument and piano, in the works mentioned previously.

Like that of the earlier *Märchenbilder* (Fairy-tale Pictures) for viola and piano, the title of *Märchenerzählungen* suggests that each piece has some kind of narrative running through it, though Schumann left no hint of any possible story lines.

The first piece is capricious and moderately-paced, with the clarinet and viola exchanging wide-arching melodic phrases over a rippling piano accompaniment. It is followed by a powerful scherzo with a quieter, more flowing central section. The third movement is the heart of the work, its yearningly tender lyricism creating a quiet space before the finale returns to the mood of the second movement with, again, a gentle middle section.

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JULIAN BLISS, MAXIM RYSANOV & JAMES BAILLIEU

JULIAN BLISS, CLARINET

Julian Bliss is one of the world's finest clarinetists, excelling as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, recitalist, jazz artist, and masterclass leader. Julian started playing the clarinet aged four and went on to study in the United States at the University of Indiana and in Germany under Sabine Meyer.

In recital and chamber music he has played at the world's leading festivals and halls, including Gstaad, New York's Lincoln Center, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Verbier and London's Wigmore Hall. As a soloist, he has appeared with a wide range of international orchestras, including the Auckland Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Paris, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sao Paolo Symphony and the Queensland Symphony.

MAXIM RYSANOV, VIOLA

Grammy-nominated Ukrainian-British violist and conductor, and Principal Guest Conductor of I Musici de Montréal, Maxim Rysanov has an established reputation as one of the world's most vibrant and charismatic musicians. Both as a conductor and a violist, he frequently visits prominent orchestras – often in programmes where he both plays and conducts.

A past winner of Gramophone Young Artist of the Year Award and the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Award, Maxim is also a prize-winner at the Geneva, Lionel Tertis and Valentino Bucchi competitions.

JAMES BAILLIEU, PIANO

Described by *The Daily Telegraph* as 'in a class of his own' James Baillieu is one of the leading song and chamber music pianists of his generation. He has given solo and chamber recitals throughout the world and collaborates with a wide range of singers and instrumentalists including Benjamin Appl, Jamie Barton, Ian Bostridge, Allan Clayton, Annette Dasch, Lise Davidsen, the Elias and Heath Quartets, Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Timothy Ridout, Adam Walker, and Pretty Yende.

As a soloist, he has appeared with the Ulster Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, and the Wiener Kammerphilharmonie.

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