

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 13th December 2020 at 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

**Members of the London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble:
Ruth Rogers (violin), Judith Busbridge (viola), Sebastian Comberti (cello)**

Described as “the finest of the younger generation of violinists” (*Musical Opinion*) and hailed by the *Guardian* as “superb”, **Ruth Rogers** is in demand as soloist, leader, and chamber musician. In 2001 she was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal – the Royal College of Music’s highest accolade. She has performed as a soloist at the Royal Albert Hall, the Acropolis in Athens, the Pyramids in Cairo and many other exciting places. Ruth was Co-Leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 2008 until 2012, is now Leader of the London Mozart Players, and regularly leads many major orchestras. She is a founding member of the Aquinas Piano Trio. Ruth appears at the BBC Proms on television with the John Wilson Orchestra.

Judith Busbridge graduated in Music from Birmingham University and completed her viola studies with Thomas Riebl in Salzburg, where she was solo violist in the Camerata Academica. Outside her schedule with the London Mozart Players she was, until 2011, a founder member of the multi-award-winning Dante String Quartet, with whom she performed at major concert halls and festivals throughout the UK and Europe, winning the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music in 2007.

From 2010 to 2013 she was violist with Ensemble 360, a versatile group of eleven musicians of international standing who enjoy a residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, and with whom she again won the RPS Award for chamber music in 2013.

Judith’s varied freelance career also includes playing guest principal viola with the English Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and The Academy of St Martin in the Fields. She is also solo viola in John Eliot Gardiner’s Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, which performs repertoire of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on period instruments. Since September 2013 she is also one of the principal violas with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Born in London, **Sebastian Comberti** studied in Italy with Amedeo Baldovino, and later with Derek Simpson and Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music, from where he graduated in 1977. In 1976 he became a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet, giving concerts throughout the British Isles and in Europe.

In 1983 Sebastian was appointed principal cello with the London Mozart Players, since when he has appeared on numerous occasions as soloist, as well as being an active member of the LMP Chamber Ensemble. A keen interest in historically informed performance has resulted in participation with a great many period instrument groups, frequently appearing as principal cello with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and soloist with the Hanover Band. Research into early cello repertoire has led to several recitals being recorded by the BBC. In April 2001 Sebastian founded Cello Classics, a label devoted to recordings of rare repertoire and artists.



Seaford Music Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Newberry Tully Estate Agents.

Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

String Trio in G major, Op.53, No.1

- I *Moderato*
- II *Minuetto*
- III *Finale: Presto*

For many years, Haydn worked in the service of Prince Nicholas Esterhazy at his castle in what is now Hungary, and at Court in Vienna and at Eisenstadt. The Prince was a devotee of the Baryton, an instrument now all but forgotten, which was something of a cross between a cello and a viola da gamba, with numerous 'sympathetic' strings, that were not actively played, but simply resonated with the bowed notes. Haydn was therefore required to write several chamber works featuring the instrument, and these would be largely unknown today, were it not for the fact that several have since been arranged for other combinations of instruments. The 'String Trio' we hear today is one such, arranged from a trio for Baryton, Viola and Cello.

Programme note by Sebastian Comberti

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Trio No.5 in C minor, Op.9, No.3

- I *Allegro con spirito*
- II *Adagio con espressione*
- III *Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace*
- IV *Finale: Presto*

In 1792, Beethoven moved from Bonn to Vienna. Despite his growing reputation there, he was initially reluctant to write a string quartet: perhaps he felt that Haydn and Mozart had perfected the medium. After writing several piano trios he wrote a *String Trio* (Op.3) and a *String Quintet* (Op.5). After he began to write his first set of string quartets (Op.18, composed between 1798 and 1800), he wrote no more string trios.

The Russian nobleman Count Johann Georg von Browne and his wife admired Beethoven's music and often invited him to their home for musical soirées. Beethoven considered his three *String Trios, Op.9*, as his best works up until that point, and dedicated them to the Count.

Compared with string quartets, in which instrumental balance is comparatively easy, with two violins to offset the lower-voiced viola and cello, string trios are especially challenging; to compose successfully for only three instruments is much more demanding. Beethoven enriches the harmonies by frequent use of double-stopping.

Beethoven considered C minor to be an especially important and dramatic key. Compared with the others in the Op.9 set, this is a very serious and emotional work; violent outbursts are frequently set against more lyrical passages. The first movement, in sonata form, begins with a dramatic, descending, minor-scale, C – B – A flat – G motif in unison that expands to become the main theme. Much later in life, Beethoven used this descending four-note motif again in his final string quartets, especially his Op.131. The more lyrical second movement is also in sonata form. The rapid, rhythmically vigorous *Scherzo* conveys a sense of nervous energy, from which the central trio offers relief. The rapid, dramatic finale is again in sonata form. The brilliant main theme is balanced by a more lyrical second subject.

Programme note by Ted Wilks, courtesy of Making Music

Ernő DOHNÁNYI (1877-1960)

Serenade in C major for String Trio, Op.10

- I *Marcia: Allegro*
- II *Romanza*
- III *Scherzo: Vivace*
- IV *Andante con moto*
- V *Rondo*

Ernst von Dohnanyi (Ernő Dohnányi in Hungarian) is generally regarded, after Liszt, as Hungary's most versatile musician. He was active as a concert pianist, composer, conductor and teacher and must be considered one of the chief influences on Hungary's musical life in the 20th century. Certainly, his chamber music is very fine, with most of it being in the masterwork category. Yet, sadly and inexplicably, it has virtually disappeared from the concert stage. Dohnanyi studied piano and composition in his native Pressburg (Bratislava) before entering the Budapest Academy. His first published work, his Piano Quintet No.1, was championed by no less an authority than Johannes Brahms. Upon graduating in the spring of 1897, Dohnanyi embarked on a dazzling career as a concert artist, often playing in chamber ensembles. Later, he also devoted considerable time to teaching and conducting.

Of Dohnanyi's *Serenade in C Major, Op.10 for String Trio*, composed between 1902 and 1904 *The Chamber Music Journal* has this to say:

It was not true, as CD jacket note writers have consistently suggested, that Beethoven's *Op.8 Serenade* served as Dohnanyi's model because no other worthy trios had been composed after Beethoven. There were many, from such fine composers as Herzogenberg, Reinecke, Fuchs and Berens, to name but a few. Dohnanyi, unlike those writers and many of today's musicians, was almost certainly familiar with them. Therefore, it is fair to say that Dohnanyi intentionally chose Beethoven's *Op.8* because he had a specific goal in mind: to produce an updated version of the classical serenade for string trio.

Beethoven begins his *Op.8 Serenade* quite ceremoniously, as was the custom, with a relatively short march. So does Dohnanyi. Beethoven's movement marking is *Marcia: Allegro*. So is Dohnanyi's. Traditionally, a march has a contrasting trio section which serves as the middle section of the movement, after which the march reappears and is used to conclude the movement, either with or without a coda. Beethoven follows this procedure. Dohnanyi does not. Instead of simply repeating the march of 21 bars in its entirety, he compresses it into five bars by means of representing the original 16th note runs that lead to the main dotted rhythm of the march into a run of only three notes while retaining the dotted rhythm. This compression creates a heightened tension which is missing in the original march.

Although Beethoven did not call his second movement a romance, he could have done, for his Adagio is clearly that. Dohnanyi entitles his second movement *Romanza*. To the off-beat pizzicato in the violin and cello, the viola, in a long solo, presents a calm main theme. It has a folk tune quality to it.

Beethoven follows his *Adagio* with a *Menuetto, allegretto* before inserting a *scherzo*. Dohnanyi, not feeling himself slavishly beholden to Beethoven's model, skips the minuet and uses a *Scherzo, vivace* for his third movement. The playful main theme is introduced in a fugal fashion.

After his *scherzo*, Beethoven produces what is probably the most memorable movement of his *Serenade*, an *Allegretto alla Polacca*. This was a novelty and perhaps a concession to popular taste (late 1790s), as polaccas had become the rage in Vienna. He follows this with an *Andante quasi Allegretto*, which is a theme and set of five variations. Dohnanyi apparently saw no reason to insert a polacca or any other kind of dance movement and makes his next movement, *Andante con moto*, a theme with a set of five variations. This is the most serious movement of his *Serenade*. The theme itself, which all three instruments present together, is reflective and elegiac in nature but full of harmonic surprises. These carry over into the variations which are one of the most extraordinary sets ever composed, and characterized by a very high degree of craftsmanship.

Beethoven concluded his Serenade simply by reinserting the opening *Marcia* in its entirety. Dohnanyi does nothing of the kind, instead using a *Rondo*. The main theme is really only a short kernel of four bars. It is frenetic and full of nervous energy. Although it begins as an entirely independent theme, it starts to bear a distant relationship to the thematic material in the opening movement as the movement progresses. The Serenade is without question one of the great masterpieces of the string trio literature and should not be missed by anyone who has the opportunity to play string trios.

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Our next concert

Sunday 24th January 2021, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford
Repeated at 6.00 pm if there is sufficient demand

Having successfully organised today's concert (albeit after a postponement when the second national lockdown was announced!), we are planning another event in January. In it, **Sebastian Comberti** will be joined by our good friend, pianist **Maggie Cole**, and they will be playing:

Beethoven: Sonata Op.69 & Variations

Popper: Two Pieces

Schumann: Five Pieces in Folk Style

If more stringent restrictions are imposed by the government between now and then, it might not be possible for the concert to go ahead, but, subject to that, it will definitely be taking place. The same Covid precautions will be in place as today, with the audience limited to a maximum of 50, social distancing at all times, masks to be worn, and all surfaces being sanitised before and after the concert.

Seats must be booked in advance, there will be no admission to anybody who has not pre-booked. Like today, the price of admission will be:

Young people 25 years and under (i.e. not having reached their 26 th birthday):	FREE
Members of Seaford Music Society:	£12
Others:	£15
Guests of Members of Seaford Music Society:	£12 for the first guest £15 any additional guests

Guest tickets may only be booked by the Member himself or herself

Book your place as soon as possible, by contacting Paul Moore: 01323 491601
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Payment must be made at the time of booking. Cheque or bank transfer preferred.

Please indicate your preference for the afternoon or evening performance. We shall do our best to fulfil your request, but this cannot be guaranteed; furthermore, the evening performance will not take place at all if all those wishing to attend can be accommodated in the afternoon.

Please remember that, like today, this January concert will be held at Seaford Baptist Church, not at our usual venue of St Leonard's Church.