

SITKOVETSKY TRIO III WITH WILL DUERDEN AND ROSALIND VENTRIS

Friday 19 July 11.15am – 12.15pm St John's Church

Alexander Sitkovetsky	Violin
Isang Enders	Cello
Wu Qian	Piano
Rosalind Ventris	Viola
Will Duerden	Double bass

The **Sitkovetsky Trio** was formed by students at the Yehudi Menuhin School in 2007. Alexander Sitkovetsky and Wu Qian were joined in 2019 by German-Korean cellist Isang Enders. Concert appearances include Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Palais des Beaux Arts, Musée du Louvre, l'Auditori Barcelona, Wigmore Hall and Lincoln Center New York. Recordings include works by Smetana, Suk, Dvořák, Mendelssohn and Beethoven (BIS), Brahms and Schubert (Wigmore Live Label).

Double bassist **Will Duerden** rose to prominence after reaching the Strings Category Final of 2018 BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition. A winner of the 2023 Young Classical Artists Trust international auditions, Will has had several new works specially written for him, with premieres in Milan and London.

Violist **Rosalind Ventris** leads an international career as a soloist and chamber musician. Praised for her 'beguiling' (Gramophone) and 'gorgeously full-bodied' (The Guardian) playing, she is the Director of Musical Performance at the University of Oxford and teaches at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Washing Away The Sorrow, world premiere

Sam Perkin (b. 1985)

Sam Perkin was born in Cork, studied at the Cork School of Music and Lyon Conservatoire, and now divides his time between France and Ireland. He has worked with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, La Côte Flûte Festival, Switzerland, and the Alta Chamber Music Festival, Norway. His *Freakshow* was played by the Sitkovetsky Trio at last year's Buxton Festival.

Commissioned by Daphne and George Burnett, *Washing Away The Sorrow*, for double bass and piano, was written this year, and dedicated to Will Duerden. Sam Perkin comments:

'In its artistic intention, *Washing Away The Sorrow* seeks to create a place for the listener to be cleansed of what needs to be cleansed. Will Duerden emerges, each time anew, from the purifying washes of sound which gently cascade over us from afar, confirming the unsurpassed beauty and power of music.'

Piano Quintet in A, D667, 'The Trout'

1. *Allegro vivace*; 2. *Andante*; 3. *Scherzo. Presto*; 4. *Tema. Andantino*; 5. *Finale. Allegro*

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet is the result of a holiday he spent in Steyr, Upper Austria. He visited the town three times but, since his autograph manuscript score of the work does not survive, it is not clear which of these visits prompted it. The probability is that he wrote it after returning to Vienna from his first stay, in July 1819.

He had visited Steyr with the baritone Johann Michael Vogl, who sang many of Schubert's songs in public, (the town was Vogl's birthplace). There he met Sylvester Paumgartner, an amateur cellist whose house in the main square was a regular music venue. According to Schubert's friend Albert Stadler, also living in Steyr at the time, a recent performance of a quintet by Hummel, for the unusual combination of piano, violin, viola, cello and double-bass, prompted Paumgartner to ask Schubert for a similar work, suggesting that he include a set of variations on his song 'The Trout', of two years earlier. Stadler did not specify the Hummel work in question, and for a long time Schubert's model was assumed to be his Quintet in E flat, Op. 87. It now seems



more likely that it was in fact the older composer's Septet, Op. 74, in his own transcription for the same quintet line-up.

Schubert's Quintet is one of his most carefree works, and it is tempting to hear in it a reflection of the atmosphere at Steyr and the surrounding countryside, which he described as 'unimaginably lovely' in a letter to his brother, Ferdinand. Paradoxically, it is the presence of the double bass that is responsible for the transparent freshness of the music's sound-world. To make sure that the piano part balances the extra weight and sonority in the bass register, Schubert has the pianist's two hands playing an octave apart without harmonies for much of the time, with the left hand often straying into the upper half of the keyboard. The quintet's characteristically limp quality is the result.

The opening movement immediately establishes a relaxed, holiday mood, with its opening dialogue between the ebullient uprush on the piano and the strings' gently gliding reply. As the movement proceeds, strings and piano exchange roles from time to time (indeed, the process has already begun, barely twenty seconds in), and Schubert leads us through some of his typical key changes that suddenly present us with new viewpoints.

There are more such moments in the wonderfully laid-back second movement, with the piano's easy-going opening theme turning into dialogue with the first violin, and lyrical duets for the viola and cello amid accompanying figures for the violin, bass and piano. The first half of the movement comes gently to rest, then immediately it begins again, a semitone higher. The effect is rather like watching a character leave from one side of the stage, only re-appear instantly on the opposite side, in a different costume.

The brisk, energetic scherzo has a vigorous country-dance feel to it, with a quieter central trio section. The variations that were the work's starting-point form the fourth movement. The theme, played by the strings alone, remains unchanged in the first three variations, as it passes from the piano to the viola, then the cello (these are variations not so much on the tune as around it). Variation 4 begins with two brief moments of minor-key storminess, but they are quickly over, and the rest is perfectly amiable, though with a slight clouding at the end. The cello takes up the theme again in Variation 5, with Schubert once again indulging in his fondness for wandering off into unexpected keys. Finally, we hear it on the violin, with the piano recreating the accompaniment of the original song.

The finale is at once purposeful and easy-going, with its driving energy, quick-fire exchanges between the piano and strings, and bubbling, exuberant energy.