



BACH AND SCHUMANN

Concert programme £4

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Bach and Schumann
Symphony Hall
Tuesday 14 November, 2023
7:30pm

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INTRODUCTION

Bach's compositions have influenced nearly every composer since his death, sometimes in surprising places.

Haydn revered Bach and (along with Mozart) studied his works at a time when they had generally disappeared from the public domain.

As for Schumann – read on! In this programme we hear two works by JS Bach: one extremely well known, the other wonderfully curious. The so-called 3rd Suite contains perhaps Bach's best-know hit – the 'Air' ["on a g-string"]. The Air is one of the most perfect musical creations ever, often to be heard in lifts and when 'on-hold' among other places.

The surrounding movements of this Suite abound with Joy and Angelic Celebration, with the splendour of 3 trumpets and timpani. The 'Fuga a tre soggetti', found in one of Bach's last works 'The Art of Fugue', is a masterpiece containing 3 different subjects, the last of which spells out BACH in musical notes. All three subject are heard played together at the end... and the music suddenly disintegrates. The big mystery is 'Is it unfinished'?

Haydn's glorious virtuosic Cello Concerto in D tests the solo cellist fiercely with both technical and musical fire.

Schumann's 2nd Symphony was written during one of his worst depressions. To heal himself, Schumann immersed himself in Bach's music, writing 6 extraordinary Fugues for Organ on the name BACH.

Bach helped bring Schumann from darkness to light in this wonderful symphony, which has hundreds of references to BACH secreted in its fabric in so many incredible ways, from the musical theme we heard in 'The Art of Fugue' to blatant stealing of other Bach original themes. See if you can spot some!



Bach, Orchestral Suite No.3

20mins

Haydn, Cello Concerto in D major

25mins

Interval

Bach, Fuga a tre soggetti

8mins

Schumann, Symphony No.2

38mins

Richard Egarr, Conductor and
Harpsichord

Laura van der Heijden, Cello

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BACH AND SCHUMANN

Richard Egarr is a livewire – a world-famous expert on baroque music whose passions embrace everything from Bach to K-Pop! For Egarr, every concert is a celebration, so expect majesty, drama and simple, unbuttoned fun as he takes the CBSO on a journey from the pageantry of Bach to the poetry of Schumann – and joins former BBC Young Musician Laura van der Heijden in Haydn's bubbly cello concerto.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

SUITE NO.3 IN D, BWV 1068

- I Overture
- II Aria
- III Gavotte I & II
- IV Gigue

For much of his career Johann Sebastian Bach was a working church musician, directing and living alongside the choir of St Thomas's Church in Leipzig. But like our modern cathedral musicians, Bach and his colleagues also played a lively and inspiring part in musical life throughout their community. And Leipzig, in 1730, was a particularly lively and inspiring place – a great trading city, addicted to caffeine. Coffeehouses were where most secular music-making happened, and where Bach from 1729 to 1737 directed a thriving music club known as the Collegium Musicum. Standards were high: unusually for the period, rehearsals were occasionally held and musicians were fined for drinking or smoking while performing.

It was probably for the Collegium Musicum that Bach wrote his third suite (or as he called it, overture) for orchestra, some time in 1730. It may originally have been for strings alone (the trumpet and drum parts were added in the handwriting of his son Carl Philipp Emmanuel), but working 18th century musicians didn't worry unduly about these details. What's unmistakable is the sheer imagination and exuberance of this music: from the blazing ceremonial overture with which it opens to the tuneful freshness and swing of the three dance movements with which it concludes, to say nothing of the timeless simplicity of the Aria (dubbed "Air on the G string" and made world-famous by the 19th century virtuoso August Wilhelmj). Don't be fooled: it takes a craftsman of genius to make a melody sound this natural. But it's the Kantor's day off, and he's letting his imagination soar. As they used to say in 18th century Leipzig, *Res severa est verum gaudium*: "True pleasure is a serious business".

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

CELLO CONCERTO IN D, HOB. VII B/2

- I Allegro moderato
- II Adagio
- III Rondo (Allegro)

For a minor eighteenth century masterpiece, the only fate worse than being forgotten by the nineteenth century was being popular in it. Haydn's D major cello concerto of 1783 never left the repertoire – and, like an old master painting, it picked up accretions. Nineteenth century virtuosos rewrote the cello part to display their own technique and Haydn's modest orchestration – designed for the court orchestra of his employer, Prince Nicolaus Esterházy – was supplemented by a full Victorian woodwind section. Unsurprisingly, by the early 20th century, many experts were starting to doubt whether this concerto was even by Haydn at all, attributing it instead to Anton Kraft, principal cellist of Haydn's orchestra from 1778-1790.

At that point, little short of a signed score in Haydn's own hand could have restored the concerto's reputation – and, miraculously, that's exactly what turned up. In 1954, the Bruckner scholar Leopold Nowak found a manuscript bearing the inscription *di me Giuseppe Haydn, 1783*. Case closed. But the doubters were right in one regard – Anton Kraft (1752-1820) did indeed play a crucial role in the creation of this concerto. Kraft was one of the greatest players of his age, and the founder of a little dynasty of fine cellists. He would go on to play in the household orchestra of Prince Lichnowsky in Vienna, performing in the world premiere of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony. At the age of 26, he was already a formidable player.

It was only natural that Haydn should seek to recruit Kraft, and having recruited him, write him a concerto with which to display his skills before the Prince. So the concerto's solo part was, in effect, a bespoke creation –

designed to show off Kraft's technique, and in particular his gloriously rich and lyrical upper register. Hence the steady, courtly pace of the concerto's first movement and the warm, inward character of the *Adagio* – a slow movement of which Mozart might have been proud. Even the cheerfully folksy *Rondo* (“No-one can tell me the exact notes of the tune of *Here we go gathering nuts in May*” remarked the British musicologist Donald Tovey “but everybody agrees that the finale of Haydn's cello concerto is suspiciously like it”) lends itself to lyricism as well as genuine fireworks. Some believe that this concerto was written for Prince Nicolaus' wedding in September 1783. If that's true, it was a luxury gift.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

FUGA A TRE SOGGETTI (FROM THE ART OF FUGUE, BWV 1080)

Conductors have never forgiven Bach for living in the baroque era. The greatest composer of all – and (because they hadn't been invented) he managed without clarinets or tubas! So Mahler beefed up Bach's suites, and Leopold Stokowski's symphonic Bach provided the soundtrack for Disney's *Fantasia*. Proms founder Sir Henry Wood's 100-player version of Bach's D minor *Toccatà and Fugue* was so over-the-top that a critical roasting seemed inevitable. So he pretended it was by an unknown Russian composer and – funnily enough – the critics loved it.

But some Bach arrangements need no excuse. *The Art of Fugue*, the great unfinished compendium of musical thought and feeling into which Bach poured his whole life's experience and craft, was written for no specific instrument, and it's been performed on piano, strings and even saxophones. This string version adapts the final fugue in the collection, which Bach left unfinished at his death on 28th July 1750. The poignant

last gesture of an old master whose mind was willing but whose body proved too weak? Or is it (as some have suggested) a deliberate decision: Bach, the supreme teacher, handing over to posterity? "I've shown you the way – the rest is up to you..."

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

SYMPHONY NO.2 IN C MAJOR, OP.61

- I Sostenuto assai –
Allegro, ma non troppo
- II Scherzo (Allegro vivace)
- III Adagio espressivo
- IV Allegro molto vivace

In his early 30s, Robert Schumann really started to feel the effects of nervous illness. Attempts to work brought on fits of shivering, fear of heights, an irrational fear of metal objects and a penetrating high 'A' sounding in his ears. The Schumanns' home in central Leipzig contributed to the problem: "Nature – where can I find it here?... Neither vale, nor hill, nor woods which would allow me to abandon myself to my thoughts". In 1844, Robert, his wife Clara and their two young daughters moved to the smaller, quieter city of Dresden – and Robert's creativity revived. He dreamed of German operas (mulling over such subjects as *Lohengrin* and the Nibelung legends), and in September 1845 he told his friend Felix Mendelssohn that he kept imaging drums and trumpets in C major. "I don't know what will come of it" he added.

What came of it was a new symphony – his third (though it would be only the second to be published), composed between the autumn of 1845 and the following summer, and proof (he felt) of his return to creativity and life. It was a fresh start: he'd adopted a new way of writing music. Instead of working at the piano, he wrote, "I began to conceive and work out everything in my

head". The symphony was intended both as a homage to the supreme romantic master of the form, Beethoven, and as a depiction of his own journey from anxiety and struggle to joyful creativity.

So after a spacious introduction – increasingly interrupted by sudden jolts – Schumann accelerates into a "very moody and unruly" first movement (although drums and trumpets help optimism keep breaking through). Violins race restlessly across the second movement, before the *Adagio espressivo* drops into a mood of deep, tender reflection: it ends amid glowing hons. And finally, jubilantly, Schumann gathers together the threads for a racing, sunlit *finale* that quotes (as it approaches its end) Beethoven's song-cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* – "To the distant beloved". Clara was very far from distant; but Schumann never ceased to see her as his guiding star.

© Richard Bratby



ROBERT SCHUMANN IN AN 1850 DAGUERRETYPE.
JOHANN ANTON VÖLLNER, HAMBURG, PUBLIC DOMAIN,
VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Conductor and Harpsichord

RICHARD EGARR



© MARCO BORGGREVE

Richard Egarr joined the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale as Music Director in August 2020, having been Music Director of the Academy of Ancient Music for 15 years. He is also Principal Guest of the Residentie Orkest and Artistic Partner of the St Paul Chamber and was Associate Artist with the Scottish Chamber 2011-2017. Egarr straddles the worlds of historically-informed and modern symphonic performance and has conducted many leading symphony orchestras, notably the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw and Philadelphia orchestras. In 23/24 season his guest conducting includes Haydn's Creation with the Gothenburg Symphony, Schumann 2 with the City of Birmingham Symphony, Bach B minor Mass with the Scottish Chamber, also Handel's Messiah and a CD of French repertoire with the Orquesta Sinfonica Castilla y Leon. He conducts repertoire ranging from Gabrieli to Schubert 9 to Tippett and Ives with St Paul Chamber, and Bach's St Matthew Passion and Beethoven 9 with the Residentie Orkest. With the Philharmonia Baroque plans include Schumann's Requiem and works by Errollyn Wallen and Tarik O'Regan alongside the core baroque repertoire.

LAURA VAN DER HEIJDEN

Laura van der Heijden has emerged as one of the leading cellists of her generation, captivating audiences and critics alike with her deeply perceptive interpretations and engaging stage presence. Her 23/24 season sees the completion of her year as 'Artist in Focus' at King's Place, London, concerto projects with the CBSO (Haydn D), London Philharmonic Orchestra as well as US touring with Kaleidoscope Collective, chamber projects in Bern with Hyeyoon Park, Arnhem with the Redon Quartet, Lammermuir and Dartington Festivals. Recitals with her long-standing pianist Jáms Coleman include at St George's Bristol and at the Cello Biennale, Amsterdam. Recent highlights include touring with the Brno Philharmonic (Martinů), BBC Symphony at the Barbican as part of the George Walker 'Total Immersion' project conducted by Alpesh Chauhan, Aurora Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, BBC Scottish with the World Premiere of a new work by Cheryl Frances-Hoad entitled 'Earth, Sea, Air'. Laura plays a late 17th-century cello by Francesco Ruggieri of Cremona, on generous loan from a private collection.



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Credits correct as of
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