

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 29th October 2023 at 3.00 pm

Mathilde Milwidsky (violin) and Annie Yim (piano)

Recently named a Classic FM Rising Star, British violinist **Mathilde Milwidsky** has been praised by *The Strad's* Charlotte Gardner for her "perfect intonation and beautiful shaping and colouring, comprehensively nailing each new stylistic and emotional universe as she went". She was the sole British violinist to be selected for the 2019 Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition in Belgium, and in 2021 and 2022 was invited to the prestigious Verbier Festival Academy, as one of only seven violinists chosen from across the world.

Mathilde has performed as a soloist at Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Kings Place, Cadogan Hall and St John's Smith Square, whilst her frequent radio appearances have included Scala Radio, BBC Radio 3, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and many others. For her debut CD, released in 2020, Mathilde made the world premiere recordings of Agnes Zimmermann's three *Sonatas* for violin and piano with pianist Sam Haywood. She was subsequently named *Classical Music Magazine's* 'Artist of the Month', and the disc received glowing reviews. Her latest recording is of the Beethoven *Romances for Violin and Orchestra* alongside the National Symphony Orchestra, and was given a five-star review in *Musical Opinion*.

Mathilde was awarded a place on the St John's Smith Square Young Artist Scheme for the 2017-18 season, and was an Artist on the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme for two consecutive seasons, 2020-21 and 2021-22. She won First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2018 Aurora Music Competition in Sweden, and First Prize in the String Section at the 2017 Royal Overseas League Music Competition.

Mathilde plays a fine J. B. Guadagnini violin kindly loaned to her through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Annie Yim is a Hong Kong-born Canadian concert pianist, creative collaborator, and founder of MusicArt based in London. Her performance has been described by the *Times* as "the most beautiful sounds, radiantly coloured, thoughtfully articulated". Noted for her wide-ranging solo and chamber music repertoire, encompassing canonic works and new music, Annie has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and national radios in Canada and Portugal, and made her UK concerto debut at LSO St Luke's, London.

Annie is founding member of the Minerva Piano Trio, who made their London debut at the Southbank Centre in 2014. She was St John's Smith Square Young Artist in Residence in 2016/17, and her trio album 'Dance!' was released on the SOMM label in 2022 to critical acclaim.

In 2015 Annie founded MusicArt, an initiative to create original artist-led performance projects. Her performances with artists and art spaces across Europe were featured in the *New York Times T Magazine*, *Artnet*, and *Gramophone*. She was a recipient of Arts Council England's Developing Your Creative Practice award in 2021 for her work in making connections between music and nature, and Help Musicians UK's Do It Differently award in 2022.



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

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Sergey PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Five Melodies for Violin and Piano, Op.35

Sergey Prokofiev was a child prodigy, writing his first opera at the age of nine and beginning his studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory four years later. He remained there until just before the first World War broke out, but after the 1917 Revolution he lived in the United States, then Paris, where his style became much more settled and mature. The final 17 years of his life were spent back in Russia under Soviet rule.

Prokofiev moved to Paris in April 1920, but kept up his contacts with America, and in December that year he began a long concert tour of California. It was during this tour that he composed his *Five Songs Without Words*, for the soprano Nina Koshits. He was obviously keen on this work, because five years later the songs were transcribed for violin and piano as the *Five Melodies*. He also arranged the second song for voice and orchestra and yet another movement became the *Scherzino* of *Six Pieces for Piano* (1930-31).

Back in Europe after the US tour, he remained in Paris despite an invitation to return to Russia for a series of concerts with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. His career in Paris was just beginning, and his musical language became harmonically aggressive and rhythmically forceful and persistent. Late in life he summed up his own style: "The cardinal virtue (or sin, if you like) of my life has been the search for an original musical language, a musical language of my own. I detest imitation; I detest hackneyed methods. I always want to be myself."

Programme note by Linda A Williams, courtesy of Making Music

Anton WEBERN (1883-1945)

Four Pieces, Op.7

- I *Sehr langsam*
- II *Rasch*
- III *Sehr langsam*
- IV *Bewegt*

Whilst brevity had always been a hallmark of Webern's style, the *Four Pieces* are truly extraordinary in their restraint, the shortest being only nine bars in length, the longest, twenty-four. The brevity of the *Four Pieces* is especially striking in light of the grand proportions that were so much a part of the contemporaneous musical aesthetic: in 1910, the year in which Webern wrote the *Four Pieces*, Stravinsky completed *The Firebird*, Strauss completed *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* (1906) received its first performance.

The concentrated aesthetic of the *Four Pieces* markedly alters one's perception of their durations. Dynamics, motivic shape and length, and gestures, are all expressed in the sparest language possible. Musicians who worked with Webern were constantly surprised by the results he was able to achieve by such modest means. Peter Stadlen, who premiered Webern's *Piano Variations* (1935-36), recalled, "As he sang and shouted, waved his arms and stamped his feet in an attempt to bring out what he called the meaning of the music, I was amazed to see him treat those few scrappy notes as if they were cascades of sound." The violinist Felix Galimir, who prepared the *Four Pieces* under Webern's supervision, concurred: "I remember at first our shock, a reaction almost prompting us to ridicule the sparsity of notes in each composition. After we worked with him for a little while, though, the proportions were so perfect that all length or shortness vanished. Of course the minutest details were of greatest importance. How expressive every little miniature phrase became when he sang it."

Programme note by Robert Adelson

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Violin Sonata No.4 in A minor, Op.23

- I *Presto*
- II *Andante scherzoso più allegretto*
- III *Allegro molto*

The fourth of Beethoven's ten sonatas for violin and piano dates from 1800. The *First Symphony* and the *Septet* date from earlier in the same year. The *A minor Sonata* was to have been published together with the following *F major*, known as the *Spring*, but this plan failed to materialize. However, the two works do offer an interesting contrast, the *A minor* stormy and dramatic and the *F major* lyrical and relaxed.

Despite hushed opening dynamics, the first movement bursts upon the scene in a frenzied, passionate and quite unbridled manner and continues with surging energy. Respite comes with the flowing second subject. The playful opening of the *Andante scherzoso*, where each note combination is followed by corresponding silence, suggests variations to follow, but this idea is soon dispelled when a contrasting mock-grandiose *fugato* takes over. A self-contained second subject and a closing theme conclude the laying out of the material. The movement ends quietly without any great suggestion of finality.

A tumultuous flow of ideas is presented in the final movement as the agitated A minor theme appears from time to time, separated by several varied episodes. The whole concludes with a panoramic view of what has gone before and the sonata sinks away quietly as if succumbing to exhaustion.

Programme note by John Dalton, courtesy of Making Music

COMFORT BREAK 15 MINUTES

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church, and downstairs via the stairs beside the stage.

Eugène YSAÏE (1858-1931)

Sonata for Solo Violin in D minor, Op.27, No.3

Born in Liège, Belgium, Ysaïe studied the violin at the conservatory there, and then in Paris with Vieuxtemps. He came to be especially associated with the music of his francophone contemporaries, being the dedicatee of the *Sonata* by César Franck, Chausson's *Poème*, and the Debussy *String Quartet*. Returning to Belgium in 1886, he became Professor of Violin at Brussels Conservatoire, and founded the Concerts Ysaïes, in which he appeared as both violinist and conductor.

His compositions, though small in number, opened up new horizons of violin virtuosity, and he was regarded by Oistrakh as the greatest innovator after Paganini. His *Poèmes* and *Sonatas* are the most original and representative of his works, affording free play to his creative imagination and flights of fancy. The six *Sonatas*, late works produced in a creative frenzy in 1923, were influenced by Bach's works for solo violin, although there is no question of imitation; the form is considerably modified and each is an individual work. The number of movements varies from one to four, and this *Sonata*, the third in the set, is a dramatic work in a single movement that is often played as an encore.

Each *Sonata* is dedicated to a significant colleague or pupil of Ysaïe: in the case of *Sonata No.3* the dedicatee is Georges Enescu.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

César FRANCK (1822-1890)

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, FWV8

- I *Allegro ben moderato*
- II *Allegro*
- III *Recitativo – Fantasia: Ben moderato – molto lento*
- IV *Allegretto poco mosso*

Like Eugène Ysaÿe, César Franck was born in Liège and studied in Paris. A brilliant student, he would have received first prize but for a stunt he pulled in an exam. He sight-read a piano concerto perfectly, but simultaneously transposed it from A minor to F-sharp major. Furious, the examiner awarded Franck second prize. Against his father's wishes, Franck abandoned the piano and chose a quiet life of composing, teaching, and playing the organ in various churches. He became organist of St Clothilde in Paris in 1848, a post he retained until his death.

Inspired by the brilliance of Eugène Ysaÿe as a violinist, Franck wrote this, his only violin sonata, as a wedding present for him. Ysaÿe premièred it in 1886 in the Modern Art Museum, Brussels.

The *Sonata* begins reflectively with a main theme that grows mainly from rising and falling thirds, an idea from which other themes are developed, and this relationship helps to unify the sonata's overall structure. The piano alone introduces the second subject, which the violin never plays. The brief central section comprises only a modification of the main theme, not a development *per se*. The recapitulation includes both themes. The second movement, in ABABA form, comprises two ideas – an agitated *Scherzo* and a contrastingly rhapsodic *Trio*. The third movement's piano introduction refers back to the first movement's "thirds" idea; after a long violin recitative, the two soloists first alternate and finally present a beautiful melody that builds to a moving conclusion. The finale's main theme is a canon in which each bar is repeated one bar later and one octave higher. The second subject is a recall of the previous movement's main theme. The *Sonata* concludes with a passionate version of the canon and a coda.

Programme note by Ted Wilks, courtesy of Making Music

Do come and join us downstairs after the concert for a cup of tea or coffee

Our next concert

Sunday 26th November 2023, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church

Polish-Welsh-English pianist **Cordelia Williams** (who will be featured each morning this coming week in BBC Radio 4's 'How to Spot Potential') brings us a rich feast of Romantic piano music, including Schubert, Debussy, Brahms and Schumann.

Membership of Seaford Music Society, which grants you free entry to this season's concert series, can be purchased from our Treasurer, Paul Moore, in the foyer at the back of the church. The cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited towards your membership subscription if you join now.

Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society

Receive a £3 discount on your ticket when attending Uckfield Music Club, Haywards Heath Music Society and Nicholas Yonge Society concerts. Simply produce your Seaford Music Society membership card when you pay at the door. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website.

Uckfield Music Club (www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk): tickets £15 instead of £18 (subject to review)

Haywards Heath Music Society (www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk): tickets £12 instead of £15

Nicholas Yonge Society (www.nyslewes.org.uk): tickets £17 instead of £20