

ENSEMBLE 360

Saturday 13 November

7.00pm

Cast Second Space, Doncaster

TIM HORTON piano

CLAUDIA AJMONE-MARSAN violin

ADRIAN WILSON oboe

GEMMA ROSEFIELD cello

SAINT-SAËNS Oboe Sonata in D

JANÁČEK Violin Sonata

BRAHMS Cello Sonata in F

MARTINŮ Oboe Quartet

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835–1921)

Oboe Sonata in D Op. 166

Andantino

Ad libitum. Allegretto

Molto allegro

Composed in May–June 1921, this is one of three woodwind sonatas composed by Saint-Saëns at the very end of his life. It is dedicated to Louis Bas, first oboe of the Paris Opéra and the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. The opening has an eighteenth-century flavour and the whole work is notable for its restraint and classical poise. One of the most memorable moments in this exquisitely crafted piece occurs at the start of the second movement, where the oboe plays freely over arpeggiated chords on the piano before moving into an elegant triple-time Allegretto. The Finale, in quick compound time, is delicately written and witty.

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854–1928)

Sonata for Violin and Piano, JW VII/7 (1922)

Con moto

Ballada

Allegretto

Adagio

Janáček started composing the Violin Sonata in about 1914 and its first version was finished by October 1915, at which point he put it to one side. Between 1915 and publication in March 1922, the work was very extensively revised (the first movement was completely recomposed and the original finale was discarded entirely). The premiere was given in Brno on 24 April 1922, at a concert of the Moravian Composers' Club, when it was performed by František Kudláček (violin) and Jaroslav Kvapil (piano). It soon travelled further afield and was given at the Salzburg Contemporary Music Festival in August 1923. According to Janáček himself, the Violin Sonata was the most successful work in his London concert on 6 May 1926, given at the Wigmore Hall and played by Adila Fachiri and Fanny Davies. Janáček was a passionate lover of all things Russian and part of his inspiration for the Sonata came from the advances made by Russian troops at the start of World War I: Janáček later

wrote that "the gleam of sharp steel ... was clanging in my troubled mind" at the time. His biographer Jaroslav Vogel wrote of the "Russian atmosphere that pervades the work", noting its close motivic connections to the opera 'Kát'a Kabanová'. The final result has a compelling structural coherence and tension as well as being highly expressive. As Hans Hollander later wrote, "in the Violin Sonata, the glowingly emotional, rhapsodical chamber music style of the composer's middle period appears in full flower".

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Cello Sonata No.2 in F, Op.99

Allegro vivace

Adagio affettuoso

Allegro passionato

Allegro molto

After a year of creative silence (the Fourth Symphony was finished in Summer 1885), Brahms spent the summer of 1886 in the small lakeside town of Thun in Switzerland and produced no fewer than four major instrumental works during his stay: the A major and D minor violin sonatas, the C minor Piano Trio and the second of his two cello sonatas. This work – written for the cellist Robert Hausmann – has an opening that is unique among Brahms's duo sonatas: while all the others begin quite gently, the F major Cello Sonata opens with a bold flourish, the cello's surging melody full of impassioned leaps over trembling piano chords. This heroic opening gives way to a second theme initially heard from the piano before being taken up by the cello: a fearless tune that begins with a series of chords before evolving into more intricate material. Throughout the exposition, Brahms's music has seemingly unstoppable ardour and urgency and this is maintained in the development: even when the mood becomes calmer, there is quiet agitation in one of the parts. At the end of the movement, Brahms seems to be headed for a more tranquil close, but the last five bars return to the fiery spirit of the opening. The slow movement is in the surprising key of F sharp major. It opens with a broad, chordal piano theme, its accompaniment a pizzicato bass line on the cello, before the roles are reversed. The movement is dominated by this

melody, reaching a climax before subsiding on to peaceful chords. The third movement is often hushed, sometimes uneasy, full of rhythmic ambiguities and rapidly shifting keys (though nominally in F minor). The brightly-lit Trio section is gentler and more lyrical. The finale, back in the home key of F major, opens with a folk-like tune with some surprising inflections (notably a prominent flattened seventh). While this theme dominates much of the movement, a more troubled episode sees the music plunge into B flat minor, before a return to the opening mood, some varied (often delicate) restatements of the main theme leading to a warm-hearted conclusion. Brahms and Hausmann gave the first performance at the Musikverein in Vienna on 24 November 1886.

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890–1959) **Quartet for Oboe, Violin, Cello & Piano**

Moderato poco allegro

Adagio – Andante poco moderato – Poco allegro

Martinů composed this unusually scored quartet in New York during autumn 1947 and it was first performed in November that year. The dedicatee was Leopold Mannes, a fascinating character in American musical life who invented Kodachrome colour film in his spare time. In 1936, Mannes became President of Mannes College in succession to his father. He attracted an impressive roster of musicians to the faculty, including the conductor George Szell, the theorist Heinrich Schenker, and Martinů for composition. The Quartet is a diverting and charming work in two movements, the second of which combines a more serious slow movement with a jolly and affirmative finale, which is full of Martinů's typical rhythmic drive and strong sense of harmonic direction, ending firmly in C major.

Programme notes © Nigel Simeone 2021

ENSEMBLE 360

Ensemble 360 has gained an enviable reputation across the UK not only for the quality and integrity of its playing, but also for its ability to communicate the music to a range of different audiences. Formed in 2005, 11 musicians of international standing came together to take up residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, establishing a versatile group of five string players, five wind players and a pianist. The musicians believe that concerts should be informal, friendly and relaxed occasions, and perform 'in the round' wherever possible.

Outside Ensemble 360 many of the musicians have highly successful careers, performing with groups including the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, English National Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Camerata Bern, Manchester Camerata and Nash Ensemble.

MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Music in the Round is the leading national promoter of chamber music. For over 35 years we have been bringing people and music closer together through our friendly and informative style of 'in the round' performances, touring to numerous venues around the country as well as presenting two concert series and the Sheffield Chamber Music Festival each year at our home venue, the Crucible Studio. Our concerts are characterised by passion, excellence and proximity, and even in these challenging times of a global pandemic we have been striving to connect people through music by presenting socially-distanced live concerts and creating films featuring our musicians to enjoy online.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Your generosity has made it possible for us to continue with our aim to bring people closer to music, despite all the challenges of the last 18 months. It is thanks to you, our Friends, supporters and audiences, that we are able to bring you such a full programme this season. These programmes are produced by Music in the Round. Your donations towards the cost of the commissioning high quality programme notes are very gratefully received, especially given the challenges of recent times. You can text 'Programme 1' to 70085 to donate £1. *This costs you £1 plus standard message rate.