

Sutton Valence Music Society – *on line*

Friday 18th September at 7.30pm

Leo Popplewell - Cello
Antonina Suhanova - Piano



12 Variations on "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" Op.66
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1825)

The eighteenth-century equivalent of a ‘cover song’, the genre of ‘Theme and Variations’ proliferated under Beethoven, bringing the most popular tunes from the opera house into people’s living rooms. This was one of three sets of variations that he wrote for cello and piano, and one of two that take their theme from Mozart’s popular *Singspiel*, *Die Zaubeflöte*. This tune is sung by Papageno as he complains of his yearning for female company - a ‘young maid or a little wife’ will suffice!

The treatment of the melody by Beethoven, as befits the role of Papageno in the opera, is full of simplicity and wit. The twelve variations with which he treats us are a compositional showcase as much as anything else, with the imaginative textural interplay between the two instruments explored with rich variety. Unusually we are given two slow variations in the minor key before the light-hearted finale, making it all the sweeter when it finally arrives. The piece ends in a deliciously understated diminuendo, leaving us gasping for more!

Fünf Stücke im Volkston Op.102
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

- i. *Mit Humor - 'Vanitas Vanitatum'*
- ii. *Langsam*
- iii. *Nicht Schnell, mit viel Ton zu spielen*
- iv. *Nicht zu rasch*
- v. *Stark und Markirt*

These five short pieces in a folk style are perfect romantic ‘fragments’, unashamedly simple in formal conception, but full of the rapid and stark emotional contrasts that characterise Schumann’s mature style. Written in 1949 and first performed by Clara Schumann on her 40th birthday, they are a stylistic precursor to his cello concerto, written the following year, and also one of Clara’s favourite works.

The first, ‘Mit Humor’, is the only movement to be given a literary subtitle, ‘vanity of vanities’, suggesting an element of nihilism behind the humour. The next, ‘Langsam’, is a more meditative lullaby with a three-bar hyper-metrical lilt. The third piece evokes his earlier setting of Heine’s ‘Ich Hab im Traum Geweinet’ from *Dichterliebe* (1840), the vocal cello line interrupted by staccato interjections from the piano. The fourth and fifth pieces are far more extrovert, embodying the spirit of Florestan, the wild and passionate alter-ego to the dreaming Eusebius.

Trois Pièces (1914)

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

1. *Moderato*
2. *Sans vitesse et a l'aise*
3. *Vite et nerveusement*

Renowned for her teaching at the Paris Conservatoire (her pupils including Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland and Darius Milhaud) Nadia's chamber music output was remarkably small, her perfectionist pedagogical ear perhaps impeding her creative proliferation. Her *Trois Pièces* were originally conceived for the organ, and arranged by her for cello and piano in 1914. The first piece, muted and delicate, owes much of its lyricism and harmonic exploration to Fauré, who taught her at the Paris Conservatoire from 1896. The second most clearly inhabits the sound of the organ, weaving a religious tapestry of sound from an intertwining canon between and cello and piano. She was confirmed as Catholic in 1899, and the influence of her religious practice is rarely absent in her music, least of all here. The third piece brings us back to earth with a dance-like, rollicking opening theme and a central slower section aglow with Spanish sunlight.

Sonata in A Mi for Arpeggione and Piano D821

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

- i. Allegro moderato
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Allegretto

Composed in 1824, just a few years before his death, the 'Arpeggione' has become one of Schubert's most enduring and beloved chamber works, despite the fact that the instrument for which it was written has long since paled into obscurity. A six-stringed instrument tuned like a guitar but bowed between the legs like a cello without an end-pin, it was invented in 1823 by the Austrian luthier Johann Stauffer, and championed by the virtuoso Vincenz Schuster, the dedicatee of the work. Notably softer and sweeter in sound than the modern cello, it struggled to gain popularity through the romantic period. Very few works were written for it, and even this sonata was not published until 1871.

Performed most frequently today on modern string instruments (cello or viola), it is a work which is full of intimacy and fragility. Schubert was already ill at the time of composition with the syphilis which would eventually kill him. The first movement contrasts a beautiful opening melody, strikingly similar to the opening theme of Schumann's later *Piano Concerto*, with a spirited and witty second subject. The second movement is a warm and chorale-like movement in E major, and the last is a lively A major Rondo, contrasting the lyrical first subject with episodes of Hungarian folk-inspired material. Typically for Schubert, the influence of *Lieder* is never far from the surface.

Leo Popplewell - Cello

A dynamic young cellist who plays with "full-blooded commitment", "ample emotionality" and "delicious dancing grace", Leo Popplewell studied at Clare College, Cambridge, and later at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Leo has performed in many of the world's leading concert halls, including New York's Carnegie Hall, and London's Wigmore Hall, Barbican Hall and Southbank Centre among others. His festival appearances include the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Barnes Music Festival, Newbury Spring Festival, Orpheus and Bacchus Festival, Cambridge Summer Music Festival, Lake District Summer Music Festival and Highgate International Chamber Music Festival. He has played in masterclasses for Adrian Brendel, Pierre Doumenge and Alexander Baillie at the International Cello Gathering, Brian O'Kane at the Machynlleth Festival, and for Steven Isserlis at Wigmore Hall. In 2019 he won the Coro Nuovo Young Musician of the Year Competition, and is on the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme for the 2020/21 season.



His studies have been generously supported by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, Help Musicians, and the Craxton Memorial Trust.

Antonina Suhanova - Piano

Pianist Antonina Suhanova has performed on international stages since 2000. After studies with Ludmila Kiselenko, Gunta Boža and Professor Juris Kalnciems in her native Latvia, she was admitted to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD, London) where from 2012 to 2018 she acquired First Class Bachelor of Music and Master of Performance degrees, both with distinction, under the tutelage of the distinguished British pianist Ronan O'Hora. During her studies, Antonina participated in numerous masterclasses of such world-renowned pianists as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Idil Biret, Pavel Gililov, Jaques Rouvier, Steven Osborne, Matti Raekallio, Richard Goode, Robert Levin and Yefim Bronfman.

Antonina has performed at the Steinway Hall in New York, the Wiener Saal in Salzburg, Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St James's Piccadilly, Milton Court Concert Hall and Barbican Hall in London, the Riga Great Guild Hall, the Moscow International House of Music, and the Erin Arts Centre. She has appeared as a soloist with the "Moscow Virtuosi" Chamber Orchestra, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, "Sinfonia Concertante" Chamber Orchestra, Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, Liepaja Symphony Orchestra, and other collectives, collaborating with such distinguished conductors as Andris Nelsons and Vladimir Spivakov. Antonina has performed at renowned festivals in the United Kingdom, USA, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Latvia, Switzerland, Austria and Russia. In 2018, her solo debut at the Wigmore Hall was broadcasted live on BBC Radio 3.

