ROS | ROYAL ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

Supporting Rising Talent

Saturday 16th March 2024, 7.00pm

I would like to welcome you to our concert supporting outstanding young musicians under our new principal conductor Rebecca Miller.

There are many ways to construct a satisfying concert programme. Some revolve around a national style and some around a concept – landscapes, seascapes, the supernatural, the heroic, and so forth. Some set familiar 'honeypots' alongside something unknown, perhaps by a living composer.

Tonight's programme, though, is unusual. Its three composers were all born in the Austro-Hungarian empire but their output is in no sense nationalistic; nor do these works rely on extra-musical programmes: even the overture, although written to introduce a play, is essentially a purely musical drama. What they have in common is the broad educational experience of their composers, and their chronology. Kraus and Mozart were almost exact contemporaries and, although Haydn was a generation older, his final symphonies were written after both these highly admired young colleagues had died. Tonight's three works were all completed over a span of just 16 years, from 1779 to 1795 – yet, when we listen to them, we find that their styles are unmistakeably distinct.

Many Thanks

Francis Norton
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ROYAL ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

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ROYAL ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY was founded in 1872 by Queen Victoria's second son, Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, an enthusiastic amateur musician. At the time it was the only London orchestra apart from the Royal Philharmonic Society.

The first concert was conducted by Sir Arthur Sullivan in the Royal Albert Hall in 1873, and the orchestra went on to perform with Pablo Casals, Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman, Jacques Thibaut, Dame Clara Butt, and Sir Edward Elgar.

Repertoire has included symphonies by Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Vaughan Williams and Shostakovich, Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Viola Concerto*, Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* and *Sea Interludes*, Holst's *Planets* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Choral works have included Verdi's *Requiem* and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, by Samuel Coleridge Taylor, with Ronald Corp's excellent choir *The London Chorus*. In 2012, we performed Prokofiev's iconic cantata *Alexander Nevsky* to an edited edition of Eisenstein's film for which it was written, displayed on screens in the auditorium.

In November 2014 we performed Britten's *War Requiem*— our first concert in Cadogan Hall. 2017 brought our first opera—*Bluebeard's Castle* by Bartók, and this was followed by Wagner's *Die Walküre, Act 3* in 2019.

In 2023 as part of our 150th anniversary celebrations, we performed Mahler's gargantuan *Symphony no.3* at Cadogan Hall.

Saturday 16 March 2024 7pm

St. Giles, Cripplegate

Kraus Overture to *Olympie*

Mozart *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola*

INTERVAL

Haydn *Symphony No. 104 in D major*

Aki Blendis (*Violin*) **Jaren Ziegler** (*Viola*)

Royal Orchestral Society

Leader **Christian Halstead**

Rebecca Miller (*Conductor*)

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This concert is kindly supported by the

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In memory of the late Coral Samuel CBE

10 August 1927- 27 January 2023

JOSEPH MARTIN KRAUS (1756–1792)

Overture to *Olympie,* VB32

Kraus's name is now rarely heard; yet his talent for thematic development, colourful orchestration and theatrical flair caused Haydn to proclaim him one of only two geniuses he knew (Mozart being the other). A violinist, proficient also at the keyboard, he had hardly completed his studies at Mannheim, Erfurt and Gōttingen when his talent was recognized by the enlightened and autocratic King of Sweden, Gustavus III, who was a great patron of the arts and a champion of opera in the Swedish language. Gustavus sponsored Kraus for a four-year training tour of Europe between 1782 and 1786, and the young composer remained in his service until Gustavus was shot dead at a masked ball in 1792 by a Swedish nobleman – inspiring operas (sadly, not with librettos in Swedish) by both Auber and Verdi. This broad education may have contributed to the fiery, passionate quality of Kraus's music, which is often compared to Haydn's from the early 1770s.

The overture to *Olympie*, now Kraus's best known work, was written in 1791 for an adaptation of Voltaire's play of that name into Swedish by Kraus's friend Johan Henrik Kellgren. It is a tour-de-force of *Sturm und Drang* passion, with its skirling string figures, spare wind chords, and sweeping themes; a much more universal drama than the play for which it was written. Its sombre, slow introduction returns at the end, just when one might expect the cheerful major-key second subject to be recapitulated: thus, even before it begins, we know that Voltaire's plot will not end happily.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E flat, K 364

Allegro maestoso : Andante : Presto

Overtures, concerti and symphonies have a long and ongoing history, but the sinfonia concertante, like the concerto grosso of Handel's time, has become a genre of the past. When he wrote this late, great example, Mozart, aged 23, had just fled the stultifying atmosphere of his post as court organist to an archbishop in Salzburg to begin a concert tour that included both Paris and Mannheim, where he picked up several new and fashionable ideas, including that of writing concertos with more than one soloist. Soon afterwards, *"with a kick on my arse"* from his episcopal employer, he relocated permanently to Vienna. Although he had yet to write his most sublime operas, he fills this instrumental work with operatic drama, presenting the extrovert violin and more soulful viola as equals in a sublime musical dialogue that redounds with the joy of new possibilities in instrumental sound. He calls for quite modest orchestral forces but uses them to the full; there's no percussion, nor even flutes or clarinets. Although he was an exceptional violinist, Mozart liked to take up the central perspective of the viola when playing in a string quartet, and for this work he divides the orchestras violas into two, like the violins, for a rich string blend that sets the bright timbre of the violins against a darker viola backcloth.

The opening exposition *(Allegro maestoso)* demonstrates an extraordinary flow of ideas and sonorities that (such is Mozart's art) seem to follow one another effortlessly, like ripe fruit falling from a tree. Then, just before the orchestral exposition can reach the anticipated full harmonic close, the two soloists enter, soaring out from the background on a sustained high E-flat. Their dialogue soon becomes a three-way conversation with various sections of the orchestra, becoming private again for the cadenzas which, unusually for the period, were expressly written out, as we know from those manuscript fragments that survive.

The second movement *(Andante)* moves to a world of an operatic lament, in a veiled C minor filled with a tenderness and melancholy that may perhaps reflect the composer's experience of loss after the recent death of his mother. Each time the solo violin takes up its plaintive aria of grief, the viola's response provides a consolation, as Mozart unfolds his seamless song. Although we are now used to finding this depth in Mozart's other works, his contemporaries might not have expected such gravitas in a genre that, up to then, had mostly been seen as light entertainment for the aristocracy.

After this wordless but heartfelt operatic aria, the final Rondo *(Presto)* brings the joyful and exuberant celebration of an operatic finale, much of its gaiety arising from a sense that "*the unexpected always occurs first, being followed by the expected."* (Alfred Einstein). Virtuosity underscores this game of tag, played by three equals – the two soloists and the orchestra – who all seem to be saying, *"Anything you can do, I can do more playfully!"*

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN (1732–1809)

Symphony No. 104 in D major, H 1/104

Adagio–Allegro : Andante : Minuet (Allegro) : Finale (Allegro spiritoso)

When Haydn made his two visits to London in the early 1790s at the behest of the impresario Johann Peter Salomon, he found himself in the right place at the right time. London was a vibrant city, four times the size of Vienna; a centre for world trade and home to a prosperous and highly educated leisured class, eager to hear the latest from Europe's most celebrated composer. *"My arrival caused a great sensation throughout the entire city and for three successive days I was mentioned in all newspapers; everyone is eager to know me"*, he wrote back to Vienna. Large audiences attended the premieres of his final twelve symphonies at the Hannover Square Rooms, or in the concert hall of the King's Theatre, seating 800. *"A new composition from such a man as Haydn is a great event in the history of music,"* wrote The Morning Herald in 1792 after one such occasion. As a result, Haydn's music became more outgoing, yet even more appealing to the connoisseur. *"Novelty of idea, agreeable caprice, and whim combined with all Haydn's sublime ... grandeur, gave additional consequence to the soul and feelings of every individual present"*, wrote an enraptured correspondent for The Times.

The last of these 'London' symphonies embodies all the virtues of classical symphonic form: balance, simplicity, and transparency. The bare bones of its commanding introductory fanfare *(Adagio)* could not be simpler; yet they hold the seeds of the whole work in the interval of a rising fifth, along with the melancholy violin figure that follows. Repetition makes the fanfare increasingly mysterious, building a

feeling of anticipation as we approach the main movement *(Allegro)*, where the seeds sprout into sturdy, vigorous shoots that leave no need for a formal second theme.

In the second movement *(Andante)*, Haydn continues to show his mastery of economical means. He opens with a fresh and innocent melody, remarkably similar to the theme of the first movement; but adherence to a formal structure never tricked him into mere note-spinning and he engages in some remarkable adventuring into remote keys. The mood darkens, little by little, until the whole orchestra bursts out in minor-key fury for a contrasting middle section before light returns.

The Minuet *(Allegro)* has a forthright energy (one commentator describes it as 'burly'), with a contrasting dainty Trio in B flat. Haydn's humour is evident in numerous details, notably a sudden pause followed by a trill, heralding the terse conclusion.

The Finale *(Allegro spiritoso)*, opens with a rustic drone from cellos and horns, over which plays a folksy theme, said by some to be a London street cry (*Hot Cross Buns*) and by others a folk ballad (*Oj Jelena*) sung by Croatian emigrés in Eisenstadt. A second theme, on strings with bassoons, is more thoughtful and solemn – but it is the first tune that gets the last word, after some pages of quite remarkable orchestral scoring.

Haydn was pleased, both with the symphony and with the 4,000 gulden (£27,000 at today's silver prices) that rewarded him at the benefit concert premiere – advertised as "Dr Haydn's Night" – on May 4, 1795. As he said at the time: *"Such a thing is only possible in England"*.

Aki Blendis

Aki Blendis, now aged 16, started learning the violin aged 4 with Elisabeth Waterhouse at Lauderdale Suzuki. He was a pupil of Felicity Lipman for six years, then studied with Ivo Stankov at the Junior Guildhall, and now has lessons with Laura Capano.

Aki was a string finalist in the 2022 BBC Young Musician, and was winner of the Walter Todds Memorial Bursary, since when he has been invited to perform in a number of recitals and concertos, including the Barber violin concerto with the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra and the North London Symphony Orchestra. He made his debut as a soloist with the London Mozart Players last summer in a sold-out concert at the St. Jude's Proms, and appeared as a soloist again with them last autumn. Aki is a member of the National Youth Orchestra and is also an enthusiastic chamber musician, playing both violin and viola at Beare's Chamber Music. Away from the violin, he is a keen sportsman, representing his school at both football and athletics.

Aki plays a fine violin by Andrea Postacchini kindly loaned to him by a generous sponsor through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Jaren Ziegler

In 2022 Jaren Ziegler won the BBC Young Musician Strings Final at age 16, becoming the first violist in the competition's history to do so. In the Grand Final, he performed the Walton Viola Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Mark Wigglesworth. This led to invitations to perform solo around the UK, including at Bath, Lammermuir and Chiltern Arts Festivals, St Jude's Proms and Holywell Music Room, Oxford. Jaren has performed as a soloist with London Mozart Players, Bishop Stortford Sinfonia, Stamford Chamber Orchestra, Purcell School Orchestra and RCMJD Symphony Orchestra. Over the summer he was selected for the Verbier Festival Academy and the Kronberg Academy Masterclasses. The 2023/24 season brings further solo engagements including recitals at Cheltenham Festival, St George's Bristol and several concerto performances with the Northern Chamber Orchestra.

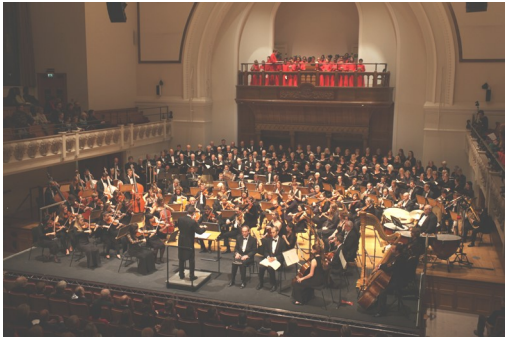
Jaren has been awarded First Prize in the Concerto Competition at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music, Junior Academy Viola Prize and Bromsgrove Young Musicians' Platform and was the youngest participant in the 2021 Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition. He is a member of LGT Young Soloists, having toured internationally and recorded with them at Abbey Road Studios. He began playing the viola at age six and studies with Jacky Woods.

Jaren plays a Stefano Scarampella viola, kindly loaned to him by the Beare's International Violin Society.

California-born conductor **Rebecca Miller** has earned international acclaim for her compelling, insightful, and energetic presence on the podium and for her ability to communicate with audiences of all ages. She spreads her work between professional, amateur and youth orchestras and choirs, and is passionate about music's relevance to our society, artistic citizenship, and championing unduly-neglected female composers. She is currently Director of Orchestras at Royal Holloway University, Principal Conductor of Royal Orchestral Society, Principal Conductor of Bishop's Stortford Sinfonia, and Principal Guest Conductor of Orchestra of the Swan. She most recently served as Chief Conductor of the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra in Sweden from 2019-2023.

Her guest conducting includes the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Gävle Symphony, Västerås Symphony, DalaSinfonietta, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Mozart Players, and London Philharmonic Orchestra. Rebecca is passionate about her work with young musicians – she works regularly with the National Children's Orchestra and LSO Discovery, and has also guest conducted the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, Wales, and Great Britain.

Previously, Rebecca served as Resident Conductor of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and American Conducting Fellow of The Houston Symphony, and Assistant Conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. She holds a BMus. in Piano Performance from Oberlin Conservatory, an MMus in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and for two years was the Paul Woodhouse Junior Fellow in Orchestral Conducting at London's Royal College of Music.

"It is not possible to see the sparks, but you can certainly hear them" - The Financial Times

Britten's War Requiem
with James Gilchrist, Ashley Riches & Geraldine McGreevy, Cadogan Hall, November 2014

Walton's Belshazzar's Feast
Cadogan Hall, November 2016

Britten's Young Person's Guide
St John's Smith Square

Peter and the Wolf
the first children's concert
St Mary's, Stoke Newington, April 2013

Bartok's Bluebeards Castle
With Janice Watson and Andrew Greenan
Village Underground, Shoreditch

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Geraldine Andrews
Jackie Burwell
Nicola Bedwin
Mike Malone
Tony Burrage
Clive Hobday

Violin 2
Katie Lander
Philip Burwell
Jeannie Okikiolu
Melissa Hutter
Adrienne Freeman
Helena Hibbert
Peter Steele
Mark Isherwood

Violas
Rosemary Cook
Jeremy Cook
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Janet Farrell
Juleka Nwankwo
Jane Yhorburn

Cellos
John Best
Hugh Larsen
Dan Ivens
Nick Warren
Francis Norton

Double Basses
Olive Chan
Tom Amigoni

Flutes
Jo Felton
Frances Hall

Oboes
Paul Blaker
Heather Bailey

Clarinets
Joe Smouha
Sarah Bowden

Bassoons
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Benjamin Day
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FOR YOUR DIARY

BALANCING ACTS—Ukraine & Russia 1937 - 1951 - 2005

Our June programme features three 20th century composers who all had to perform balancing acts. Shostakovich's life-long struggle with Stalinist terror is well known: his **Fifth Symphony** (1937), subtitled *A Soviet Artist's Response to Just Criticism*, is a fine example of what George Orwell called *Doublethink*.

For Glière, the balance was between his empathy for the western Romantic tradition and the Soviets' rejection of Modernism, which trapped him in a time-warp. His music appeals to wide audiences, but his fine **Horn Concerto** (1951) sounds as though it was written at least 14 years before Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, not 14 years afterwards.

Hanna Havrylets was born near Lviv in 1958, studied in Kyiv, and worked there for the rest of her life. She learned to balance Ukrainian nationalism against the need to make a career throughout the Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin eras, when Ukraine itself was in political turmoil, and her beautiful **Chorale for Strings** (2005) shows this well. But politics beat her in the end. She died in Kyiv on the third day of the Russian assault in 2022, unable to get help for a medical emergency.

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Our Horn Soloist **is Ben Goldscheide**r,
finalist in the BBC Young Musician
2016 Brass Category