

RIPON CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion



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Marlborough String Quartet with Anna Tilbrook (piano)

Sponsored by Property Maintenance Yorkshire

Monday 11 October 2021, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Patron: Julius Drake

Welcome

Welcome back to Ripon Concerts and to the first of our six concerts of the 2021-22 season. It seems a very long time since our last concert in March 2020!

This has been a very challenging time for musicians, many of whom have been unable to perform anywhere, let alone in front of a live audience, for many months. Ensemble practice using platforms such as Zoom has been a poor substitute for the real thing.

Such has been their resilience, however, that they have kept going and all the musicians we had to cancel last season have been rescheduled and cannot wait to perform for us this season. It is a great joy to welcome them back. The prolonged absence from the concert platform has inevitably meant some changes in their programmes, some at the last moment. We crave your patience and indulgence if you do not always hear what you were expecting to hear.

Many young musicians have fallen through the net of government support schemes and have needed help from charitable organisations, such as such as Help Musicians, who have provided £17m from their crisis hardship fund for 21,000 musicians during this difficult time.

The pandemic has also had huge implications for concert promoters. We have done a comprehensive risk assessment so that the concerts can be as safe as possible for everyone. We appreciate that some of our audience will still be very anxious about attending and we ask that we all consider each other's welfare and peace of mind.

Covid restrictions inevitably make for smaller audiences, which puts a huge strain on our budget. We are therefore very grateful to all our sponsors, to members who have made a donation to the society, and to our programme advertisers.

We hope gradually to reinstate interval refreshments, book and CD sales as the season progresses and mingling at events becomes safer.

Please make a note of the dates of all our other concerts and come to them all. You will be richly rewarded by the variety of music on offer and the excellence of the performers. Meanwhile please enjoy this evening's concert.

Roger Higson, Chairman

Monday 11 October 2021 | Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Czech delights and a Mozart surprise

Anna Tilbrook – Piano
Elise Batnes – First Violin
Ellie Fagg – Second Violin
Philip Dukes – Viola
Louisa Tuck – Cello

Programme

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Piano Quartet in A minor

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 12 K.414

(1756–1791)

Allegro • Andante • Allegretto

– interval (no refreshments) –

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major,
Burghauser (B.) 155 (Opus 81)

Allegro ma non tanto

Dumka: Andante con moto (alternating with other tempi)

Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace; Poco tranquillo; Molto vivace

Finale: Allegro

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About the music

Mahler: Piano Quartet in A minor

Mahler combined the careers of conductor and composer with great effectiveness. During his maturity, sustained composing typically occurred during the summer, between seasons of the Vienna State Opera (to use present-day terminology), of which he was the music director. Such concentrated episodes of summer composing – typically in a hut in the Austrian countryside – enabled Mahler to write several of the massive symphonies that, along with song-cycles, are his principal legacy.

The piano quartet on today's programme is an accomplished early work, dating from 1876, when Mahler was a student at the Vienna Conservatory of Music. The piece nowadays consists of one movement, marked *Nicht zu Schnell* (not too fast); whether additional movements were intended is not entirely clear. To put this early Mahler work in chronological perspective, it was written in the year that Brahms completed his Symphony No. 1 and Bruckner finished the draft score of his Symphony No. 5; both of these older masters had some 20 years of compositional activity ahead of them in 1876.

The piano quartet attests to a high level of technical skill; the 15- or 16-year-old composer is already able to think on a large scale, constructing an extended movement in sonata form (a tripartite structure of exposition, development, and recapitulation), and handling harmony and key changes in a confident and effective way. It begins with the piano alone, after which the strings (violin, viola, and 'cello) enter the texture. At the end of the movement, the strings play pizzicato.

Reportedly, this work was first performed in 1876, with Mahler playing the piano part. The composer's manuscript of this piece was allegedly rediscovered in the 1960s by Alma Mahler/Gropius/Werfel (1879–1964; married to several prominent individuals, of whom Mahler was the first, as well as an interesting person in her own right). Early modern performances included one in New York City (February 1964), and one at the Purcell Room in the South Bank concert hall complex in London (June 1968). The work was published in 1973.

Mahler's premature death, at the age of 50, was the result of bacterial endocarditis affecting a heart valve presumably damaged by previous rheumatic fever. Nowadays, he would have been a candidate for antibiotic treatment and heart valve replacement.

Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 12, in A major, Köchel (K.) 414 (chamber version)

After taking the risky step of severing his professional ties with Salzburg in the spring of 1781 (where he had a guaranteed income as a court musician), Mozart gradually established himself as a freelance composer and keyboard virtuoso in Vienna. This career rupture, though understandably distressing to the composer's father, Leopold Mozart, actually cemented Wolfgang's stature as a leading composer - the pieces dating from his final decade (1781–1791) include many of his greatest works, in all major genres – operas, symphonies, concertos, chamber works, pieces for solo keyboard, and non-operatic vocal/choral works. A factor in Mozart's maturation in Vienna appears to have been his contact with Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) in the 1780s. As a well-established, emotionally stable, senior figure,

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Haydn was undoubtedly a professional exemplar for the considerably younger Mozart, much as he was, a decade later (after Mozart's death), for the young Beethoven (with the addition of lessons in counterpoint for Beethoven, which, at least from 1770 onwards, Mozart did not need).

Before his Vienna decade, Mozart had already written several concertos for harpsichord or fortepiano and orchestra – notably the impressive E flat major 'Jenamy' concerto of 1777 (K. 271; known as No. 9 – the standard numbers for Mozart's keyboard concertos include four early arrangements dating from 1767, of works by other composers, made by the 11-year-old Wolfgang). The spectacular series of fully mature Mozart fortepiano concertos (Nos. 14–27) dates from 1784–1791. During his second year in Vienna (1782/3), Mozart wrote three keyboard concertos (Nos. 11–13) scored for fortepiano and a modest orchestra of strings, oboes and horns (with bassoons in Nos. 11 and 13, and trumpets and timpani in No. 13). Omission of the wind instruments in these three concertos (and, parenthetically, in No. 14) does not significantly affect the musical content, with the result that they can be performed as chamber works with a string ensemble (as in today's performance), a situation intended by the composer, perhaps with a view to encouraging purchase of the sheet music for home performance by accomplished amateur musicians in Vienna and elsewhere.

Less extraverted and virtuosic than Mozart's later A major fortepiano concerto of 1786 with clarinets (K. 488; No. 23), the concerto on today's programme is an intimate, though substantial, work with memorable ideas, comprising two outer movements

in A major and a central slow movement in D major. Although all three movements are in major keys, the first two movements each have a dark central section involving considerable use of minor keys. The central section of the last movement includes a thematic idea stylistically reminiscent of comic opera – a reminder, perhaps, that by the time of this concerto, Mozart had already had one major success in Vienna, in the form of his 'Turkish' opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* ("The Abduction from the Seraglio"). The second movement of the concerto begins with a theme reportedly identical to an idea in an Italian opera by Johann Christian Bach (youngest son of J. S. Bach), whom the Mozart family had met during a year which they spent in London during Wolfgang's childhood, in the mid-1760s, and whom Wolfgang met again in Paris in 1778). J. C. Bach had died in London at the age of 46 (on January the 1st, 1782), and Mozart's respect for him is evident in a letter that Wolfgang wrote to Leopold Mozart, describing J. C. Bach's premature death as a "loss to the musical world". Any connection between this death and the J. C. Bach quotation in K. 414 would, however, be speculative.

Dvořák: Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Burghauer (B.) 155 (Opus 81)

Before achieving success and prominence as a composer, Dvořák was a professional violist, and had also worked as an organist. Chamber music looms large in Dvořák's *oeuvre*, and includes 14 string quartets, three string quintets, two piano quintets, two piano quartets, a string sextet, four surviving piano trios, and other works, including a Terzetto for two violins and viola. Along with his substantial output of

chamber music and purely orchestral works (notably his nine symphonies), Dvořák was a productive composer of operas. Indeed, his last major work is an opera (*Armida*; dating from 1902–3). Perhaps because their libretti are in Czech, Dvořák's operas have been performed relatively infrequently outside Czech-speaking locales (apart from *Rusalka*, his penultimate work in this genre, which dates from 1900 and remains the composer's best-known opera).

The impetus to write the second piano quintet, one of the finest of Dvořák's works, and one of the peaks of the piano quintet literature altogether, came initially from the composer's decision to revise an earlier work in the same key, for the same combination of instruments. The piano quintet No. 1 had been written in 1872 and had received at least one performance at around that time. Dvořák was dissatisfied with that early work, however, and continued to have reservations about the revised version (dating from 1887), which was first performed in 1922 and published in 1959. Also in 1887, Dvořák wrote the second piano quintet, an entirely new work with no discernible thematic overlap with the earlier piece. By the late 1880s, Dvořák was a well-established and mature composer with numerous works – including seven symphonies and several operas – to his credit.

Much or all of the second piano quintet was written at Vysoká, a community in the Czech countryside some 50 kilometres southwest of Prague, in a house where Dvořák wrote many of his mature works.

A prominent feature of the second piano quintet is that it veers repeatedly between major and minor keys. This aspect is

exemplified by the first movement, a sonata-form structure that is characterised by frequent key changes. After two bars on the piano alone, the 'cello presents a lyrical theme in A major, and the rest of the strings then join the texture in a stormy plunge into A minor. A second main theme in C sharp minor, stylistically reminiscent of Brahms, is later presented on the viola during the exposition of this movement. Major/minor key juxtapositions continue during the development section. At the start of the recapitulation, A major is re-established, followed by a revisitation of the plunge into A minor mentioned earlier. The second main theme then reappears, this time presented on the 'cello in F sharp minor, and the movement ends assertively in A major.

The second movement comprises alternating slow (minor key) and fast (principally major key) sections. The term 'Dumka', of Ukrainian origin, refers to an epic ballad, and (in art music) is typified by 'melancholic/cheerful' alternations. This term is also used as the title for another of Dvořák's chamber works, the 'Dumky' (plural of 'Dumka') piano trio, which comprises six movements in 'Dumka' form. Centred in F sharp minor, the second movement of the piano quintet on today's programme begins with a 'melancholic/yearning' section in that key, in which the main theme is presented on the viola. A subsequent switch to D major brings faster, 'cheerful', music, and extensive use of pizzicato. As the movement proceeds, the slow F sharp minor music is revisited, and there is also a livelier section with dotted rhythms in this same minor key. A shift into F sharp major and 'cello pizzicato provides contrast, before the movement



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ends in F sharp minor, with the viola again prominent.

In the third movement, two fast A major Scherzo sections flank a slower central section in F major. The term 'Furiant' refers to a Czech folk-dance in which there are alternating rhythmic units of 3 beats and 2 beats (although this is not a conspicuous feature of the present movement). The scherzo (3rd movement) of the Symphony No. 6 in D major is another example of a *furiant* by Dvořák, and does exemplify the alternation of 3 and 2 beats just mentioned. In the scherzo of the second piano quintet, the 'cello and viola again occupy a soloistic role. The exuberant, upwardly-trending first theme of the scherzo makes way for a lyrical idea presented on the 'cello. During the contemplative central section, thematic material from the scherzo section is revisited, and there is a relatively slow chorale-like idea before the scherzo section is repeated, bringing the movement to a close in A major.

The large-scale finale, like the first movement, is in sonata form. After some introductory bars, a 'first subject' in A major is presented, which – true to the spirit of the whole quintet – soon veers into F sharp minor. An ethereal 'second subject' in E major likewise shifts into C sharp minor. In the substantial development section, fluid shifts of key and major/minor alternations continue, and there is also a fugue-like (fugato) section before an 'escape' into A major. The 'ethereal' idea returns, less ethereally than heretofore, and a slow, 'rapt' section then supervenes, followed by an accelerando leading to a decisive conclusion in A major.

One of the factors in Dvořák's success was the publication of his works by a major

German publisher, Simrock, after Brahms had recommended works by Dvořák to this publisher. Although Dvořák no doubt recognised the value of this association, he was understandably irritated by Simrock's reluctance to use his Czech first name (Antonín), rather than the 'Germanised' version, "Anton". This may be evidence of difficulty experienced by Central European non-German composers in asserting their individuality in a German-dominated environment. Simrock published the second piano quintet in 1888.

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About the musicians

Anna Tilbrook is one of Britain's most exciting pianists, with a considerable reputation in song recitals and chamber music. She made her debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1999 and has since become a regular performer at Europe's major concert halls and festivals.

Anna has collaborated with many leading singers and instrumentalists including James Gilchrist, Lucy Crowe, Sarah Tynan, Barbara Hannigan, Willard White, Ashley Riches, Stephan Loges, Christopher Maltman, Ian Bostridge, Barbara Bonney, Natalie Clein, Nicholas Daniel, Philip Dukes, Guy Johnston, Louisa Tuck and Jack Liebeck. For Welsh National Opera she has accompanied Angela Gheorghiu, José Carreras and Bryn Terfel in televised concerts.

With the distinguished British tenor James Gilchrist she has made acclaimed recordings of 20th-century English song for Linn records, including Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* (a finalist in the Gramophone Awards 2008), the cycles for tenor and piano by Gerald Finzi, songs by Britten and Leighton and the song cycles of Robert Schumann. For Chandos, James and Anna recorded a disc of Songs by Lennox Berkeley and most recently the Songs and Chamber Music of Vaughan Williams with Philip Dukes.

In 2009 they embarked on a series of recordings for Orchid records of the Schubert Song Cycles and their disc of *Die schöne Müllerin* received great critical acclaim and was Editor's Choice in

Gramophone, November 2009. Schubert's *Schwanengesang* along with Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* was released in 2011 and their recording of *Winterreise* was Record of the Week in *The Independent* and was made Recording of the Month in the 2011 Christmas issue of *BBC Music Magazine*.

With String Quartets such as the Carducci, Fitzwilliam, Elias, Coull, Barbirolli and Sacconi, Anna has performed a wide range of chamber music from Mozart's Piano Concertos K414 and K415 to the Piano Quartets and Quintets of Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Shostakovich, Brahms, Elgar, Bridge and Fauré.

Recent engagements have included her Amsterdam Concertgebouw debut with Lucy Crowe, recitals in Carnegie Hall and Wigmore Hall, and appearances at the Edinburgh, Aldeburgh and Cheltenham Festivals. Anna regularly broadcasts for Radio 3 and has also curated a number of series of concerts for them including in 2017 marking Hull as City of Culture with James Gilchrist and the Sacconi Quartet.

Born in Hertfordshire, Anna studied music at York University and at the Royal Academy of Music with Julius Drake, where she was awarded a Fellowship and in 2009 became an Associate. She also won many major international accompaniment prizes including the AESS Blüthner prize and the award for an outstanding woman musician from the ROSL.

Elise Batnes is a Norwegian violinist. Since 2006 she has been leader of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and played as soloist with orchestras throughout Europe. Born in Trondheim, she has been playing the violin since the age of four.

Ellie Fagg led the National Youth Orchestra in 2001 and studied at the Royal College of Music. She has played with The Scottish Ensemble and Aurora Orchestra, toured with the LSO and Puertas String Quartet and is currently a member of the Razumovsky Quartet.

Philip Dukes is recognised as one of the world's leading viola players. His 30-year career has seen him as a concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician. He has appeared with many orchestras worldwide and performed at the BBC Proms five times.

Louisa Tuck was the youngest ever cello section leader in the Royal Northern Sinfonia and since 2015 has been principal cellist in the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. She also plays with Kathryn Tickell in a group which performs a mix of classical and folk music.

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