

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 22nd April 2018 at 3.00 pm

Raphael Wallfisch (cello) and John York (piano)

Raphael Wallfisch was born in London into a family of distinguished musicians, his mother the cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, and his father the pianist Peter Wallfisch. At an early age, Raphael was greatly inspired by hearing Zara Nelsova play, and, guided by a succession of fine teachers, including Amaryllis Fleming, Amadeo Baldovino and Derek Simpson, it became apparent that the cello was to be his life's work.

While studying with the great Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky in California (Thornton School of Music), he was chosen to perform chamber music with Jascha Heifetz in the informal recitals that Piatigorsky held at his home. At the age of twenty-four he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Cello Competition in Florence. Since then he has enjoyed a world-wide career playing with such orchestras as the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Hallé, City of Birmingham Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Symphony, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic and many others. He is regularly invited to play at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Spoleto, Prades, Oslo and Schleswig Holstein.

Teaching is one of Raphael Wallfisch's passions and he teaches masterclasses all over the world. Raphael holds professorships in Switzerland, at the Zürich Winterthur Konservatorium, and in London, at the Royal College of Music.

His extensive discography of recordings with EMI, Chandos, Black Box, ASV, Naxos and Nimbus includes concertante works by Dohnanyi, Respighi, Barber, Hindemith and Martinu, as well as Richard Strauss, Dvorak, Kabalevsky and Khachaturian and a wide range of British cello concertos, including works by MacMillan, Finzi, Delius, Bax, Bliss, Britten, Moeran and Kenneth Leighton. For the Walton Edition on Chandos, he recorded the Cello Concerto originally written for his master Piatigorsky. Raphael's latest recording - featuring Jewish repertoire by Bloch, Ravel and Caplet - triggered some extensive interest from the media as soon as it was released in January 2014, in time for Holocaust Memorial Day (27 Jan).

In 2015/16 Raphael was soloist in the highly acclaimed Royal Opera House ballet production "Elizabeth", a unique theatre/dance/music piece about Elizabeth I. In 2017 Raphael recorded a historic scale project with the Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin in which 8 cello concertos by exiled Jewish composer were set to disc. 2018 began with a historic performance at the German parliament in Berlin to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, and continues with performances throughout Europe and Israel, including returning to Royal Opera House Ballet to perform "Elizabeth" at the Barbican Centre in May, performances with the Dresden Philharmonic, and recitals and concerts throughout Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom with pianist John York and Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch.

Leading British composers who have worked closely with and written for Raphael Wallfisch include Sir Peter



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Maxwell Davies, Kenneth Leighton, James MacMillan, John Metcalf, Paul Patterson, Robert Simpson, Robert Saxton, Roger Smalley, Giles Swayne, John Tavener and Adrian Williams.

Alongside his solo career, Raphael also greatly enjoys touring with his piano trio which he and his colleagues Hagai Shaham (violin) and Arnon Erez (piano) founded in 2009 - **Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch**. Four recordings on Nimbus have been released so far, each receiving the highest critical acclaim. He continues to perform extensively with his duo partner, the acclaimed pianist, John York, with whom he has recorded and performed extensively for over 30 years.

Raphael Wallfisch plays the 1865 Vuillaume "Sheremetev" and a 1760 Gennaro Gagliano.

John York is well known on five continents as a musician of personality and compelling enthusiasm in a wide range of pianistic and pedagogic activities.

Press reaction to his recent performances has included:

«York2 go stratospheric in their world première Black Box Music recording of The Planets...raw energy... bright new details of previously unglimped territory... cosmic keyboard... haunting translucency of figuration» (The Times)

«this was enough to confirm the (Wigmore Hall) evening in its ambition, scope and sheer grit as something exceptional – duly exciting a prolonged ovation from its capacity audience» (The Independent)

His career, launched in 1973 when he was awarded the International Debussy Prize in Paris, and marked by an auspicious début at London's Wigmore Hall in 1974, has taken him around the world as soloist, with such orchestras as the London Philharmonic and London Mozart Players, and as a chamber music partner, primarily with cellist Raphael Wallfisch, and in the piano duo team of York2. He is often a guest with international artists such as clarinetists James Campbell and David Campbell, the Allegri quartet, the Lindseys, the Wihan quartet, the Beethoven String Trio of London, singers Patricia Rozario and Sarah Walker, and violist Rivka Golani, among many others.

Recordings are too numerous to list, but include many albums on Crystal Records of Los Angeles, on the Meridian and Marco Polo labels (York Trio), on Cala Records' complete works for piano and winds of Poulenc, Saint-Saëns, Ravel and Debussy, on LondonHall (York2), on Naxos/Marco Polo with Raphael Wallfisch – and, significantly, on EMI Eminence, where York and Wallfisch played the full Beethoven cycle, hailed as 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine, Feb. 1997, and as 'Critic's Choice' in Gramophone, March 1998. In January 2005 Wallfisch/York released a new complete Beethoven cycle again, also including the rare Op.19 and the cello version by Czerny of the 'Kreutzer' – and now they are featured in the first ever recording of the newly discovered Sonata of Zemlinsky, lost for a century but found and revived by them, alongside works of Korngold and Goldmark, for which they are again receiving the highest accolades.

In the autumn of 2004 John celebrated his 30 years in 'the business' with a York2 gala concert at Wigmore Hall. In spring of 2005 York2 played in Sydney and Canberra.

Major institutions at home and abroad value his role as an inspiring communicator and pedagogue. He has worked with students of the highest level at Margess International of Switzerland, the Australian National Academy and at the New World Festival in Venezuela.

In the UK he is Professor of 32 years' standing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Senior Music Head at the illustrious St. Paul's Girls' School in London.

He acts as consultant, presenter and composer for the Trinity/Guildhall examinations service, whilst music publishers, notably Boosey and Hawkes, Faber and Ricordi, make use of his editing, composing and arranging skills. His lively, informative and entertaining work as writer and reviewer for 'Piano' Magazine and 'Tempo' Quarterly is a further reflection of his rounded musical character.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918): Sonata in D minor, L135

- I *Prologue : Lento*
- II *Sérénade –*
- III *Finale : Animé*

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827): Sonata in A major, Op.69

- I *Allegro ma non tanto*
- II *Scherzo : Allegro molto*
- III *Adagio cantabile –*
- IV *Allegro vivace*

INTERVAL 25 MINUTES

Tea and coffee at £1 per cup can be purchased from the Church Lane Tea Room, 18 Church Street, just past the Old Plough Inn. Specialist teas and coffees are also available at standard prices. Please bring your drinks back to the church, to make room in the Tea Room for others!

There is one toilet in the church vestry, and public toilets opposite the church, in Place Lane. The Church Lane Tea Room also has one toilet (for patrons only).

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856): Adagio and Allegro in A flat, Op.70

Johannes BRAHMS (1833 -1897): Sonata in F, Op.99

- I *Allegro vivace*
- II *Adagio affettuoso*
- III *Allegro passionato*
- IV *Allegro molto*

John York writes:

A recital with three whole sonatas, each in several movements, might risk being a bit heavy going! However, we have chosen three attractive and very fine sonatas, richly contrasted, diverse and diverting. All three composers made their own mark on so-called 'sonata form' in their lifetime, many times over in the cases of Beethoven and Brahms (with all their sonatas, trios, quartets, quintets, concertos and symphonies) but just four times in Debussy's. And where Beethoven's work is the epitome of the Classical style, defining sonata structure and pushing it to the very limits, both the late-Romantic Brahms and the very 20th century Debussy are perhaps more succinct, the Frenchman's work concentrating the whole three-movement argument into barely 12 minutes.

In 1916 **Debussy** knew his days were numbered by the cancer that would kill him a few months later, and yet he proudly announced that he, the archetypal 'musicien français', composing under the grim shadows of the Great War, was writing six sonatas. The first, this **cello sonata**, was followed by one for flute, viola and harp and another for violin – and that was that, sadly. The rest was, indeed, silence...

His initial plan was a sort of programmatic work, touching on Pierrot Lunaire (*pace* Schoenberg) and associated Petroushka stereotypes (*pace* Stravinsky and the *commedia dell'arte*) – saying it concerned 'Pierrot angry with the moon.' He soon dropped that theme and concentrated instead on the abstract,

colourful, witty and kaleidoscopic music we know now. Ideas flit in and out of focus, technical tricks and sudden dynamic effects follow close on one another. And it all makes fantastic, magical and very French sense, of course.

Beethoven's A major sonata, the third of the five that make up his wonderful cycle, is generally regarded as the first such work to achieve a perfect balance between the players. All the material – and there is a great deal of memorable melody and significant thematic detail – is shared out brilliantly, both players even indulging in some cadenzas and much virtuoso display. There's a rich and generous opening movement followed by a quirky, syncopated Scherzo and just the briefest of singing Adagios before a hurtling finale sums it all up to perfection.

Schumann's glorious Adagio and Allegro was just one of the many pieces he wrote for all sorts of odd instruments after his insanity had already reared its ugly head – and it's definitely the best. His original instrumentation was for horn and piano and it certainly has some very idiomatic horn writing, challenging players even now. More commonly heard these days on the cello, it gains thereby in warmth, easefulness and sheer beauty. A glamorous arch of superb slow melody proceeds into a brilliant sonata-rondo allegro which incorporates yet more development of the introductory section.

Raphael and I have recently been much involved with a recording project in which we play not just the two 'standard' cello and piano **sonatas of Brahms** (fabulous both of them) but also the G major violin sonata in a D major cello version by someone, maybe himself, maybe not – and the two late sonatas of Op. 120 originally for clarinet or viola and piano which have not so far been heard on the cello.

Today we play the greatest of them all – the Op. 99 in F major, a work that represents the very heights of Romantic music – Brahms at his best. Surging melody, passionate energy, heroic virtuosity, modulation, compositional cleverness – all combine here to build a much-loved and oft-requested masterpiece.

John York – April 2018

Forthcoming events:

Sunday 20th May, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church, Seaford (please note the starting time, which is different from that shown in the 2017-18 brochure and in last month's concert programme):

Family concert: 'The Enchanted Violin and other tales'. A concert for the whole family, with free entry for children, who will be especially welcome. The concert will last about an hour.

Sunday 8th July 2018 (afternoon): the Society's Annual General Meeting and members' social event. The formal notice will be sent to all members closer to the time, but please put the date in your diary now. We should love to hear from any members who would like to join the committee. **IMPORTANT: Please retain your membership card at the end of this season, as it will be required to enable you to gain admission to this members-only event.**

Our **2018-19 Season** brochure will be published during the summer. If you are not already a member of Seaford Music Society, leave your name and address with us and we shall be glad to send you a copy. Meanwhile, you may like to enter in your diary the date of the first concert of the new season, **Sunday 28th October 2018.**