

BRILLIANT YOUNG INTERNATIONAL MUSICIANS IN SAINT PETER'S CHURCH

SUNDAY 1st MARCH 2020

JOHANNA ROEHRIG (violin) and CAMERON RICHARDSON-EAMES (piano)



Once again a large audience were treated to a spectacular performance of some very diverse and demanding music for violin and piano.

Johanna Roehrig was born in Hamburg and began to play the violin when she was six and she is now studying for her Master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She has won prizes in several of the European competitions and, since 2016 has an impressive history as soloist with a variety of European orchestras and as a recitalist in numerous European countries. Tonight, she was accompanied by Cameron Richardson-Eames, whom Johanna first met at the Royal Academy and with whom she had developed a close musical partnership. Cameron was a choral scholar at Cambridge where, after graduating with a first class honours degree in music, he remained for three years teaching within the musical faculty. Trained initially as a tenor Cameron has developed a career as an accompanist. Being a man of many parts he has worked as a vocal coach and a staff pianist at the Juilliard School in New York and is currently a Fellow of Trinity College London specialising in piano performance.

The concert opened with **Mozart's Sonata for violin and piano No 32**. It is a lovely and uplifting piece. After a reflective opening both instrumentalists burst into a cheerful and sonorous allegro,

with a lovely melody bounced between the two. The second movement, a more gentle andante, was played with tenderness and grace while the work finishes with a bustling and cheerful allegretto. It was played with style and feeling and the empathy between the two performers very clear for all to see.

Dvorak's Romance for Violin and Orchestra Opus 11, originally written for violin and orchestra is very well known. In this performance the orchestra part had been transcribed for piano. It a graceful and gentle work, lovingly and tenderly played. The introductory bars before the arrival of the violin were mesmeric, so delicately played, setting the mood for the remainder of the work. Johanna captured the reflective mood, and highlighted the periodic, more agitated moments before returning to the flowing languid melody so reminiscent of a gentle rustic dance.

E. Ysaye was a 19th century Belgian violinist of immense reputation. He was a fervent admirer of JS Bach, whose six solo partitas for violin Ysaye much admired. He too wrote six works for solo violin, each dedicated to one of his musical friends. **Number 3 in D Minor**, the one played tonight, was dedicated to Georges Enescu and is prefaced simply as 'Ballade'. It is a dazzling work, hugely complex and virtuosic. One contemporary violinist described it as 'horrifying dazzling and inspiring'. All three words suited this performance too, played as required by the composer 'con bravura'.

The second half began with the Czech composer **Janacek's Sonata for Violin and Piano**. Like his hero and compatriot Dvorak, Janacek was an early advocate of folk music as an inspiration for his music. Written in the weeks immediately before the outbreak of WW1, Janacek gives vent to his personal and 'political' anxieties. An opening clarion call on the violin, like a 'call to arms' opens the work and a rumbling piano accompaniment underlays a violin part dominated by frequent interjections of a cluster of three notes, sometimes distant and sometimes very immediate. A much calmer second movement incorporates a lively melody, folkloric in its mood. However, the remaining two movements are again very agitated, frequent interjections interrupting quieter interludes and, in the allegro, a lovely melody played over rippling chords on the piano. The sense of foreboding, the tension and, perhaps even the anger were beautifully illustrated by the two performers. Of this work Janacek wrote 'I could hear the sound of the steel clashing in my troubled mind'. You could indeed

Toru Takemitsu, who died in 1996, was the first Japanese composer to gain widespread recognition in the west. He combined something of his native Japanese background with contemporary western music composers such as Messiaen to create 'a sea of music'. This work, **Distance de fee**, is remarkable. It has a profound stillness about it, where the silences are almost as important as the music itself. The piano provides clusters of chords around which the violin weaves a gossamer thread. It was exquisitely played, with Johanna demonstrating such skill and control over some complex phrasing and very high notes indeed. It is not an easy work to absorb, but both players seemed at one with their interpretation.

The concert finished with **Ravel's Tzigane**. What a work and what a performance! The work was written in 1924 for the Hungarian virtuoso violinist, Jelly d'Aranyi. The word Tzigane means gypsy and the gypsy style had become a very popular musical idiom in the early years of the 20th century. This work is replete with the smoky passionate atmosphere of European gypsy music making, not least in the very opening, where the solo violin creates the sultry and carnal atmosphere. The whole work is one vibrant and passionate duet between the piano and the violin. The intensity of the work increases and the violin playing more frantic, with notes played at the extreme top of the

violin's register. It was a brilliant performance, full of colour and atmosphere and a real test of this pair's musical abilities. It does not come better than this and the audience responded rapturously.

We were sent on our way on a rather calmer note **Après un reve**, one of Faure's best known songs, was here performed by violin, rather than voice. It was just what we needed 'Après la tempete' of the Ravel! By popular acclaim it was one of the best recitals we have had in Saint Peter's. Hopefully they will return soon.