

Southwell u3a Music Lovers Group – 03 June 2020

(Youtube playlist for the complete programme is at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JkFNCePaAA&list=PLQHiO9b3DnltBrFLS--rdJAp_GOyAfw10

Or Search YouTube for the John Tebbs Channel and find under the Playlists tab as Southwell u3a Music 200603 along with other u3a Music Lovers programmes from January 2020.

This month's selection is one of contrasts. We have two melody makers from the classical period at the height of their productivity but at different ends of their life. Schubert's 3rd Symphony as an exuberant 18-year-old and Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, composed with many other of his best work in the last year of his life. This is contrasted with more complex pieces; Beethoven as he moves from classical to romantic with the Appassionata, but we start with a mature Brahms with his 2nd Cello Sonata

J. Brahms, (1833 – 1897) Cello Sonata No. 2 Op. 99, F Major 25.41

Norbert Anger Cello Keiko Tamura Piano

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JkFNCePaAA&t=150s>

We played Brahms Cello Sonata No1 last season and his second was written in 1886, more than twenty years after completing his Sonata No. 1. The works following the Fourth Symphony are generally regarded as belonging to the "late style." The earliest of these were three chamber works composed during the summer of 1886 while Brahms was on a productive vacation at a resort near Lake Thun in Switzerland. The pieces, a cello sonata, a violin sonata, and a piano trio, could have been conceived as a group, and make an effective concert program for three performers. The cello sonata is by far the most expansive of the three. It is the only one in four movements, and its scherzo movement is of unusual breadth. By contrast, the second violin sonata and the third piano trio are among his most concise chamber compositions. The first cello sonata, Op. 38, was the earliest published work for solo instrument and piano. This second sonata creates a contrasting counterpart to that introspective and dark piece through its use of the instrument's higher range, effects such as pizzicato and tremolo, and the virtuosic, extroverted piano part. The first movement is extraordinarily exuberant, and the piano tremolo, an effect often used for piano reductions of orchestral and opera scores and rarely used by Brahms, is extremely effective and exciting. The approach to the recapitulation is subdued, tense, and ultimately satisfying. The slow movement is among Brahms's most tender and intimate. It is in F-sharp major, a half-step above the sonata's home key and not closely related to it, a bold movement key choice which is not found elsewhere in Brahms. The key of F-sharp does play a large role in the other three movements. The opening cello pizzicato line and the very chromatic piano chords at the beginning set a highly atmospheric mood. The unusually extended developmental scherzo is passionate and fiery, with a demanding piano part and complex rhythmic ambiguities. It represents the last time Brahms used a da capo marking to indicate the reprise of the main scherzo after the contrasting trio section, which is quiet and gentle. The rondo finale is perhaps the most extreme example of Brahms's late penchant for brief closing movements, largely because of the relatively expansive middle movements. It has been criticized for not providing enough balance, but it is a witty and delightful piece with a joyous ending.

Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828) Symphony No3 in D Major D 200
Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra Conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ6eOqv_Kas&t=504s

26:55

I. Adagio maestoso – Allegro con brio ·II. Allegretto ·III. Menuetto. Vivace – Trio – Menuetto ·
IV. Presto vivace ·

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Schubert's manuscript tells us he began this symphony on May 24, 1815 (age 18), (the same day he wrote a piece for female chorus and horns, a lovely cycle worth exploring). He completed the Adagio maestoso introduction and first few pages of the Allegro of the symphony, and then put the score aside. He returned to the Allegro on July 11; the symphony was completed in eight days. History is filled with stories of fine music written at astonishing speed, but Schubert often did his best work in great haste formed, on the back of a café menu.

When writing about Schubert's Third Symphony, musicologists often point out the influence of Haydn, especially evident in the first movement's slow introduction. There are also echoes of Rossini, especially in the bubbly tarantella of the finale movement. But what might be more extraordinary is the way the "voice" of Schubert is fully formed and always present in this youthful music. We hear Schubert's distinctive orchestration, with its use of "choirs" of instruments (winds playing together opposite strings). Interestingly and inexplicably, these instrumental groupings, along with their distinct personas, frequently wander into the symphonies of Anton Bruckner, written years later.

Schubert was a composer eternally rooted in song, and that intoxicating sense of melody is present throughout the Third Symphony. One example is the sunny melody in the second movement's trio section. Notice the way the other woodwind voices interject during this passage, as if in agreement. This melody begins in the clarinet and is then picked up by the flute, which extends the musical conversation.

We also hear Schubert's characteristically abrupt modulations of key (often related by thirds), which give us the sense of turning a corner into a completely new world. In the final movement's coda (which anticipates the three-note string figures of the Ninth Symphony's triumphant Finale), listen to the way we move far afield harmonically before bouncing back to the "right" key.

In some ways, this music feels both young and old. Amid all its youthful vitality, we catch glimpses of the haunting shadows which occasionally fall across later Schubert symphonies, such as the "Unfinished" Eighth and the "Great" Ninth. For example, listen to the sense of ghostly solemnity in the transition to the first movement's first theme. These shadows are quickly wiped away and replaced with exuberant, carefree vigour, but we do not completely get them out of our ear.

Beethoven (1770 1827) Piano Sonata No23 in F Minor Op 57 Appassionata 24:29
Murray Perahia Piano <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACB2a7dOHmU&t=281s>

Beethoven's quartets, symphonies and piano sonatas all embrace the full scope of his amazing aesthetic journey from conventional classicism to previously uncharted realms of imagination that still challenge and inspire composers, performers and listeners alike. Yet, his piano sonatas are the most intimate of these, as Beethoven wrote them for his own instrument, and thus they preserve an aural image of the ideal he sought as a performer. Until deafness forced a change in his career, Beethoven was known as one of the finest pianists of his time - and the best improviser of all, a key skill to flex the prowess of a composer's imagination.

As solo works, the sonatas require no colleagues to dilute the personal communication between artist and audience. Thus, when we hear a Beethoven piano sonata, we come closer to the man and the artist than with any other genre of his music.

Among Beethoven's 32 published piano sonatas, one of the most compelling and significant is No 23 in f minor, Op. 57, the so-called "Appassionata," as it was a product of the same intensely visionary creative period as the "Eroica" symphony, "Kreutzer" violin sonata and Fidelio opera, and did just as much to revolutionize its genre. According to Czerny, Beethoven considered it to be his greatest sonata prior to his massive 1819 "Hammerklavier" Sonata No 29.

W.A. Mozart (1756 - 1791) Clarinet Concerto in A Major **31:05**
Iceland Symphony Orchestra Conductor Cornelius Meister, Arngunnur Árnadóttir
Clarinet https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YT_63UntRJE

To say that Mozart's last year was an extraordinary one could well be an understatement. Indeed, a merely ordinary composer might have been proud to have accomplished in years what he accomplished during that period. It was not only the number of works, but their quality and the conditions under which they were composed which makes this period so special. The Köchel Catalog lists thirty-three new compositions written from December 1790 to the time of his death one year later. On the list, one can find two string quintets, a piano concerto, two pieces for mechanical organ, numerous dances, the operas *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito*, a Masonic cantata, the Requiem, and his last orchestral work, the Concerto for Clarinet.

It was almost inevitable that Mozart would write a clarinet concerto, for no other major composer championed the new instrument more than Mozart. He wrote for it whenever he could be assured of having good players to perform the parts and, in doing so, forced its acceptance into any orchestra desiring to perform his works. This work owes its existence to Mozart's friendship with the great clarinetist Anton Stadler, for whom he had earlier written the Quintet, K. 581.

The concerto was originally sketched as a work in G Major for basset horn, a type of alto clarinet pitched five steps below the normal B-flat clarinet. After completing the first movement, Mozart changed his mind and decided in favour of Stadler's "basset clarinet", a standard clarinet with an extension to allow it to play four half-steps lower than normal. Unfortunately, the original manuscript was lost, and the work survived only in an edition published for the standard instrument with the extreme low notes transposed up one octave. It was not until the 1960s that clarinetists began to express interest in again performing the work on an extended instrument. Because this instrument is rare, most modern performances use the non-extended clarinet in A.

Although the work is in no sense a virtuoso showpiece—there is no cadenza, for example—it no doubt proved to be exceedingly demanding for a clarinetist playing an instrument with only five or six keys and can be used as a measure of Stadler's extraordinary abilities. Mozart evidently trusted his friend to the extent that he provided very few dynamic markings, knowing that Stadler's musicianship could provide the necessary shadings. The work was finished in October 1791, during the time that Mozart was heavily involved with the first twenty or so performances of *Die Zauberflöte*. Many writers have suggested that the noble serenity of the concerto reflects Mozart's intense emotional involvement with the production of the opera. Whatever the reasons, the combination of Stadler's ability with Mozart's love of the instrument and emotional state of mind resulted in a work generally considered to be among the finest written for any solo instrument.