



2021 Petworth Festival

Wednesday 14 – Saturday 31 July

Thursday 29 July, St Mary's Church 7.30pm – 9.40pm

Chineke!

Piano Sonata in F, K 280 (arr Schneider for oboe quintet) W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

1 Allegro assai, 2 Adagio, 3 Presto

It is an extraordinary phenomenon that a composer with such prodigious gifts as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the supposed advantages of his childhood encounters with a cultivated nobility should fail to procure a court appointment commensurate with his talents. After unfulfilled ambitions in Vienna, Mozart reconciled himself to the position of Konzertmeister to the court orchestra in Salzburg where, from 1773, his expanding portfolio revealed a quantity of works in all genres and a growing maturity with each passing year.

The first six of his nineteen piano sonatas (K279-284) were begun towards the end of 1774. Each of them inhabits a charming spontaneity and, whilst drawing on the style and techniques of Haydn, the opening 'Allegro assai' of K 280 bears characteristics of late Baroque keyboard works in its chromaticism, imitative phrases and spread chords. Mozart's two resolute themes generate numerous decorative offshoots and provide a wealth of subsidiary material for its rigorous formal design. The poised lyricism of the slow movement is underpinned by the rhythm of a stately Sicilienne. Sweeping aside the serious mood is a wonderfully frivolous finale, a delightful confection that forms a perfect counterweight to earlier solemnities.

Clarinet Quintet in F sharp minor, Op. 10 Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

1 Allegro energico, 2 Larghetto affettuoso, 3 Scherzo, 4 Finale

Mozart was not the only wunderkind to cause consternation among his peers. In a letter to Elgar in September 1897, August Jaeger of Novello's publishing company pronounced Coleridge-Taylor 'a genius, I feel sure, if ever an English composer was'. At the Royal College of Music, his composition tutor Charles Villiers Stanford claimed no composer could write a clarinet quintet without showing the influence of Brahms's own recent work. But the young Afro-British composer took up the challenge and produced a quintet showing a special admiration for Dvořák. Stanford was so impressed he used his influence to procure a Berlin publisher. The work's assurance is readily apparent in the opening 'Allegro energico', its forward momentum underpinning a flowing movement built on two easy-going themes, the second introduced by the viola. A song-like simplicity marks the affable 'Larghetto', while an alternating metre ((3/4 and 9/8) fuels the buoyant 'Scherzo', its nervous energy subsiding for the equable Trio. Coleridge-Taylor's melodic invention and spontaneity of expression finds a natural outlet in the exuberant Finale, where its two main themes are crowned by a jubilant Coda.



Oboe Quintet in G minor, Op. 39

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

- 1 Tema con variazioni – L'istesso Tempo – Vivace
- 2 Andante energico
- 3 Allegro sostenuto, ma con brio
- 4 Adagio pesante
- 5 Allegro precipitato, ma non troppo presto
- 6 Andantino

Following varied success in America after the 1918 Revolution, Russian-born Sergei Prokofiev settled in France, and during the summer of 1924 rented a property at St. Gilles-sur-Vie in the Vendée region. Here he began work on both his Second Symphony and what would become this Oboe Quintet.

Scored unusually for oboe, clarinet, violin, viola and double bass, the work began as a ballet called *Trapèze* commissioned by the choreographer Boris Romanov for his itinerant dance troupe. Wishing to gain maximum use from the score he arranged for six movements that could be performed as a concert work. The Quintet pushes at the boundaries of tonality, but there's no shortage of folk influences in the eventful opening movement, based on a wistful idea that generates all subsequent material. A jaunty, grotesque lyricism permeates the second movement, and if one hears echoes of Stravinsky in the motor rhythms of the third and fifth movements, the latter is characterised by feverish instrumental exchanges. The repeated patterns of the slow movement ('Adagio pesante') brood over a wintry landscape, but the last movement ('Andantino') offers a glimpse of spring in its dancing rhythms and rustic themes.

Clarinet Quintet in A major, K. 591

W.A. Mozart (1756-91)

- 1 Allegro, 2 Larghetto, 3 Menuetto, 4 Allegretto con variazioni

The Clarinet Quintet in A major was completed in September 1789 for the renowned clarinetist Anton Stadler and first performed in December that year. With its mastery of form, balance of sonorities and manner of address Mozart produces a work of rarefied grace and purity. In the opening 'Allegro' the strings' initial calm is answered by deft flourishes from the clarinet, moving to a poignantly lyrical secondary theme underlined by the cello's *pizzicato* bass. A harmonically adventurous development explores the clarinet's initial bars in exchanges between the strings set against clarinet arpeggios before yielding to the return and refuge of the home key.

The tragic *Larghetto* reveals Mozart as a master of exquisitely wrought phrases. By contrast, the affable *Menuetto* with two separate Trios, provides a melancholy solo violin for the first, and sparingly accompanied solo clarinet for the second. The finale is a theme and variations built on a simple march-like theme heard at the outset. After the first two variations there follows a slow and quasi-operatic 'Adagio' leading directly to a 'display' variation where rapid arpeggios unequivocally bring the clarinet's versatility into focus. A further slow variation and a short linking passage anticipates a final statement of the main theme, now embellished by the clarinet, and which crowns this wonderfully radiant work.

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