

SATURDAY 17TH JUNE 2023 AT 3:00PM

ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL AND THE FRIENDS OF KILBRIDE PRESENT

THE D'CRUZ TRIO

**Caroline D'Cruz – Piano
Stephen Latham – Cello
Seymour Adams – Clarinet**

WISDOM OF THE AGES

If wisdom is more attributed to the elderly, we have a programme that largely comprises of last thoughts of a number of venerated composers. Schumann, Faure and Brahms virtually bid farewell to chamber music, indeed composing, with these pieces. Their accumulated skills and knowledge are wonderfully deployed in these late works.

Robert Schumann June 1810-July 1856

Märchenerzählungen (Fairy Tales), Op132 October 1853

Schumann was 46 when he composed this music. It is now thought that he probably suffered from bipolar disorder. That is partly suggested by his sudden bursts of activity. These pieces, which only took a few days to compose, are amongst the last he wrote, a final burst of activity.

Despite the Fairy Tales title, no specific fairy tales were evoked. Schumann's wife Clara wrote that, 'Robert had been happy with the outcome, he thought them to be romantic.' It may seem eccentric to highlight the march so persistently when evoking romantic fairy tales, but hear how Schumann provides a tapestry of sound, light and shade, certainly suggesting romance and perhaps adventure.

The movements are

1. Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell: Lively but not fast. The march is broken into by gentle interludes.
2. Lebhaft und sehr markiert: Lively and strongly stressed. Here the march is framed by gentle music.
3. Ruhiges Tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck: Restful and tender. The piano accompanies a clear duet played by the other instruments.
4. Lebhaft und sehr markiert: Lively and strongly stressed: But this time with a duet at its heart.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor August 1875 - Sept 1912

Deep River Op25 no 10

This song is well known from its many settings. Coleridge-Taylor was of mixed parentage and partly as a homage to his father, he set 24 spirituals from the black African-American slave community. Referred to when published as folk songs, they hold rather more resonance than the explorations of Dvorak and Brahms into their folk song heritage. Deep River is a plea for peace and freedom both in this life and across the river of death, in the afterlife.

Coleridge Taylor, a Londoner, was very successful as a composer, he also worked as a conductor. He became most known for his large scale choral works, Hiawatha being the one still played today. He was given support by Elgar and in the USA was received in the White House in Washington. Even successful composers were not often well paid. So despite being celebrated and well received on both sides of the Atlantic, he struggled financially.

The piece gives us the main melody, becomes more complex, fragmenting the theme and adding variations, and then rhapsodising the main melody at the end, all very much in the Romantic mode.

Gabriel Faure 1845 - 1924

Piano Trio in D minor, Op120 piano, violin and cello 1923

Arrangement for piano, clarinet and cello by Stephen Latham

Faure's lifespan meant that for him, late Berlioz was new music and yet he outlived Debussy. His own late music does remain affiliated to the Romantic Movement which was being eclipsed well before he died. He is mostly, and unfairly, known for just one piece, his Requiem. Organist, choir master and composer, teacher and general mover and shaker in French music circles, his influence comes forward partly through his pupils. Amongst those was perhaps the most influential European teacher of the 20th Century, Nadia Boulanger.

In 1920 Faure reluctantly retired as head of the Paris Conservatoire which at least left him time for composition. The poor health he experienced at this time is not in the least evident in this or his next and final chamber piece, other than perhaps the brevity and economy he deploys, no padding whatsoever. The initial idea was to write for either the usual trio combination or to use the clarinet instead of violin. He soon decided on the traditional format. But as you will hear in this transcription the violin line yields perfectly to the clarinet.

1. Allegro, ma non troppo: fast but not too fast, watery/fluid
2. Andantino: moderately slow, but keep light
3. Allegro vivo: fast, with vigour

The piece provides a merry, energetic leave-taking.

INTERVAL

Max Bruch Jan 1838 - Oct 1920

Adagio on Two Hebrew Melodies: Kol Nidre Op49 for orchestra, harp and cello, 1880.

Today's cello and piano arrangement is by Leonard Rose.

Much as with his near contemporary Faure, Bruch was regarded as a Late Romantic composer. They were both teachers and despite each producing substantial bodies of work, here again is a composer primarily known for one work, his Violin Concerto. Though the piece you hear today is the next most often heard of his works. Surprisingly, he lived for a time in Sefton Park, Liverpool. He conducted the orchestra now known as the Liverpool Philharmonic for three years and completed the Kol Nidre in the city, which was where one of his children was born.

Kol Nidre is a declaration which provides the opening to the Jewish High Holy Day of Yom Kippur. That day is one of prayer, reflection and atonement. Bruch was a German Protestant, but after publication of this piece, he frequently had to correct the misconception that he was Jewish. The cello and orchestra piece was commissioned by the famous cellist Robert Hausmann, but beyond that there is no indication of what exactly inspired the use of traditional Jewish folk melodies. It is assumed that this reflected his support for the then movement of Jewish assimilation into German society.

Obviously Bruch provided a deeply meditative piece.

Johannes Brahms May 1833 - April 1897

Clarinet Trio Op114 in A minor 1891

Brahms, born in Germany, was often regarded as the heir to Beethoven. This daunted the less artistically confident Brahms, his long periods of self doubt restricted his output. By 1891 Brahms had declared he had finished composing. However some late inspirations were to come, this trio and the much loved late piano pieces among them. We find Brahms in mellow, lyrical mood. The piece was inspired by the beautiful playing of the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld and is in four movements. It is one of the few pieces written for this fairly unusual combination of instruments which has gained a foothold in the chamber repertoire.

1. Allegro: The movement deploys the full possible range of the A Clarinet instrument. There are long breathed melodies intertwined with the cello. The piano accompanies and on occasion interrupts the demanding flow, allowing the clarinetist moments of recovery.

2. Adagio: Again this is very much a dialogue of clarinet and violin with a commentary by the piano. The second half of the movement introduces some unusual harmony and rhythm.

3. Andante grazioso: Much of this movement uses a bouncy waltz, it swirls between the three instruments and they take turns duetting with one another.

4. Allegro: A lot of ideas are compressed into this movement. Syncopation is used and multiple themes eventually wind together; the themes being passed between the instruments as the momentum builds to a splendid finish.

Programme notes by Mike Brook