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

Sunday April 25, 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.)

Maria Włoszczowska (violin) and Dinis Sousa (piano) play Beethoven and Schumann

- **Beethoven: Violin Sonata no 10 in G major, op 96**
- **Schumann: Violin Sonata no 2 in D minor, op 21**

Maria Włoszczowska (violin)

Polish violinist Maria Włoszczowska performs as a soloist, chamber musician and guest concertmaster worldwide. She is recognised for her versatile musicianship, having won the First Prize and Audience Prize at the XXI Leipzig International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in 2018, as well as numerous prizes at the XV International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition.

Maria gave her debut recital at the Wigmore Hall with pianist Alasdair Beatson in 2016. She has appeared as soloist with several international ensembles since, including the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Concerto Budapest and several of Poland's symphonic and chamber orchestras. She regularly performs at festivals around Europe where her chamber music partners

have included Robert Levin, Philippe Graffin, Nobuko Imai, Amy Norrington, Paolo Giacometti, Bengt Forsberg, Matthew Hunt, Alasdair Beatson, Dinis Sousa and the Doric String Quartet amongst others.

Recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Emily Anderson Prize, the Hattori Foundation Senior Award and Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prize, Maria based herself in the UK after studying at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles with Leonid Kerbel and the Royal Academy of Music in London, later completing her studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Hungarian violinist and conductor András Keller.

More information:
<https://www.mariawloszczowska.com>

Dinis Sousa (piano)

Portuguese pianist and conductor Dinis Sousa studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he was the Conducting Fellow. At Guildhall, Dinis studied conducting with Sian Edwards and Timothy Redmond and piano with Philip Jenkins and Martin Roscoe. As a pianist, he had the opportunity to study with musicians such as Yekaterina Lebedeva, Andrés Keller, Angela Hewitt, Richard Egarr, Ralf Gothóni, amongst others.

Dinis plays as a duo with violinist Maria Włoszczowska. He is also founder and artistic director of Orquestra XXI, an award-winning orchestra that brings together some of the best young Portuguese musicians from around Europe. Orquestra XXI has already

established itself as one of the leading performing groups in Portugal, appearing regularly in its main concert halls.

Dinis has worked closely with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his ensembles: the English Baroque Soloists, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and the Monteverdi Choir – culminating in his appointment as the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra's first-ever assistant conductor. He has assisted Sir John with other orchestras as well, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker and Tonhalle Orchester Zürich. In recognition of his work with Orquestra XXI, Dinis was awarded the title of Knight of the Order of Prince Henry in Portugal.

More information: <https://dinissousa.com>

Violin Sonata no 10 in G major, op 96 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. Allegro moderato; 2. Adagio espressivo – 3. Scherzo. Allegro; 4. Poco allegretto – adagio espressivo – tempo I – allegro.

The last of Beethoven's violin sonatas, op 96 appeared nearly ten years after its predecessor, the "Kreutzer" Sonata, op 47. It was written for the French violinist Pierre Rode, who was on a concert tour which took him to Vienna in December 1812. He played the work, with Beethoven's loyal patron and pupil Archduke Rudolph as the pianist, at a concert that same month organised by another of the composer's most devoted supporters, Prince Franz Joseph Lobkowitz. It is to Archduke Rudolph that the sonata is dedicated.

The Kreutzer Sonata had been written in a grandly rhetorical manner "as though it were a concerto". The G major sonata, op 96, is its complete opposite. Rode's style of playing, which avoided showy virtuosity,

drew from Beethoven one of his most warmly lyrical and intimate-sounding works although, as he wrote to Rudolph, he felt "rather hampered" by having to rein in his fondness for "fairly noisy passages" in the finale. The opening, at the opposite pole from Beethoven's scruff-of-the-neck manner, sets the tone for the whole work. The violin offers an unassuming little twist of a motif, echoed by the piano, which then flowers unexpectedly into a broader melodic idea. The second theme, with its lively, mazurka-like rhythms, provides an element of contrast, but this is similarly restrained to fit the emotional scale of the work.

The music moved briefly into E flat towards the end of the first movement, and this is the

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key of the *adagio espressivo* that follows, a warmly meditative piece which finds room for some graceful decorative flourishes from both instruments. It leads, without a break, into the G minor third movement, full of short, pithy phrases and off-the-beat accents. The central trio section returns to the slow movement's key of E flat to send both instruments soaring on a great current of lyrical expansiveness, before the opening section returns.

The concluding set of variations is based on a simple, easy-going theme, following its harmonic structure rather than its melodic

outline. The first four variations steadily increase in momentum, but the fifth variation returns to the tempo and mood of the slow movement, with some even more florid writing for both the violin and the piano. The violin then sets off with the theme in its original form, but in E flat. After a few bars the music stops and reconsiders, before launching into Variation 6. This is extended to make a finale, including a brief fugue starting in the bass of the piano and ending with the original form of the theme once more, this time in the right key, with an added note of brilliance in the writing all the more telling after the rest of the sonata's restraint.

Violin Sonata no 2 in D minor, op 21 by Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

- 1. Ziemlich langsam (rather slow) – lebhaft (lively); 2. Sehr lebhaft (very lively);
3. Leise, einfach (gently, simply); 4. Bewegt (with movement) .**

Schumann's three violin sonatas are among his last chamber works, composed in the autumn of 1851, during his ill-fated period as director of music in Düsseldorf. Early signs of his mental decline were beginning to become apparent in the way he handled his duties, and there were increasing signs of strain in his relations with the choir, the orchestra and the music committee. The intimacy of domestic music-making provided him with a solace which prompted a renewed interest in chamber music.

His Second Violin Sonata was written for, and dedicated to, Ferdinand David, leader of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, for whom Mendelssohn wrote his E minor violin concerto. Schumann's comment, "I didn't like the first violin sonata, so I wrote a second, which I hope turned out better", was probably meant to be tongue-in-cheek.

The premiere was given in 1853, not by David, but by Joseph Joachim and Schumann's wife Clara, marking the start of their long-standing musical partnership. Joachim later wrote to his friend Arnold Wehner, director of music at Göttingen: "I must not fail to tell you about the new sonata in D minor... I consider it one of the finest compositions of our times in respect of its marvellous unity of feeling and its thematic significance. It overflows with noble passion, almost harsh and bitter in expression, and the last movement reminds one of the sea with its glorious waves of sound".

The first movement opens with a slow introduction beginning with a four sharply detached chords whose top notes spell out the motif D-A-F-D, a typical Schumann device to create a musical reference to David's name. This motif becomes an important

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figure in the quick music, passionate and urgent, that follows. This slows down briefly to introduce the second main theme. Though less emotionally high-pressured, it never quite manages to settle in a new key, and a sense of restlessness continues to drive the rest of the movement forward. A short final section moves quicker but also quietens the music down.

It is followed by a vigorous scherzo, with two contrasting, more relaxed, sections. When the main section is heard for the third time Schumann marks the music “fainter and fainter”, but this is simply an intake of breath before the violin and piano play a new idea, a vehement succession of chords forming a sudden major-key outburst.

This turns out to be the main theme of the third movement, shared out at the start between the violin, pizzicato, and the piano, right hand, and in which the pianist is instructed to use the “soft” pedal. Four variations follow, the third being a conscious look back at the preceding scherzo (and marked as such in the score), before the final variation, over gentle piano arpeggios, absorbing the scherzo’s driving rhythmic figure into its tranquil ending.

The finale returns to the tumultuous energy of the sonata’s opening, but the mood is now more exuberant with, again, a more relaxed, contrasting second theme. The key finally changes from D minor to D major for the ebullient coda.

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