

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 24th November 2024 at 3.00 pm

Raphael Wallfisch (cello) and Simon Callaghan (piano)

Raphael Wallfisch is one of the world's most celebrated cellists, renowned for his commitment to exploring and broadening the full range of repertoire for the instrument, and drawing on a rich musical heritage. He was born in London into a family of distinguished musicians, and was inspired at an early age by hearing Zara Nelsova play. He later went on to study in California with Gregor Piatigorsky, who chose him to perform with Jascha Heifetz in the informal recitals at his home. His career was launched at the age of twenty-four, when he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Competition in Florence.

Since then, he has enjoyed a global career, being much loved in his home country – where he has forged close relationships with all the major orchestras – and respected around the world, working with orchestras throughout Europe, and in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and elsewhere. As a soloist and consummate chamber musician he has toured worldwide.

Wallfisch has worked closely with many of Britain's leading composers, many of whom have written works especially for him. The depth of his interest in the repertoire is evidenced by his extensive discography, which explores both the mainstream and countless lesser-known works and includes what is considered the benchmark recording of Martinů concertos with the Czech Philharmonic and Jiří Bělohlávek. He is President of the British Music Society, as well as Professor at the Royal College of Music and International Chair of Violoncello and Chamber Music at Trinity Laban Conservatoire. He plays the 1733 Montagnana "Ex-Romberg" and an exquisite modern cello built for him by Patrick Robin.

Simon Callaghan performs internationally as a soloist and chamber musician, in parallel with a highly successful career as a recording artist. He appears on a regular basis in the UK's major concert halls, and on tours to Asia, North America and Europe. BBC Young Musician of the Year Finalist Coco Tomita and Callaghan have a successful duo partnership, which saw their first record released in 2022. He is a founding member of the London Piano Quartet, joining colleagues from the renowned Piatti Quartet to showcase the repertoire for piano quartet with a particular focus on reviving works that have fallen into obscurity.

Simon's distinguished and eclectic discography includes recordings for Hyperion, Nimbus and Lyrita. He has a strong profile on BBC Radio 3 and on a variety of streaming platforms, his most recent single on Apple Music with Coco Tomita surpassing 1 million streams in the first month of its release. His broad repertoire encompasses the standard works of the 19th and 20th centuries and increasingly concentrates on much that is little known. A cornerstone of his work is his commitment to British music, and he has begun a series on Lyrita, recording world premieres of British concertos with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Callaghan's reputation and experience in chamber music led to his appointment as Artistic Director at London's Conway Hall, only the sixth incumbent since the founding of the series in 1887. He is Professor of Piano at the Royal Northern College of Music, and was elected a Steinway Artist in 2012.



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

The Society gratefully acknowledges the receipt of a generous donation, from a member who wishes to remain anonymous, towards the cost of the hire of the piano for this concert

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Adagio and Allegro, Op.70

The *Adagio and Allegro in A flat* was originally written for French horn and piano, although it was not an entirely new piece, being an alternative version of an earlier one, the *Romance and Allegro* for horn and piano. "It is a magnificent piece, fresh and passionate, just what I like", wrote Clara Schumann in her diary, after hearing a performance by the Dresden horn player Schitterlau. There are versions for violin and oboe, and for cello and piano, this being the version we shall hear today.

The *Adagio*, deeply felt, sounds particularly well on the cello. The lively *Allegro* begins with an exciting fanfare, and this is followed by a calmer middle section using themes from the *Adagio*, before an exhilarating finish.

Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Cello Sonata in G minor, Op.65

- I *Allegro moderato*
- II *Scherzo: Allegro con brio*
- III *Largo*
- IV *Finale: Allegro*

Chopin's influence on later romantic composers was immense, and in the context of the cello one may cite the example of how the 35-year-old Chopin provided inspiration over half a century later to the 28-year-old Rachmaninov, a composer whose output (like Chopin's) centred round the piano. An interesting feature which Chopin and Rachmaninov have in common is the virtual absence of chamber music in their creative lives; there is also the fact (which may be no more than a coincidence) that the last chamber work each of them wrote was a cello sonata. In Chopin's case, the *Cello Sonata* and an early *Piano Trio*, were his only significant contributions to the form.

The *Sonata* was conceived in the atmosphere of his acrimonious affair with the writer George Sand and his struggle against tuberculosis. It is one of his last works, written with the help of his friend, the cellist Auguste-Joseph Franchomme (1808-84), to whom it is dedicated. Together they gave a private première of the *Sonata* in 1847, and on 16th February 1848 they performed the last three movements at the Salle Pleyel. It was to be Chopin's last public concert appearance in Paris, although others were to follow during his ill-fated tour of England and Scotland later that year. He died in Paris in October 1849.

Chopin conceived all his music in terms of the keyboard, and the success of the *Cello Sonata* as a work must reflect, at least in part, Franchomme's expert guidance, especially in the string writing. The work is a consolidation of a lifetime's experience, drawing on styles which Chopin had developed through the piano concertos and sonatas and other larger-scale works for solo piano. It lacks the innovative approach, however, of other late works of his; he was too ill and tired while he was writing it to wrestle with new musical forms or language. As a result, the work has been criticised for being backward-looking, even Germanic, in style; it has also been criticised for over-elaborate piano writing, which threatens to upset the balance between the players. Nevertheless, there is much to be admired in this work of almost autumnal beauty.

The piano introduction to the first movement recalls the orchestral introductions to the two piano concertos, but what follows illustrates the subtlety and inventiveness of Chopin's keyboard writing. The *Scherzo* has surprising vigour, which calls for a light touch from the cellist in order to bring out the vitality of the movement. The *Largo*, on the other hand, is a movement of sublime tranquillity, which recalls the language of the *Nocturnes* and of Chopin's Polish heritage. The breadth and richness of the *Finale* bring the *Sonata* to a close in great style.

INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church, and downstairs via the stairs beside the stage. **No refreshments will be served during the interval, but we warmly invite you to join us downstairs for tea, coffee and biscuits after the concert ends.**

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Two Pieces, Op.2

- I *Prélude*
- II *Danse Orientale*

Rachmaninov was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor. He is widely considered one of the finest pianists of his day and, as a composer, one of the last great representatives of Romanticism in Russian classical music. Early influences of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and other Russian composers gave way to a thoroughly personal idiom that included a pronounced lyricism, expressive breadth, structural ingenuity and a tonal palette of rich, distinctive orchestral colours. The piano is featured prominently in his compositional output. He made a point of using his own skills as a performer to explore fully the expressive possibilities of the instrument. Even in his earliest works he revealed a sure grasp of idiomatic piano writing and a striking gift for melody.

Rachmaninov's Op.2 Pieces for cello and piano, which were among the first of his works to be published by Gutheil, comprise a new version of the earlier F major piano *Prélude*, and a *Danse Orientale*. The *Prélude* retains F major as its key and begins at once with the cello's statement of the main theme, accompanied chordally by the piano. A restatement, slightly more elaborate, follows, leading to a faster section in which the piano assumes greater importance, although both instruments are fully utilised. A strongly varied recapitulation of the opening theme, with the piano more assertive – though still in accompanying mode – brings the *Prélude* to a quiet ending. The succeeding *Danse Orientale*, in A minor, is more fluidly constructed, with a characteristic opening theme that is subjected to a variable state of flux in its working, but always returning to A minor. The quiet pizzicato ending is another characteristic touch.

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Cello Sonata no.2 in G minor, Op.5, No.2

- I *Adagio sostenuto e espressivo – Allegro molto più tosto presto*
- II *Rondo: Allegro*

Over an extended period, Beethoven wrote five sonatas for cello and piano. The two of Opus 5 were written for Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia and were presented during a visit Beethoven made to the court in Berlin in 1796. Although the King was an able and enthusiastic cellist himself, it seems likely that it was the resident court player, Jean-Louis Duport, who joined Beethoven in giving the first performance. In return, the composer received a gold snuff box "fit for an ambassador and filled with *louis d'or*".

Perhaps fully aware that the King would not be satisfied with taking a secondary place when he played the sonatas himself, Beethoven ensured that the cello was not overshadowed, releasing it from its long-accepted role as a reinforcement of the *continuo*. As a result, these became the first real duos for cello and piano where the instruments were equal partners. In fact they provide showpieces for the cello, and breathing spaces were left in the piano part in order to exploit both the bass sonority and the high melodic register of the instrument, for which the music lies perfectly.

The *G minor Sonata*, like its partner, is basically in two movements, with a more expansive slow introduction to the first than in its companion piece. The *Adagio* leads into an extended *Allegro* in sonata form. The disturbed minor key drive of this movement is followed by a spacious and witty G major finale.

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

Our forthcoming concerts

Sunday 9th February 2025, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford

One of the highlights of our season, the annual visit from the **London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble**. Joined this year by **Tim Lines** on clarinet and bass clarinet, they will be performing works by Mozart, York Bowen and Brahms.

Sunday 16th March 2025, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford

A step back in time to the Baroque period, when **Trio La Follia** (violin, cello and harpsichord) offer us a rich variety of music by Handel, Telemann, Corelli and Jean-Marie Leclair.

Membership of the Society grants you free entry to these and all the remaining concerts this season without additional charge. Children and young adults (under 26) may also attend without charge (children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult). If you are not a member and would like to join, see our Treasurer, Paul Moore, at the desk in the entrance foyer. The cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited to the cost of your annual membership subscription.

Single-concert tickets for non-members cost £20, and can be purchased in advance from Newberry Tully Estate Agents in Church Street; Seaford Tourist Information Centre; online through TicketSource; or from our Treasurer, Paul Moore.

Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society

Members may bring one guest to any of the concerts in our 2024-25 season of concerts, at a reduction of £3 off the single-ticket price, subject to the concert not having sold out.

On presentation of their current membership card, members may also enjoy the following benefits:

- A reduced price of £14 at any Haywards Heath Music Society concert in their 2024-25 season
- A reduced price of £17 at any Nicholas Yonge Society concert in their 2024-25 season
- A discount of £3 off the price of any Uckfield Music Club concert in their 2025 season (exact price to be confirmed)
- A discount of £2 off the price of any concert at the 2025 Lewes Festival of Song (subject to confirmation)

Tickets at these reduced prices are available at the door, on concert days only. Details of any reciprocal benefits that other organisations may make available will be published as soon as they are known.

Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website:

Uckfield Music Club:	www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk
Haywards Heath Music Society:	www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk
Nicholas Yonge Society:	www.nyslewes.org.uk
Lewes Festival of Song:	www.lewesfestivalofsong.co.uk