

# Seaford Music Society

## Grand Concert

at the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022, at 3.00 pm

### Howard Shelley OBE (piano) and the London Mozart Players

Ruth Rogers (LMP Leader)	<i>Violin</i>
Meghan Cassidy	<i>Viola</i>
Sebastian Comberti	<i>Cello</i>
Benjamin Russell	<i>Double bass</i>

Since his acclaimed London debut in 1971, **Howard Shelley** has enjoyed a distinguished career as pianist, conductor and recording artist, performing with renowned orchestras around the world. His discography now exceeds 180 CDs, all highly praised. Most of his current work is in the combined role of conductor and soloist. As conductor he has worked with all the major London orchestras and many other orchestras in the UK and abroad, including Hong Kong, Singapore, USA, Mexico and Germany. He has toured to Australia for over thirty consecutive years, and performs now as both conductor and soloist with the Melbourne Symphony, Adelaide Symphony and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras: with the latter he has recorded twenty-one volumes (and rising) for Hyperion's Romantic Piano series.

Howard has a special relationship with the London Mozart Players, with whom he has worked closely for over 45 years. They have given hundreds of concerts together and made many recordings and overseas tours. A mutual respect and joy in music-making have kept their partnership fresh and alive, and, in recognition of this, the orchestra appointed Howard their Conductor Laureate. In March 2020, just before the pandemic struck, to mark Howard's 70th birthday he performed all Beethoven's piano concertos with LMP in a single day at St John's Smith Square, London.

An Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Music, in 2009 Howard was awarded an OBE for his services to classical music.

**Ruth Rogers** studied with Itzhak Rashkovsky and Herman Krebbers. She graduated from the Royal College of Music in 2001 and was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal, the college's highest accolade. Described as "the finest of the younger generation of violinists" (*Musical Opinion*) and hailed by the *Guardian* as "superb", Ruth is in demand as soloist, leader and chamber musician.

She has an impressive list of awards and has performed as a soloist at such prestigious venues as the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and St John's Smith Square. Ruth has appeared in concert alongside distinguished performers including Ida Haendel and John Lill, and has led orchestras under the batons of Lorin Maazel and Colin Davis. She was Co-Leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 2008 until 2012, and appears as a guest leader of many other orchestras including the BBC Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. She has also appeared in Principal roles with the Hallé, English Chamber Orchestra and London Chamber Orchestra.



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Ruth has played concertos with the City of London Sinfonia, the City of Oxford Orchestra and London Strings, plays regularly with the Iuventus Quartet and Aquinas Piano Trio, and has appeared at the Wigmore Hall with the Nash Ensemble. She has played to orphans, landmine victims and malaria patients in refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

**Meghan Cassidy** studied the viola with Garfield Jackson at the Royal Academy of Music, where she graduated in 2010, and was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2019. During her time at the Academy she won the Sydney Griller Award and Sir John Barbirolli Memorial Prize. She continued her studies with Tatjana Masurenko (Leipzig), Nabuko Imai (Hamburg) and Hartmut Rohde at IMS Prussia Cove.

In 2007 Meghan joined the Solstice Quartet, who went on to win awards from the Tillett Trust and Park Lane Group in 2008 and then the Royal Overseas League in 2009. With the Solstice Quartet, Meghan has performed at the Wigmore Hall and QEH as well as live on BBC Radio 3. As a sought-after chamber musician she has performed at Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival (Finland), Oxford May Music Festival, Oxford Chamber Music Festival, SoNoRo Festival (Bucharest) North Yorkshire Moors Chamber Music Festival, Stift International Music Festival (Netherlands), and the Monte Piano Trio's Chamber Music Festival in Sylt (Germany). Meghan has collaborated with the London Conchord Ensemble, Ensemble Midvest, Monte Piano Trio and Fidelio Piano Trio, performing in London, Dublin, Frankfurt and Denmark. She has appeared as Guest Principal Viola with orchestras such as BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera North and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Meghan is founder and Artistic Director of the Marylebone Music Festival, which will be in its seventh season in June 2022. The Festival has raised over £31,000 for charity, and in June 2020 released an album with Air-Edel Records, 'Songs from the Marylebone Pleasure Gardens'.

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 he became principal cello with the London Mozart Players, with whom he has appeared frequently 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 of London's 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 led to several recitals being recorded by the BBC.

As soloist for the CPO record label he has recorded four CDs of the Sinfonia Concertantes of JC Bach, while with other chamber groups he has recorded for CRD, EMI, Harmonia Mundi, Hyperion, Meridian, Phoenix and RCA. In 2001 Sebastian founded Cello Classics, a label devoted to recordings of rare repertoire and artists, for which he has himself released CDs of hitherto unknown sonatas by Boccherini, quartets for four cellos, early 19th century sonatas with fortepiano, and discs of sonatas by Stephen Paxton and concertos by Haydn and Zumsteeg with the OAE.

**Benjamin Russell** grew up in South London and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Thomas Martin and Stephen Williams. As well as his recent appointment with LMP, Benjamin is also a member of the Britten Sinfonia with whom he regularly plays as principal bass. He is also a regular guest principal of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and City of London Sinfonia. He has recorded for various pop artists including Ed Sheeran and Snow Patrol, as well as playing for television and film soundtracks. As a chamber musician Benjamin has performed with the Allegri Quartet, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble, London Winds and the Haffner Wind Ensemble, as well as performing at the Plush, Latitude and Leicester International Music Festivals.

## Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

### Piano Quartet No.2 in E-flat major, K.493

- I *Allegro*
- II *Larghetto*
- III *Allegretto*

Typically of Mozart in E-flat, the Quartet K.493 is a mellow and genial work, with something of the relaxed grandeur of the recently composed E-flat Piano Concerto, K.482. As in the concerto, the first movement has an almost reckless profusion of lyrical themes, which expand and proliferate at leisure. Most pervasive and influential is the theme that establishes the dominant key, B-flat, initiated by the piano and immediately echoed by the violin. This idea fertilises the whole of the widely modulating development (moving from B-flat minor and D-flat major as far afield as D minor), where strings engage in close imitative dialogue against a background of rapid keyboard scales and arpeggios. When this theme reappears in the recapitulation on violin and viola, with the cello following in imitation, it again starts in B-flat – all wrong for this point in the movement – before the piano smoothly restores the home key of E-flat. This ‘wrong key’ entry in the recapitulation demands a resolution in the coda, where the strings reiterate the theme in three-part canon with the simplest tonic and dominant harmony.

The A-flat Larghetto, in full sonata form, has a warmth and chromatic richness, with an impassioned development that begins with a dramatic re-interpretation of the opening phrase – a moment echoed, with another new twist, at the start of the coda. The Allegretto finale begins with a gavotte-like theme, and there is an abundance of graceful and piquant melody, though the movement’s chief protagonist is an idea that at first seems to be merely transitional: a brusque unison for the three strings answered by a pleading syncopated phrase on the piano. This idea is rarely absent for long, chromatically expanded just before the initial return of the main theme and, in an echo of the first movement, sounded in close canonic imitation in the coda.

*from notes by Richard Wigmore © 2003*

## Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

### String Trio in D major, Op.9, No.2

- I *Allegretto*
- II *Andante quasi allegretto*
- III *Menuetto – Allegro*
- IV *Rondo – Allegro con spirito*

In early 1798, when Beethoven composed his three string trios, Op. 9, he was still in the process of consolidating his reputation in Vienna. He had already made a name for himself in several of the city’s leading aristocratic salons as a virtuoso pianist, playing his own music and improvising, and three concerts at the Burgtheater in 1795 had introduced him to a wider audience. Building on his successes in Vienna, Beethoven began to tour during this period, visiting Prague, Dresden, Berlin, Pressburg, and Pest (before its unification with Buda) in 1796.

It was hard, though, for the young composer to escape the shadow of Mozart and Haydn. Although he had died in 1791, Mozart was more popular than ever in the 1790s. His Divertimento, K.563, for string trio (violin, viola, and cello) was published in 1792 and doubtless provided a model for Beethoven’s trios. Meanwhile, Haydn – with whom Beethoven had studied for at least a year after arriving in Vienna in November 1792 – was still very much alive. Many commentators have pointed to Haydn’s achievements in his symphonies and string quartets as inhibiting and delaying Beethoven’s forays into those genres,

certainly a viable explanation for the younger composer's focus on the piano sonata and other types of chamber music, such as the string trio, during the 1790s.

The second trio from the Op. 9 set is in four movements, a layout it shares with Haydn's quartets and symphonies. The violin dominates the trio, and the part may have been intended for Ignaz Schuppanzigh, a gifted player who collaborated frequently with Beethoven. The opening Allegretto is marked by a strongly lyrical impulse in the writing for the violinist, but the incessant accompaniment lends the movement a restless atmosphere. The second movement, with its flowing 6/8 rhythm and its minor mode, has the feeling of an arcane dance. A lively minuet reminds the listener that Beethoven would soon abandon this courtly dance in favour of the more vigorous Scherzo. In the Rondo finale, Beethoven assigns the main theme to the cello, but the violin claims it by the end.

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### INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

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## Johann Nepomuk HUMMEL (1778-1837)

### Piano Quintet in E-flat minor, Op.87

- I *Allegro e risoluto assai*
- II *Minuet and Trio: Allegro con fuoco*
- III *Largo*
- IV *Finale: Allegro agitato*

Hummel's music may not be widely familiar today, but during his lifetime he was one of the brightest stars in Europe's musical firmament – a virtuoso pianist whose fame rivalled Beethoven's, and a celebrated composer who influenced a generation of Romantic composers. Hummel began attracting attention as a young child. When he was eight, Mozart heard him play and agreed to take him on as a pupil, free of charge. Two years later, at Mozart's suggestion, he and his father began a grand tour of Europe that lasted four years and cemented his reputation as a prodigy. Back home in Vienna, he spent several years studying composition and vying with Beethoven for the title of Vienna's greatest virtuoso and composer.

Hummel served as music director at various courts, including Esterházy (with Haydn's blessing) and Weimar. He devoted much of his time to teaching Europe's leading pianists, to performing, and to composing music that many considered comparable to Beethoven's. He was Chopin's early muse, whilst Liszt admired him enormously and played two of Hummel's concertos on his debut tour. Schubert planned to dedicate his last three piano sonatas to Hummel, and wrote his "Trout" Quintet at the request of a patron who wanted a work with the same combination of instruments as Hummel's Piano Quintet.

Hummel's music was a bridge between Mozart's Classicism and the emerging Romantic age. His work is marked by melodiousness, lavish embellishments, interesting harmonic colours and sonorities, and pianistic fireworks, all wrapped up in Viennese charm and grace. The fun begins with the sonata-form Allegro, which opens with a declamatory four-note motif on which the entire first movement is built. There is a lyrical second theme, a stormy, harmonically adventurous development, and a recapitulation that introduces some new ideas. Throughout, Hummel creates washes of piano colour with triplets, arpeggios and rapid, irregularly grouped runs. The second-movement Menuetto – which is really more like a scherzo – is playfully gruff, with its bite softened by the violin's whimsical turns and by a trio that is all scalar lightness. The piano is at its most lyrical in the brief Largo that serves as an introduction to a rousing Finale, an entertaining combination of mania and flowing song, as the piano drives the music at a breathless pace.