

RIPON
CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion

Ensemble Kopernikus with Ian Tindale

Schubert, Fauré
and Walton



Monday 10 January 2022, 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Patron: Julius Drake

Welcome

New Year is often a time to take stock, review the challenges ahead and plot a way forwards, which might even be to tread the same well-worn but successful path.

As I write these notes the future of the pandemic remains uncertain. This has a direct bearing on our concert planning – will we still have to plan for reduced income because of smaller audiences? This will have implications for the artists we can afford, and the type of concert we can arrange, e.g. having the piano adds to expense. Should we be promoting and supporting more young artists at the start of their careers?

Another major challenge we face is to recruit more trustees to take the society forward and take on some of the “heavy lifting” in concert organisation. I am convinced that out there are people with energy, enthusiasm and commitment who would find involvement in the running of the society both interesting and rewarding.

Trustees have responsibilities for choosing the season programmes, liaising with artists and agents, managing the finances, marketing and publicity including the website and Facebook, communications with members, data protection, concert management and logistics on concert days and much else.

If you have expertise or are interested to be involved in any of these areas, please contact me personally at a concert, by phone (01765 635244) or by email (r.h.higson@btinternet.com).

Roger Higson, Chairman

Monday 10 January 2022 | Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Schubert, Fauré and Walton

Kasia Ziminska – Violin
Otoha Tabata – Viola
Alice Purton – Cello
Ian Tindale – Piano

Programme

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) Violin Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 13
Allegro molto
Andante
Allegro vivo
Allegro quasi presto

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Adagio in E-flat, D897

– interval (no refreshments) –

Gabriel Fauré Sicilienne
Élégie
Papillon

William Walton (1902–1983) Piano Quartet in D minor
Allegramente
Allegro scherzando
Andante tranquillo
Allegro molto



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About the music

Gabriel Fauré was a relatively unknown thirty-something composer in mid-1870s Paris when he started work on his *First Violin Sonata*. A fruitful vacation in the summer of 1875 resulted in the completion of this work while he was staying with a family also hosting the Belgian virtuoso violinist Hubert Léonard, a handy guinea pig for the music flying from Fauré's pen. Though the sonata was initially received with uncertainty by audiences and publishers, his mentor and colleague Camille Saint-Saëns helped further the cause of sonata and composer alike. Despite being traditionally constructed and relying on sonata form for the structure of three of its four movements, the piece is clear evidence that Fauré is already demonstrating the daring harmonies, chromatic shifts and experimental phrasing that would become a hallmark of his style in the coming fifty years of his career.

The first movement begins with an impetuous, sweeping piano solo before the violin enters in a surprisingly understated manner. A close partnership between the material shared between the two instruments is soon established, however, and they pass this lyrical but often chromatic material between them or respond to each other with new ideas. The movement unfolds organically with unstoppable energy, and the moment when the violin joins the piano in the recapitulation of the glorious music from the very beginning is truly ecstatic. We find ourselves in an instantly darker and more tragic vein in the slow movement of the sonata. A sustained melody grows in the violin out of an initial 'cross' motif, accompanied by rising arpeggios in the piano, and this material

is shared out and generates a climax. Later the arpeggios are used as a serene, hopeful second theme, and this is the music which will eventually close the music in D major. Back in the original tonality of the sonata, the *Allegro vivo* scherzo is full of skittish semiquavers and syncopated pizzicato chords. The melancholic, middle 'trio' is completely contrasted and explores wide-spanning melodies in the violin with rocking accompaniment, and it also features extended chromatic passages for the piano alone. Fauré is at his most inventive in this movement: an unusual time signature (two very quick quavers in a bar); repetitious material in phrases of odd lengths; and harmonies that change quickly and slip sideways fleetingly into new keys. All contribute to the weightless, thrilling effect of this movement. The sonata is brought to a close with a finale which features a gently skipping violin theme which, in a typically Fauré-esque manner, revolves around a single note (here, a C-sharp). A transitional piano theme, syncopated and chromatic, quickly escalates the energy and both instruments take up the drama with octaves at the extremes of their range. A sense of calm is brought about by floating piano arpeggios and a slow, scale-based violin theme. Both characters of music return and come together before a sense of the skittish, unstoppable momentum from the scherzo returns to finish the work.

Franz Schubert's *Adagio in E-flat major* (D897), titled 'Notturmo' posthumously by the publisher, was probably the original slow movement of his *Piano Trio in B-flat major* (D898). These works date from the end of 1827, famous for the genesis of his *Winterreise*, when Schubert was coming

to terms with the death of Beethoven in March of that year. Schubert was now both liberated and yet more hindered by the weight of the mantle passed down to him as a result of the death of his fellow composer; he would go on to explore this heightened responsibility in the 'Beethovenian' genres of the late piano sonatas and the *C major String Quintet* (D956).

The ill-health that had been a recurring feature of Schubert's life since 1822 would go on to kill him in 1828; with hindsight it is possible to load these great, late works with more pathos than their first audiences might originally have perceived, but nonetheless this *Adagio* has a peaceful quality which speaks to us of eternal timelessness. The piano ripples around the strings' lyrical opening melody, as if a distant pair of duetting hunting horns. The piano's iteration of this theme in octaves is so typical of Schubert's piano chamber music, and the strings provide a delicate, plucked accompaniment. A shift of tonality finds us in E major and triple time: triumphant music characterised by cascading piano scales and grandiose dotted figures in the strings and piano. Darkness falls during a transition passage, before we find ourselves in the music and tonal centre of the opening again, but it isn't until another triumphant outburst has taken over (now in radiant C major) that Schubert can consider really bringing the movement to a close, complete with trilling birdsong in the piano and suspended string lines. Did Richard Strauss know this work when he wrote the last of his *Four Last Songs*, 'Im Abendrot', choosing this key and trilling birdsong when he sets the lines 'Can this perhaps be Death'?

Fauré's *Sicilienne* was originally a piece of

incidental music for a play by Molière in the late 1890s, but it is now better known in several different re-imaginings including this one for cello and piano. The lilting minor-key melody is deceptively complex and underpinned by some unexpected harmonic shifts, while the major middle section provides contrast with slower moving harmonies and simpler melodic shapes. Written a decade earlier the *Élégie* was an instant hit when first heard at Saint-Saëns' salon. Perhaps originally intended as a slow movement for a cello sonata, the piece encompasses such a range of human emotion from tragedy, nostalgia and despair that it stands as a masterpiece in its own right. It seems to draw on depths of emotions we don't readily find examples of in Fauré's own life, but perhaps he was drawing on experiences from service in the Franco-Prussian war in the 1870s or his first unrequited love affair. Finally in this set of so-called miniatures is *Papillon* ('Butterfly'), commissioned by the publisher after the success of *Élégie*. Fauré didn't care for the title, and his exasperation grew when it took fourteen years and several lost copies before it was finally published. The showpiece alternates sparkling semiquavers throughout the cello's register with lyrical, song-like sections.

William Walton's *Piano Quartet* was his first major composition, written at the age of 16 and while at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. Possibly taking inspiration from Howells' work for the same forces, Walton embarked on the work in 1918 and completed it two years later. It had some competition success and was published in 1924 complete with its dedication to Dr Thomas Strong, then Bishop of Ripon and

previously Dean of Christ Church, where he had been an inspirational mentor to the young composer.

The influence of Howells and Vaughan Williams is instantly apparent in the first movement. A mournful, improvisational and folk-like violin solo opens with a four-note melodic 'germ' which filters throughout the whole work and we will hear the motif again in the final moments of this movement. From such a simple start the piano quickly breaks out and builds into full gale-force storms, uniting the whole ensemble in swirls of notes. This first movement constantly oscillates between this extrovert character (often march-like or stormy) and internalised, dreamy music with a nostalgic quality. The second movement scherzo is full of vibrant dance rhythms and Stravinskian rhythmic impetus. We also hear Walton's first exploration of fugue textures, and a noble piano melody to make Elgar proud. Both fugue subject and piano melody originate from the 'germ' melody first heard in the work's opening.

In the *Andante tranquillo*, Ravel's influence looms large. Walton uses every instrumental effect he can to create an aura of soft-focus reverie: string harmonics, played with mutes, accompanied by gently undulating piano arpeggios. Before a return to this opening calm, the movement's middle section explores darker harmonies and colours, with solos for cello and viola and a suspended violin line with the rocking harmonies that would become a feature of his mature work. The *Finale* is a whirlwind of carnival energy. Here we hear Stravinsky at the forefront in the violent string chords and untamed energy of the piano's octaves. The landscape of the music is constantly changing, always

restless and often on the verge of being out of control: piano battles strings; motifs evolve and change; chromatic inflections threaten a sense of a home key; and syncopations overwhelm the original pulse. Again Walton uses a fugue (based on figures from this movement's opening) to build tension in the middle part of the movement, until the music fragments again. After a quieter section of dark harmonies and misty textures, the strings peel out a syncopated pattern which heralds the recapitulation. The solemn, quiet music is never far from hand, but the movement builds from quiet reiterations of the 'germ' motif, before arriving at a triumphant resolution in the tonic major at the last moment.

Ian Tindale



Holy Trinity Church, Ripon
29 January at 7:30 pm

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Sibelius - *Romance in C*
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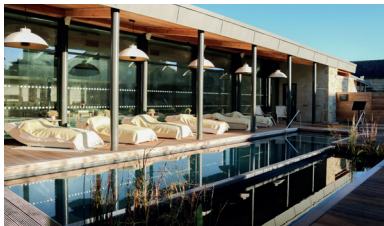
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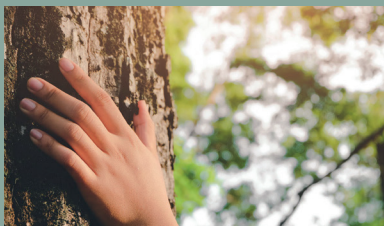
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About the musicians

Ensemble Kopernikus is an exciting young chamber group based in London, dedicated to exploring the rich and varied repertoire available for a variety of instrumentations.

Praised for its 'imaginative and demanding' programmes, it combines well-known works with rarely performed gems. The ensemble is becoming known for its sharp attention to detail and energetic, lyrical interpretations.

Having begun collaborating in various forms since they were students, the group has worked closely with many outstanding coaches including members of the Belcea Quartet, Matthew Jones, David Dolan, Caroline Palmer and Melissa Phelps, and is a current participant in the Chamber Studio at Kings Place, where it is being coached by Richard Ireland. The group has been finalists in competitions including the St. Martin-in-the-Fields Chamber Music Competition and the 8th International Johannes Brahms Chamber Music Competition in Gdansk as well as winning the Ivan Sutton Chamber Music Award. It has performed at venues including St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Wigmore Hall and has given concerts at the City of London Music Festival and for concert societies including the Blenheim Music Circle, St Mary's Perivale and Ripley Recitals.

What lies behind the name Kopernikus? Ian Tindale explains: "*With the ensemble's ties to Poland, both in terms of nationality and ancestry, we were drawn to the revolutionary Polish polymath Nicolaus Copernicus (in Polish: Mikołaj Kopernik) whose multidisciplinary free-thinking changed the world. His name reminds us to explore new approaches and to find new directions in our music-making.*"

The ensemble's core members Kasia Ziminska (violin), Alice Purton (cello) and Ian Tindale (piano) are all individually much in demand as chamber musicians appearing in concerts and festivals across the UK and internationally. As individual performers they are engaged in a wide variety of creative work, including classical improvisation, orchestral playing, jazz and folk performance, song recitals, historical performance and experimental contemporary music. Notable individual appearances include the Musikverein, Vienna; the Mozarteum, Salzburg; UNESCO Hall, Paris; Lutosławski Concert Hall, Warsaw; the Grand Theatre, Luxembourg; and major London venues including the Barbican Hall, Royal Festival Hall and Cadogan Hall.

Between them, their educational work has brought them to organisations and institutions including the LSO, LPO, Leeds Lieder Festival, Voices of London Festival, Harvard University, Stanford University, Ithaca College, DePaul University, McGill University, Manchester University, Royal Northern College of Music, Durham University, Huddersfield University and Oundle School.

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and others who wish to remain anonymous or who have donated since this programme went to press.

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Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

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