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

Available from Sunday October 18, 2020 at 11:15

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We very much hope you enjoy this concert. If you would like to become a patron of the Oxford Coffee Concerts or make a donation to help support our exciting “virtual” concert project, please get in touch with us via the contact page at coffeeconcerts.com.

This is the second of the virtual concerts we recorded in September to be streamed from 11:15 on Sunday mornings on our YouTube channel throughout October. (They will also be available for a limited time after release.)

Benjamin Gilmore (violin) and Katya Apekisheva (piano) play:

- Mozart: Sonata for Piano and Violin no 21 in E minor, K 304
- Clara Schumann Romances, op 22
- Schubert: Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major, D 574 (“Grand Duo”)

About Benjamin Gilmore

Benjamin Marquise Gilmore grew up in England and studied with Natalia Boyarskaya at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Pavel Vernikov at the Vienna Conservatory, as well as with Julian Rachlin, Miriam Fried, and members of the Artis quartet and the Altenberg trio. Benjamin’s father was the musicologist Bob Gilmore, from whom he received instruction in music theory at a young age, and his grandfather is the conductor Lev Markiz, with whom he has performed on many occasions.

Benjamin has appeared at festivals such as Kuhmo, IMS Prussia Cove, Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute and Styriarte, and his chamber music partners have included Frans

Helmerson, Janine Jansen, Natalia Gutman, Gary Hoffman, Elisabeth Leonskaya, Benjamin Schmid, Mischa Maisky and Gerhard Schulz.

Benjamin has also worked with composers such as Giya Kancheli, Bernhard Lang, Guus Jansen, Gavin Bryars and Frank Denyer. As a soloist he has performed with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta, the NDR Hannover, the Rotterdam Philharmonic and the Munich Chamber Orchestra.

The recipient of several awards including first prize at the Oskar Back violin competition in Amsterdam, fourth prize at the Joseph Joachim violin competition in Hannover and third prize at the Mozart competition in

Salzburg, Benjamin has been a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe since 2011. He was appointed concertmaster of the Scottish

Chamber Orchestra in 2016 and joint concertmaster of the Philharmonia Orchestra in summer 2019.

About Katya Apekisheva

Described as a 'profoundly gifted artist' by Gramophone Magazine, Katya Apekisheva has earned her place as one of Europe's most renowned and gifted pianists. Born in Moscow, into a family of musicians, Katya attended the Gnnessin Music School for exceptionally gifted children, making her stage debut at the age of 12. She continued her studies in Jerusalem at the Rubin Music Academy and later at the Royal College of Music in London.

From these auspicious beginnings Katya went on to be a prize winner at the Leeds International Piano competition and now enjoys a career performing with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the Halle Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic, the Jerusalem Symphony, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, working with renowned conductors such as Sir Simon Rattle, David Shallon, Jan Latham-Koenig and Alexander Lazarev.

As a recording artist, Katya has received widespread critical acclaim for her interpretations – from Gramophone Magazine's Editor's Choice award and International Piano Magazine's Critics' Choice

to Classic FM's CD of the Week as well as a Classical Brit award. Katya's discography includes solo and chamber works by Mussorgsky, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Dvorak and Rachmaninov. Her latest disc is a collection of impromptus that International Piano called "a fascinating and engrossing album". Recent and future highlights include performances in Russia, Norway, Japan, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Australia and at home in the UK at the Bath Mozart Fest, St. George's Bristol and the Wigmore Hall, where she is a regular presence. Her intense artistry and delicacy make Katya a sought-after collaborative pianist, working with artists such as Janine Jansen, Natalie Clein, Guy Johnston, Maxim Rysanov, Jack Liebeck, Boris Brovtsyn, Alexei Ogrinchouk and Nicholas Daniel, and she appears regularly at major chamber music festivals around the world.

Katya also has a highly successful and personally rewarding piano duo partnership with Charles Owen, performing regularly at festivals worldwide. Together they are co-artistic directors of the London Piano Festival, which began in 2016.

More information:

<http://www.katyaapekisheva.com/>

Violin Sonata in E minor, K304 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

1. Allegro; 2. Tempo di minuetto.

This is one of six violin sonatas, 301-6, which Mozart wrote in 1778. They were his first violin sonatas since the ones he had written during the lengthy tour he had undertaken with his father and sister between the ages of eight and ten, which had taken in several major cities, including Paris, London and The Hague.

The new set of six was also the product of a journey, probably the most formative, both musically and emotionally, of Mozart's life. He set off, with his mother, in the autumn of 1777 with the intention of making his name in Paris (where his mother died). Passing through Mannheim, he spent the winter and early spring there, writing four of the sonatas (plus a fifth which he held back for inclusion in his next published set). The other two were composed in the summer of 1778 in Paris, where the set was published, with a dedication to the Electress Maria Elisabeth of Munich (issuing instrumental works in groups of six or twelve was a publishing convention which dated back to the late seventeenth century).

At the time the violin sonata was regarded as a genre intended mainly for domestic, amateur music-making, with the keyboard part having the main musical interest and the violin providing an accompaniment. But in these sonatas, and still more in the set published a few years later, after he had settled in Vienna,

Mozart began to tilt the balance towards a more equal partnership between the two instruments. As one reviewer of the later, Vienna, set commented: "The accompaniment of the violin is so artfully combined with the clavier that both instruments are kept constantly on the alert: so that these sonatas require just as skilful a player on the violin as on the clavier."

K304 is the most strikingly individual of the six. Not only does it show Mozart moving purposefully in the direction of greater equality between keyboard and violin, it can also with some justification be claimed as his first fully mature tragic masterpiece. Mozart's contemporaries must have been startled, not just by the opening, an extended passage for the two instruments in unison, but by the emotional intensity of whole movement.

The minuet second movement is also in E minor. The music's air of restrained sorrow gives the turn to E major for the trio section an almost Schubertian poignancy. Unusually, Mozart writes out a shortened version of the opening section at the end, rather than simply indicating a wholesale repeat of it. It suggests emotional pressures too great for the conventions of the day to accommodate.

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, op 22 by Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

1. Innig; 2. Allegretto. Mit zartem Vortrage; 3. Leidenschaftlich schnell.

Making her public solo debut at the age of eleven, Clara Wieck went on to become one of the most prominent 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. She made several tours of Europe as a child, and was admired by musicians as prominent as Mendelssohn and Liszt.

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 Wieck's 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; she became head of the piano department at Frankfurt in 1878. As well as championing her husband's music, she was one of the first leading pianists to bring Chopin's work to a wider audience. She also played Brahms's music extensively when he

was still establishing his reputation, and the two remained close friends until her death.

Clara's compositions are mostly for solo piano, but also include three groups of songs and a youthful piano concerto. In spite of her many appearances in chamber music – she played Beethoven's 'Archduke' Trio at the age of fifteen, Robert Schumann's Piano Quintet was a mainstay of her repertoire and she had a regular duo partnership with the violinist Joseph Joachim – she produced just two chamber works of her own: this set of three romances and her G minor Piano Trio of 1846.

Joachim (1831-1906) was one of the leading violinists of his day, as both a soloist and chamber music player, and he was to become one of Brahms's closest colleagues. It was "to illustrious musician and friend Joseph Joachim" that Clara dedicated these three Romances. Written in July 1853, they were among her last compositions.

The marking "Innig" for No 1, in D flat, carries suggestions of inward, intensely personal, contemplative concentration. Described by Clara's biographer, Joan Chissell, as a "poetic nocturne", it quotes the opening of Robert's A minor Violin Sonata, written two years earlier. The quicker second piece ("to be played sweetly") is in G minor with a contrasted middle section in G major. No 3 ("passionate, fast") is quicker still, with some teasing rhythmic ambiguities.

Violin Sonata in A major, D574 by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

1. Allegro moderato; 2. Scherzo. Presto; 3. Andantino; 4. Allegro vivace.

Schubert wrote four sonatas for violin and piano, all between 1816 and 1817. Their first publisher, Anton Diabelli, gave the first three the spurious title 'Sonatina', no doubt in the hope that this would widen their appeal. The A major Sonata, dating from August 1817, he renamed 'Duo' when he issued it in 1851.

The first movement opens with a pair of easy-going themes, one for the piano, left hand, the other for the violin. Schubert then turns his attention to other ideas. The opening section is marked to be repeated; otherwise these two ideas are not heard again until the recapitulation – the moment when the music returns to its starting-point. Placing the brisk, energetic scherzo second instead of third was an unusual move, but Schubert had good reason, as we shall see. The central Trio

section is still lively, but smoother in outline. A gentle, song-like theme for the violin launches the third movement, which takes in some restless and wistful passages, with just a fleeting touch of poignancy at the very end. When the finale begins we hear at once why Schubert placed the Scherzo where he did, since not only are the two movements similar in character, they open in a virtually identical way. The finale ends the sonata in a mood of exuberant confidence showing the twenty-year-old Schubert, with a number of his best-known songs and his first five symphonies under his belt, asserting his individuality as an instrumental composer.

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Upcoming...

Sunday October 25, 2020 at 11:15

Piatti String Quartet

- Beethoven: String Quartet no 1 in F major, op 18 no 1
- Webern: Langsamer Satz for String Quartet
- Bridge: Three Idylls for String Quartet, H67

Sunday November 1, 2020 at 11:15

Leonore Plano Trio

- Beethoven: Piano Trio in E flat major, op 1 no 1
- Brahms: Piano Trio no 3 in C minor, op 101