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

Sunday February 7, 2021 at 11:15

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Virtual Coffee Concerts are pre-recorded at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford and are streamed from our YouTube channel at 11:15 on Sunday mornings. (These recordings are available for a limited time after release but, of course, there will be more to come.)

Elena Urioste (violin) and Tom Poster (piano)

- Kreisler: Preghiera
- Dvořák: Songs My Mother Taught Me (arr Kreisler)
- Still: Suite for Violin and Piano (Mother and Child)
- Heuberger: Midnight Bells (arr Kreisler)
- Strauss: Violin Sonata in E flat major, op 18

Elena Urioste

Violinist Elena Urioste is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School. Notable teachers and mentors include Joseph Silverstein, David Cerone, Ida Kavafian, Pamela Frank, Claude Frank, Rafael Druian, and Ferenc Rados.

Elena has given acclaimed performances as a soloist with major orchestras throughout the United States, including the Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Minnesota Orchestras; New York, Los Angeles, and Buffalo Philharmonics; Boston Pops; and the Chicago, San Francisco, National, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras, among many others. Abroad, she has appeared with the London Philharmonic, Hallé, Philharmonia, and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras;

the BBC Symphony, Philharmonic, the National Orchestra of Wales; the Orchestra of Opera North; the Malaysian Philharmonic; Orchestre National de Lille; Edmonton Symphony; Würzburg Philharmonic; and Hungary's Orchestra Dohnányi Budapest and MAV Orchestras.

Elena has collaborated with celebrated conductors Sir Mark Elder, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Vasily Petrenko, Christoph Eschenbach, Robert Spano, Karina Canellakis, and Gábor Takács-Nagy. She has regularly performed as a featured soloist in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium and has given recitals at London's Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Kennedy Center, Konzerthaus Berlin, Sage Gateshead, Bayerischer Rudfunk Munich, and Mondavi Center.

Elena is a former BBC New Generation Artist (2012-14) and has been featured on the covers of Strings and Symphony magazines. Recent musical highlights include the release of Elena's second album on BIS Records, *Estrellita*, a collection of miniatures for violin and piano with pianist Tom Poster, and the release of her fourth studio recording, a collection of Grieg sonatas and songs, again with Tom Poster.

An avid chamber musician, Elena is the founder and artistic director of Chamber Music by the Sea, an annual festival on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She has been a featured artist at the Marlboro, Ravinia, La Jolla, Bridgehampton, Moab, and Sarasota Music Festivals, Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove, the Cheltenham Music Festival, Switzerland's Sion-Valais International Music Festival, and the Verbier Festival's winter residency at Schloss Elmau.

Elena has collaborated with luminaries such as Mitsuko Uchida, Kim Kashkashian, and members of the Guarneri Quartet, and performs extensively in recital with pianists Tom Poster and Michael Brown. She is also a founding member along with Tom Poster of the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, which gave one of the early performances in the "Virtual" Oxford Coffee Concert series at the Holywell Music Room.

Further information:
<https://www.elenaurioste.com/>

Tom Poster

Pianist Tom has performed over forty concertos from Mozart to Ligeti with Aurora Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, China National Symphony, Hallé, Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, collaborating

with conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Nicholas Collon, Robin Ticciati and Yan Pascal Tortelier. He has premiered solo, chamber and concertante works by many leading composers, made multiple appearances at the BBC Proms, and his exceptional versatility has put him in great demand at festivals internationally.

Tom is pianist of the Aronowitz Ensemble (former BBC New Generation Artists) and Aronowitz Piano Trio, and he enjoys established recital partnerships with Elena Urioste, Guy Johnston, Alison Balsom, Matthew Rose and the Navarra Quartet. Tom has recorded for BIS, Champs Hill, Chandos, Decca, Orchid and Warner Classics, and regularly features as soloist on film soundtracks, including the Oscar-nominated score for *The Theory of Everything*.

Tom studied with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and at King's College, Cambridge. He won First Prize at the Scottish International Piano Competition 2007 and the keyboard section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 2000.

Tom is co-founder and artistic director of Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, appointed Associate Ensemble at Wigmore Hall in 2020. With a flexible line-up featuring many of today's most inspirational musicians, and an ardent commitment to diversity through its creative programming, Kaleidoscope broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and has recently been ensemble-in-residence at Cheltenham Festival, Kettle's Yard and Ischia Music Festival. The Kaleidos' debut album for Chandos Records, of works by Beach, Barber and Price, is released in 2021.

Further information:
<https://www.tomposter.co.uk/>

Prehiera by Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)

As well as one of the greatest violinists of his day, Kreisler was a skilful composer, having studied with Bruckner at the Vienna Conservatory. Besides the short violin and piano pieces for which he is best-known, his works include a substantial String Quartet in A minor and an operetta, Apple Blossoms. He also wrote cadenzas for the Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos which are still regularly played, and transcribed for violin and piano a variety of pieces by other composers.

In 1905 the music publisher Schott issued a group of pieces for violin and piano ascribed to then (and, in some cases, still) little-known eighteenth-century composers such as Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Giuseppe Tartini. The publication carried the following notice:

The original manuscripts used for these transcriptions are the private property of Mr Fritz Kreisler and are now published for the first time; they are moreover so freely treated that they constitute, in fact, original works...When played in public, Mr Kreisler's name must be mentioned on the programme.

Thirty years later the American music critic Olin Downes, trying to track down the original manuscript of the Praeludium and Allegro attributed to Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798), and frustrated by a considerable amount of fruitless searching, cabled Kreisler to ask where the manuscript was located. In reply, Kreisler came clean – there wasn't one; Praeludium and Allegro, like the other 1905 pieces, was his original composition. The attributions were hastily re-worded to read 'Kreisler, in the style of...', and although some critics failed to get the joke (the English writer Ernest Newman, in particular, worked himself up into a lather of indignation over the affair), the episode was mostly treated with the good humour it deserved.

Preghiera (Prayer) is one of two pieces by Kreisler with this title (the other was adapted from the slow movement of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2) This one he at first attributed to the composer and writer on music Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-1784), known as Padre Martini. Much in demand as a teacher, Martini included Mozart and Johann Christian Bach among his pupils.

Songs My Mother Taught Me by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

This is Kreisler's transcription of No 4 from Dvořák's Gypsy Songs, op 55, which are thought to have been composed in January and February 1880. Though 'Songs my Mother Taught Me' is the familiar English title, the text translates as:

*When my old mother taught me to sing,
It is strange that she often had tears in her eyes.
And now, too, tears torment my dark cheeks
When I teach gypsy children to play and sing!*

Suite for Violin and Piano (Mother and Child)

by William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Still was born in Woodville, Mississippi, and grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas. He learned the violin as a child, later also taking up the oboe and cello. He studied with composer Edgard Varèse, played in theatre and night-club orchestras, and worked as an arranger with a number of musicians, including band-leaders WC Handy and Paul Whiteman, singer Sophie Tucker, and clarinettist Artie Shaw.

As a composer he was strongly influenced by Afro-American music but, rather than spirituals, he preferred to draw on blues traditions: "they, unlike many spirituals, do not exhibit the influence of Caucasian [ie European] music". He composed a number of choral pieces, operas and orchestral works, including his best-known composition, his Symphony No 1, of 1931, subtitled 'Afro-American', which enjoys the distinction of being the first symphony by a black composer

to be played by a major American orchestra – the Rochester (New York) Philharmonic.

He wrote his Suite for violin and piano in 1943. Each of the three movements was prompted by a sculpture from the 1930s by a black American artist associated by the Harlem Renaissance, the Afro-American cultural revival of the 1920s and 30s.

Sargent Johnson (1887-1967) was born in Boston, later moving with his family to Chicago, then San Francisco, where he spent much of his life. He produced a number of paintings and sculptures entitled 'Mother and Child', possibly the result of being orphaned at the age of fifteen. Still may not be responding to any one in particular in this movement, which has the character of a lullaby, but with uneasy undertones. He later re-scored it as a stand-alone piece for string orchestra.

Midnight Bells

by Richard Heuberger (1850-1914)

Midnight Bells is Kreisler's title for his transcription of one of the best-known numbers from the Viennese operetta repertoire, 'Geh'n wir in's Chambre séparée' (We're Going Into a Private Room), from Der Opernball (The Opera Ball). This tells a light-hearted story of flirting and deception during

a ball at the Paris Opéra, where the audience boxes have been designated for hire as private rooms. This number is sung by Hortense, maid to one of the couples involved in the confusion, as she leads Henri, her nervous young date for the evening, into one of the rooms for their evening's assignation.

Violin Sonata in E flat, Op 18 by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

1. Allegro, ma non troppo; 2. Improvisation. Andante cantabile; 3. Finale. Andante – allegro.

Strauss burst on to the scene with his early orchestral tone-poems, in particular *Don Juan* (1888), drawing on the revolutionary musical narrative techniques developed by Liszt and Wagner. But behind these achievements was an apprenticeship which gave him a solid grounding in the more conservative traditions of Schumann and Brahms, thanks to his horn-playing (and Wagner-hating) father, Franz, and Franz's colleagues in the Munich Court Orchestra.

The Violin Sonata is the last of a group of chamber works that Strauss wrote in his late teens and early twenties; the others are a string quartet, a cello sonata and a piano quartet. He composed it between 1887 and 1888, by which time he had already completed his four-movement 'symphonic fantasy' *Aus Italien*, and was at work on the tone-poem *Macbeth*.

The sonata's outer movements share something of the youthful energy and confidence of the two orchestral works. The piano's bold opening statement, and its immediate echo by the violin, has a rhythmic drive and urgency which show the young composer hitting his stride with poise and determination. If this belongs more to the world of his later tone-poems, the appassionato second main theme shows the future opera composer at work,

ardent and lyrical, but also taking a more skittish turn.

The second movement quickly acquired an independent life of its own – even in the complete score of the sonata it is headed "from Rich. Strauss Op 18", suggesting that it may, at one stage, have been published separately – and it is easy to see why. Its opening song-like melody has great charm, and it includes two contrasted episodes. The first is restless and stormy, the second, marked *grazioso*, is more rhapsodic, with delicate Chopin-like figures for the piano.

A short, sombre introduction prefigures the finale's main theme. When this arrives, it leaps into the air with all the exuberance of *Don Juan*, which Strauss was just beginning to think about at the time. The central theme is a big melodic statement which is so obviously operatic in conception as to push the violin-and-piano medium to its limits. The movement finally romps home in a scherzo-like 6/8 section of irresistible rhythmic vitality.

And with that, Strauss takes his leave of traditional instrumental forms to concentrate, in his tone-poems and operas, on that particular kind of musical storytelling to which his gifts were uniquely suited.

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