

# Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

18 May 2014 – 4pm

## Retorica

Violin - Philippa Mo | Violin - Harriet Mackenzie

### PROGRAMME NOTES

#### GP Telemann (1681-1767) – Sonata for two violins. Op.2, no. 5 in B minor

1. Largo
2. Vivace
3. Gratoso
4. Allegro

Telemann in his own lifetime was the single most famous and honoured of contemporary German composers, his reputation exceeding even that of JS Bach. Almost completely self-taught; he played many instruments and composed operas, other vocal pieces, chamber music and symphonic works. He was somewhat neglected after his death but a more sympathetic appreciation in recent times

has revealed why his influence was so great. There are over 3000 works credited to him, including several previously thought to be by Bach. Telemann's teaching was hugely influential and he was venerated by Bach who was a friend and made him the godfather of his son Carl Philipp Emanuel. He was also greatly admired by Handel who regularly bought Telemann's publications. Telemann's music was itself influenced by French, Italian and Polish musical styles. He remained at the forefront of all new musical tendencies throughout his long life.

(Shadwick 1998)

#### HENRYK WIENIAWSKI (1835 – 1880) - Étude Caprice. Op. 18, no 1 in G minor

Wieniawski was born in Lublin, Poland, into a musical family. His talent for playing the violin was recognised early and he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of eight, overcoming the obstacles of being under-aged and foreign. He left with the Gold Medal! He then embarked on an unrelenting life of concert tours and recitals, which, while highly successful, were exhausting and left little time for composition. Wieniawski was influenced by Chopin, whom he met in Paris, Robert Schumann and Anton Rubinstein. The latter secured posts for Wieniawski in Saint Petersburg which became his main base for 12 years. It was during that relatively stable time that most of his composition was achieved. He was intent on further developing a Polish national style of composition which included mazurkas and polonaises,

sometimes of formidable technical difficulty. Further concert tours took him to the United States for two years before he became Professor of Violin in Brussels. During his lifetime he was regarded as a violinist of genius, comparable with Paganini. His health was never robust and during his last year he was given shelter by Madame von Meck – Tchaikovsky's famous patron. Wieniawski was adulated throughout Europe and beyond, rather like Liszt, and found it as difficult to resist invitations, but it was literally the death of him. He was taken ill during a concert in Moscow and died shortly afterwards, at the age of 48.

(M Pilatowicz 1999)

#### WA MOZART (1756-1791) – Sonata in G major, K 379

1. Adagio
2. Allegro molto
3. Tema con variazioni (Andantino cantabile)

This sonata was composed in Mannheim in November 1777, while he and his mother were on a lengthy trip that would take them to Paris the next spring.

Mozart sets the G major Andante in what is often referred to as "rondo-slow-movement form," a variant of slow-movement sonata form (sonata form without a development section) in which the contrasting material

(section B) is recapitulated on the tonic and followed by a return of section A. Sudden and wide dynamic contrasts are also a part of the Andante, which features an elegant opening theme fit for a vocal composition.

The closing Rondeau is filled with youthful energy and surprises. The first return of the rondo theme features a transposition of its second half to G major, which then introduces the second episode. The close of this episode is a cadenza passage with three different tempos that leads, concerto-like, into the return of the rondo theme and the close of the movement.

----- Interval -----

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## JS BACH (1685-1750) – Two part Inventions

1. no.2 C minor BWV 773
2. no.6 E major BWV 777
3. no.8 F major BWV 779

It may seem surprising to us now that Telemann was considered superior to Bach while they were both living and working. Yet both shared the same fate of relative public amnesia after death. In Bach's case it was the violinist Joachim, Brahms and especially Schumann we should thank for re-revealing the riches of his amazing musical life and works. *'We are all but amateurs in comparison to him'*. (R. Schumann). Bach was of course a very distinguished organist and accomplished violinist as well as composer and teacher, and was much inspired by the Lutheran tradition of church music. It was hardly to be wondered at that he was in great demand amongst the princely states of Germany, - (though the rulers, however

musical, never wanted to pay more than they had to.). The story of Bach's escape from a Weimar gaol, where he was thrown to prevent his leaving the services of the duke, has probably been a touch embellished over the years. Be that as it may, he was from 1717 Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. Bach had something of a habit of working on a theme or series until he had nothing more to say, before moving on. The fifteen two-part contrapuntal Inventions (ideas) for keyboard were written about 1723 as musical exercises for his students in Cöthen.

(Fang 2009)

Retorica have made their own arrangements of some of the Inventions.

## Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)– Sonata for Two Violins. Opus 569

1. Andante Cantabile
2. Allegro
3. Commodo (quasi Allegretto)
4. Allegro con brio

Prokofiev fled Russia for the West six months after the 1917 revolution and didn't see it again for 10 years. His émigré status however was not held against him and there were many invitations to return. Eventually, swayed by personal beliefs and sentiments, he made two concert tours, before his voluntary, but ambivalent, final return in 1936. Part of the ambivalence was caused by his reception in America, where his pianistic brilliance was recognised but his compositions were often misunderstood. He was even accused of being a covert Bolshevik. He got on much better when he transferred to Paris in 1923 and moved in

an avant-garde circle with the likes of Honegger, but found himself uncomfortably in competition with Stravinsky, the other great Russian in town. (though, with the rather edgy and attacking style of Prokofiev's music at the time, it's hard to see where the competition came from?). Just before his 1932 tour of Russia, when he was fêted everywhere, Prokofiev composed the Sonata for Two Violins, while on holiday in Sainte Maxime. It is in much warmer style; does that reflect, not just maturity, but his final decision to be part of the new Russia? *(A decision which, of course, he came bitterly to regret after the war and the regular denunciations that he suffered in the 1940s).*

(Kennedy 2004; Shadwick 1998).

## GF HANDEL (1685-1759) arr. Halvorsen (1864 – 1935) – Passacaglia

Johan Halvorsen was a violinist, conductor and composer. He continued the Norwegian traditions established by Grieg but in a style marked by brilliant orchestration. His works are enjoying something of a revival, certainly in Norway. Elsewhere his fame rested on two works, arrangements of movements from Handel's harpsichord suites. The Passacaglia is regarded with gratitude by viola

players, but arrangements of the work have been made for harp, cello and guitar combinations as well as for violin duo. In whatever combinations, virtuosity is required from both players.

(Sierra Chamber Society 1992).

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

**Harriet Mackenzie** graduated from the Royal Academy of Music where she was supported by numerous awards : the Musicians Benevolent Fund, Tillett Trust, Hatton Foundation and the Manoug Parikian Award. She is passionate about contemporary music and has collaborated with many musicians and composers who have written works dedicated to her. As a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician Harriet has toured throughout the world and performed in many prestigious venues such as the Wigmore Hall, South Bank London, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam & Expo Dome in Japan.

**Philippa Mo** studied at the Royal Academy of Music, and at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing with Professor Lin Yao Ji. Her studies were supported by the Belmore Woodgate Scholarship and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Since finishing her research studies culminating in the award of an MMus degree, Philippa now performs extensively as a chamber musician. She has given concerto and chamber performances all over Europe; including her acclaimed debut at the Wigmore Hall, the premiere of the revised Fugue Refractions by Jim Aitchison at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, the Beethoven Series at St John's, Smith Square, and performances at the Deutsches Museum, Munich, Ulaan Bataar, the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, the Barbara Hepworth Museum and The Tate St Ives in the UK and televised performances in Turkey as part of the Ankara International Music Festival with Orkestra@Modern.

*To read more about the artists, please refer to our website*

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