

Boléro de Concert **Louis-Alfred Lefébure-Wély** (1817-1869)

Lefébure-Wély succeeded his father as organist at Saint-Roch at the age of 14. Five years later he met the organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll who, impressed by the young virtuoso, engaged him to demonstrate his new poikilorgue (a small free-reed organ or harmonium) at the Exposition of Industry. Cavaillé-Coll took advantage of Lefébure-Wély's eventual enormous popularity among the French public by having him inaugurate many of his new large instruments in and around Paris. Composing and improvising in the popular style, Lefébure-Wély embraced operatic and other programmatic styles such as the imitation of battles and thunderstorms.

The Boléro is a Spanish dance in triple metre which is often characterised by the rhythm found in the opening measures. It involves intricate steps, and would typically be danced by a couple playing castanets. The ABA form is clearly articulated by different characterisations. The A sections would be danced by both partners, while the B section alternates solo dances.

Andante, K 616 **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791)

Although Mozart was an organist and held the instrument in high regard, he left no important compositions written specifically for the organ. Fortunately, he was commissioned to write several pieces for an 18th-century invention (which he detested), an 'automatic' organ operated by a clock mechanism, somewhat similar in concept to a player-piano. These pieces are fine examples of Mozart's genius, and although they were not intended to be played by human hands and feet, they can be played with few alterations on the 'non-automatic' organ!

Sonata I in F minor **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847)

Allegro moderato e serioso; Andagio; Andante recitativo; Allegro assai vivace

Mendelssohn was the first composer of international stature to address the organ as a concert instrument after the death of J S Bach in 1750. He cultivated a renewed interest in the music of Bach, most notably when in 1829 (a time in which Bach's large-scale works were considered impossible to perform) he mounted a production of the 'St Matthew Passion' at the Berlin Singakademie.

Mendelssohn's influence on the revival of Bach's music was of paramount importance, paving the road that led to a wealth of Bach scholarship as well as renewed interest in the music of other earlier composers during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The 'Six Sonatas' of 1845 reflect Mendelssohn's 'classical' style as well as the influence of J S Bach. The 'Sonata in F' begins like a large fantasia, incorporating a fugal section that leads to the statement of the chorale, 'Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh' allzeit'. The phrases of the Chorale, played on a second manual, alternate with the contrapuntal theme of the opening. The second movement is a delightful Adagio in the related key of A flat major, employing two manuals for alternating phrases. The Andante-recitativo is a dialogue between a lamenting small chorus and an affirming tutti, evoking a dramatic, operatic quality. This movement leads directly into the triumphant finale, a toccata in F major.

David Higgs

One of America's leading concert organists, David Higgs is Chair of the Organ Department at the Eastman School of Music, New York. A native of New York City, as a teenager he divided his time between studying classical music and performing in several rock/gospel/soul-music groups. His teachers have included Claire Coci, Peter Hurford, Russell Saunders and Frederick Swann.

In New York City he was Director of Music and Organist at Park Avenue Christian Church, and Associate Organist of the Riverside Church. After moving to San Francisco in 1986, he became Director of Music and Organist at St Mark's Episcopal Church in Berkeley, and Organist/Choir Director at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco. He was appointed to the faculty of the Eastman School of Music in 1992, and his students have won major competitions and hold many of the top positions in the United States.

A sought-after teacher, David is a frequent lecturer for conferences, workshops and festivals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sponsor David Mason



JUHO POHJONEN

7.30pm St Peter's Church

Fantasia in C minor, K 396
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Of this little 'Fantasia in C minor' commonly attributed to Mozart, only the first 27 bars have been irrefutably proved by scholars to be his. The last five of these bars also include a violin part; in other words, the 'Fantasia' was originally intended for violin and piano. The version now known to us, based on Mozart's sketch but without the violin, was completed after Mozart's death by Maximilian Stadler. How much is Mozart and how much Stadler is impossible to say. It is, however, highly refreshing to listen to this rambling little 'Fantasia' without any expectations of mastery and genius and instead to imagine how Mozart's celebrated art of improvisation might have sounded in his day.

Fantasiestücke, Op.12

1. Des Abends
2. Aufschwung
3. Warum?
4. Grillen

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

5. In der Nacht
6. Fabel
7. Traumes-Wirren
8. Ende vom Lied

Most of Schumann's piano works, from the 'Abegg Variations' to 'Faschingsschwank', were composed between his twentieth and thirtieth birthdays. Towards the end of this ten-year period the emphasis shifted from broad cycles to suites of little character pieces, the movements of which can also be performed separately. It is possibly in the little character piece or song that Schumann really comes into his own, for he never seemed quite at home with large-scale forms.

The 'Fantasiestücke', or eight fantasy pieces, were composed in spring and early summer 1837. The name of the suite alludes both to the descriptive titles of the pieces and to their improvisatory nature, for the German word *fantasieren* means both 'to fantasize' and 'to improvise'. *Des Abends* is an excellent example of this, even down to the groping position of the hands; the simple juxtaposition of double and triple motifs is Schumann at his most typical. One inherently Schumann feature of *Aufschwung* and

Warum is the all-pervading counterpoint, while the supporting structure of *Grillen* is evocative of Brahms.

The central movement of the suite is *In der Nacht*, Schumann's personal favourite. In a letter to his future wife, Clara Wieck, he wrote that it reminded him of the ancient Greek legend of Hero and Leander, who loved each other across the Hellespont. The story symbolised his longing for Clara, and the stormy sea was naturally her father (the piano teacher Friedrich Wieck), who was against the youngsters' marriage and has gone down in music history as a most tedious character. *In der Nacht* is followed by *Fabel*, a wild escapade growing out of a modest opening statement, and *Traumes-Wirren* is in the nature of a concert etude. *Ende vom Lied* gives the suite a somewhat ambivalent end. According to Schumann, it affords a brief, happy vision of a wedding before giving vent to his longing for the beloved. Woven into the quiet coda is a falling five-note motif associated with Clara.

Sonata No.4 in F sharp major, Op.30

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Alexander Scriabin is one of the most extraordinary figures in Russian music. It is almost impossible to distinguish between the man and his music, for his original aesthetics and idiom were the combined outcome of his mystic and musical philosophy. His musical language runs along harmonic rather than melodic lines in a style that is easily recognisable. The works of his youth still clearly reflect an admiration for Chopin, but he soon set a course of his own to create a homogeneous, personal musical universe.

The 'Sonata No. 4 in F sharp major' is interesting as regards Scriabin's stylistic development. Harmonically it is still unequivocally tonal, but its idiom and form look to the future. This sonata may, in fact, be regarded as a watershed between the two extremes in his output. It is in two movements, but the halting Andante, avoiding a tonal centre, seems more like a prelude to the Prestissimo volando in sonata form. Within its relatively strict confines, it brilliantly captures various states of mind. The first movement is full of languor and longing tinged with eroticism, the second a passionate outburst that culminates in a glowing coda as the theme of the first movement returns in a triumphal procession. Scriabin himself, in his typical visionary manner, described the fourth sonata as a journey to a glowing star.

Interval