



## A “virtual” Coffee Concert recorded at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford

**Available from Sunday September 13, 2020 at 11:15**

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This the third of three virtual Coffee Concerts recorded on July 24, 2020. Further concerts will be recorded and streamed from 11:15 on Sunday mornings throughout autumn. (They will also be available for a limited time after release.)

### **Tim Horton (piano)**

- **Beethoven: Six Bagatelles, op 126**
- **Schubert: Piano Sonata no 20 in A major, D 959**

One of the leading chamber pianists of his generation, Tim Horton studied at Chetham’s School of Music with Charles Hopkins and Heather Slade-Lipkin and graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1995. In the same year he replaced Alfred Brendel at short notice in two performances of Schoenberg’s Piano Concerto with the CBSO and Sir Simon Rattle at Symphony Hall, Birmingham and at the Royal Festival Hall, London. Since then he has played with the RLPO, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Trondheim Symphony Orchestra.

In 2005 Tim was chosen as the scholar of the Klavier Festival Ruhr at the recommendation of Alfred Brendel, an honour that included a recital at the Festival

and a bursary. Tim has a duo partnership with cellist Adrian Brendel with whom he has given tours of Spain, Germany, Italy and the UK, including concerts at the Wigmore Hall, London. In 2011 they made their debut at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. He has played regularly at the Plush, Aldeburgh, Bath and Elverum Festivals and has collaborated with many leading chamber musicians including Paul Lewis, Peter Cropper, the Elias Quartet, the Vertavo Quartet and the members of the Kungsbacka Piano Trio.

Tim has been playing with violist Robin Ireland since 2008 and they have toured Britain extensively. Their Nimbus Alliance disc of Shostakovich and Prokofiev was highly acclaimed on its release. They have also released a disc of the Brahms Sonatas

*Continued from page 1...*

and the Schubert Arpeggione Sonata. Along with violinist Benjamin Nabarro and cellist Gemma Rosefield, Tim is a founder member of the internationally acclaimed Leonore Piano Trio as well as Ensemble

360, and has been a regular guest pianist with the Nash Ensemble.

More information:  
<http://www.timhortonpianist.co.uk/>.

## **Six Bagatelles, Op 126** *by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)*

1. Andante con moto; 2. Allegro; 3. Andante; 4. Presto; 5. Quasi allegretto;
2. 6. Presto – andante amabile e con moto – Tempo I.

The word ‘bagatelle’ means a trifle and, in a musical context, a short piece in a light, entertaining style. Its first known use as the title for a piece of music is ‘Les Bagatelles’ by François Couperin published in 1717. It also appears in the title of two eighteenth-century published collections of music. But Beethoven was the first composer to establish it as signifying a specific genre with his three sets of bagatelles for piano, Op 33, Op 119 and Op 126. They are among the first of a long line of short character pieces for piano that includes such collections as Schubert’s Impromptus, Mendelssohn’s Songs Without Words and Grieg’s Lyric Pieces.

Unlike Op 33 and Op 119, Op 126 seems to have been conceived as a set; a note in Beethoven’s sketch for the first one refers to a “Ciclus von Kleinigkeiten” (cycle of little pieces). The six pieces were written between 1823 and 1824, and are in marked contrast to the large-scale works which were also occupying his attention at the time, the Missa solemnis and the Ninth Symphony.

The set opens with a gentle piece in G major and mainly in triple time, with the additional marking Cantabile e compiacevole (‘song-like and pleasant’). It is followed by the blunt energy of the G

minor allegro, whose lyrical second theme is also marked cantabile. Beethoven placed the same marking at the start of No 3, in E flat. This consists of a tranquil theme heard first unadorned then, following a short cadenza-like passage, in a highly decorated form.

The fourth piece alternates between stormy B minor and gentler B major. There is no difference in tempo, but the drone bass of the B major sections gives them a feeling of calm and stability. No 5, in G major, is a flowing piece in a gently lilting 6/8 time. In the middle section the static harmony and the right-hand melody convey the fleeting (and probably completely coincidental) impression of an Italian baroque Christmas pastorale.

The set ends with the longest and most complex piece of the six. It starts with a brief presto which hurtles to a cadence, then stops. The main part of the movement is a quietly purposeful triple-time piece that echoes Nos 4 and 5 by settling, in the middle, on a long passage of unchanging harmony, before moving on. The opening presto comes back at the end, rounding things off with what seems at first like baffling inconsequentiality, but in fact placing the central andante in sharper relief

## Piano Sonata in A, D959

*by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)*

1. Allegro; 2. Andantino; 3. Scherzo. Allegro vivace; 4. Rondo. Allegretto..

Schubert idolised Beethoven and his great ambition in his last years was to establish himself as the older composer's successor. Beethoven's death in March 1827, and Schubert's meeting, at about the same time, with Johann Nepomuk Hummel, then at the height of his fame as a pianist and composer, seems to have re-awakened his ambitions to compose instrumental music on a large-scale. During the last few months of his life he set himself an astonishing workload, producing not only his last three piano sonatas, but also the String Quintet, as well as working on sketches for a projected Tenth Symphony.

He numbered the sonatas 1-3, intending to publish them as a set, to rival similar sets of sonatas by Beethoven (although none of Beethoven's sonatas had been issued in sets of three since Op 31, of 1802). The autograph score is dated September 1828, but sketches indicate that he worked on them over a period of some months before that. He intended to dedicate them to Hummel, but by the time the publisher Anton Diabelli got round to issuing them, in 1837, both Schubert and Hummel were dead; Diabelli dedicated them instead to Schumann.

Each of the three sonatas has its own distinctive character, the A major being the most lyrical of them. The purposeful opening of the first movement includes a precipitately falling triplet figure which becomes an important element in its own

right, the rhythm generating much of the music's energy before it shades off into a more song-like second theme.

The movement ends quietly, leading us on to the rather plaintive opening theme of the andantino, and containing not the slightest hint of the volcanically eruptive emotions waiting to be unleashed later. The movement ends sombrely, in the depths of the keyboard, with spread chords alternating between the two hands.

Schubert then takes those spread chords, and turns them into something airy and playful at the start of the third movement, as if imitating a mandolin or guitar. Even this music includes a hint of the second movement's storms, however, and the central trio section turns thoughtful, before the opening music returns.

The finale opens with one of Schubert's most relaxed and expansive melodies, reworked from the second movement of his Sonata in A minor, D537, written in March 1817. The music passes through episodes which are energetic and mysterious by turns, before the final appearance of the rondo theme. This is broken up by poignant silences, before a presto coda sweeps the mood aside, the powerful final chords giving a subtle reminder of how the whole sonata began.

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## **Coming soon – More virtual concerts**

We'll soon be releasing further online performances from various Coffee Concert regulars, including the Carducci Quartet, The

Piatti Quartet, the Leonore Piano Trio and Ben Gilmore. Watch this space!