

The background of the entire page is a painting of a forest. The trees are tall and slender, with trunks in shades of brown, tan, and grey. The foliage is dense and dark, with some green and blue tones. In the lower right, a small figure in a blue and red outfit is visible, possibly a person or a creature, standing in a clearing. The overall style is impressionistic and somewhat somber.

Amici della Musica

**Mahler
Schulhoff
Smetana
Dvořák**

**Saturday 16th March 2024
St Thomas' Church Winchelsea
Winchelsea Arts**



AMICI DELLA MUSICA

Amici della Musica is a group of four renowned international soloists; Philippe Graffin, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Raphael Wallfisch and Piers Lane. Each of these musicians come with a rich individual history of performing and programming chamber music and are now delighted to come together to bring their friendship and musicianship to audiences. The composers they have chosen for this concert all come from Bohemia - once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now the Czech Republic.

Cover picture: Detail from *Old Woman in the Forest*
Ota Bubeníček 1871-1962

Philippe Graffin *violin*

Following his success at the Fritz Kreisler international competition, French violinist Philippe Graffin was invited by Yehudi Menuhin to make his debut recording with the RPO. Since then, Philippe's unique personality and emotional playing has shaped a career that spans five continents and reflects his ever-questing mind. His acclaimed discography ranges from Mozart to works written for him, including more than thirty concertos. He teaches at the Royal Conservatory (Brussels) and the Conservatoire de Paris.

Elizabeth Wallfisch *viola*

Elizabeth Wallfisch is proud to have been born in Melbourne, Australia. Since her student years she has resided in Europe. A renowned performing artist, she is one of the leading personalities in the field of early music and is just as esteemed as an interpreter of the classical literature for violin. She has led, as director and soloist, renowned ensembles including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Elizabeth was Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Raphael Wallfisch *cello*

Raphael Wallfisch is one of the world's most celebrated cellists performing on the international stage, renowned for his curiosity and commitment to exploring and broadening the full range of repertoire for the instrument. His career was launched at the age of twenty-four when he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Competition in Florence. Since then he has enjoyed a global career, forging close relationships with orchestras including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and many more in Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Piers Lane *piano*

London-based Australian pianist Piers Lane has a worldwide reputation as an engaging, searching and highly versatile performer, at home equally in solo, chamber and concerto repertoire. Five times soloist at the BBC Proms, Piers Lane's wide-ranging concerto repertoire exceeds one hundred works and has led to engagements with many of the world's great orchestras. Festival appearances have included Aldeburgh, Bard, Bath Mostly Mozart, Bergen, Cheltenham, Como Autumn Music, Prague Spring, Rockport, La Roque d'Anthéron, Ruhr Klavierfestival, Schloss vor Husum, Seattle and the Chopin festivals in Warsaw, Duszynki-Zdrój, Mallorca and Paris.

GUSTAV MAHLER 1860 - 1911

Quartettsatz (Piano Quartet in A minor) (1876)

During his lifetime Mahler achieved greater recognition as a conductor, especially of opera, than as a composer. Born in Bohemia to Jewish parents of humble background, at the pinnacle of his career he conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and in Vienna.

Conducting left Mahler little time for composition. He concentrated on large orchestral works, which today are highly esteemed and regularly performed. This makes the *Quartettsatz*, the surviving first movement from his unfinished piano quartet, a rarity. It is his only known chamber work without a vocal part, written while he was a 16 year-old music student. He is believed to have destroyed other works from the same period; Mahler was known for temperamental outbursts.

The movement is in the dark key of A minor. It is cast in traditional sonata form, with two main themes followed by development and restatement. The piano presents the first theme and the strings present the second theme, which are combined in the development, rising to a climax of some intensity. Possibly the movement's most imaginative passage is the return of the first theme, now in a subdued, even mysterious mood. Near the end, a cadenza for the first violin leads to a quiet conclusion. The movement might be seen as prefiguring Mahler's emotional depth, as revealed in his later works.



ERWIN SCHULHOFF 1892 - 1942

Duo for violin and cello (1925)

- I. *Moderato*
- II. *Zingaresca*
- III. *Andantino*
- IV. *Moderato*

Schulhoff was Czech and Jewish, dying in 1942 while imprisoned for his communist beliefs by the Nazis. Like other Jewish composers who were unable to escape the Third Reich, much of his work is not well known. Schulhoff's early talents were recognised by Dvořák. He went on to study in Prague, Vienna, Cologne and, briefly, in Paris with Debussy. After military service in the First World War, he became involved in emerging modernist movements including jazz. He was a concert pianist as well as a composer.

The *Duo for Violin and Cello* demands a range of techniques. Colour and percussive effect come from the bowing instructions, extensive pizzicato and strumming, harmonics, mutes as well as the wide pitch range of the instruments. Dynamics vary from triple *pianissimo* to triple *forte*, often with abrupt changes. The final presto is marked *fanatico*.

The duo opens with a suave, poignant theme that serves as a unifying motto recurring (with variation) in the third and fourth movements. Following this thematic introduction, the first movement continues to ghostly, pentatonic harmonics, evoking the Far East. The second movement is a scherzo in gypsy style (*zingaresca*) with a wild accelerando at the central climax. The third movement is delicate, lyrical and atmospheric, drawing on the opening motto theme. The finale resumes the dynamism of the first movement including the initial motto theme, the ascending harmonics, the verve of the *zingaresca* and a hint of expressionism. The conclusion launches a sudden, frantic gallop.

For more information about Schulhoff, see the OREL Foundation website, dedicated to artists whose work was suppressed by the Nazis, www.orelfoundation.org.

BEDRICH SMETANA 1824 - 1884

Polkas de Salon, Op. 7 (1848-1854)

No. 2 (F minor)

No. 3 (E major)

Caprice Bohemien (F major)

Smetana is regarded as the father of Czech music. *Ma Vlast (My Country - 1879)* remains a staple of the orchestral repertoire. Smetana showed precocious musical talent, encouraged by his parents. His musical career began in Prague, where he was also briefly a revolutionary.

From 1856 onwards he spent several years in Gothenburg, Sweden as a conductor, before returning to Prague. There he helped establish the national opera house, writing a number of operas, of which *The Bartered Bride* (1866) is his enduringly popular masterpiece.

Smetana was a piano virtuoso and teacher. He was drawn to the polka form (a Bohemian dance) throughout his life as a composer, and wrote a number of sets of highly regarded polkas for piano. Smetana's life was eventful, with personal tragedies including the death of his first wife and three of their four daughters, as well as various professional reverses. Sadly Smetana's final years were marred by illness and he died in an asylum in Prague.

INTERVAL



Programme notes
by R J Manuell

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK 1841 - 1904

Piano Quartet in E flat major Op. 87 B162 (1889)

- I. *Allegro con fuoco*
- II. *Lento*
- III. *Allegro moderato grazioso*
- IV. *Finale: Allegro ma non troppo*

Dvořák's chamber music is as famed as his large orchestral works. He was an accomplished violinist and viola player. The viola was a favourite instrument and was given a prominent part in this quartet, written in 1889 just before his Eighth Symphony. Dvořák was then at the height of his powers and enjoyed international recognition.

The quartet begins with a dialogue between the piano and the strings, contrasting their sonorities. The strings proclaim a muscular four-measure motive, and the piano provides a bantering, almost frivolous, reply. There is a contrasting second theme in the unexpected key of G major, but the two elements of the main theme dominate the development. The coda has meditative version of the main theme played *tremolando* by the violin and viola, with isolated piano chords and pizzicato notes from the cello.

The slow movement has five distinct melodic themes. The first, introduced by the cello, is intense and romantic. The second, cooler, is presented by the violin. The piano has the third, more agitated, theme. A series of chromatic octaves for the piano leads to the stormy fourth theme, unleashed by the whole quartet. The plaintive fifth theme follows for piano alone.

The third movement underlines Dvořák's well-known affection for folk music. The main section is in the rhythm of a *sousedská*, a Bohemian country dance in 3/4 time, related to the Austrian *ländler*, the precursor of the waltz. The second theme has the rhythm of a *mazurka*, a Polish country dance in triple time, popular in Bohemia. The finale has a gypsy element, with a soaring melody for the viola in its haunting upper register, characteristic of Dvořák. The quartet ends in cheerful high spirits and with a burst of energy.

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