

# Seaford Music Society

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 3.00 pm**

## **Divertimenti Ensemble**

Ralph de Souza	<i>Violin</i>
Rachel Isserlis	<i>Violin</i>
Matthew Jones	<i>Viola</i>
Sebastian Comberti	<i>Cello</i>
Jane Salmon	<i>Cello</i>

**Ralph de Souza** was born in Mumbai and began violin lessons from an early age. At the age of ten, Ralph was put on a plane by himself to go to the Yehudi Menuhin School, where he found himself sharing a room with Garfield Jackson and Nigel Kennedy. Later, he went to the Curtis Institute in the USA to study with Ivan Galamian and Jaime Laredo.

In 1977 Ralph won the Royal Over-Seas League Competition. In 1985 he spent the summer playing chamber music at Marlboro and became determined to turn to professional quartet playing, and he joined the Endellion String Quartet in 1986. He has been a sought-after chamber musician and has had a close association with the International Musicians' Seminar in Prussia Cove, starting in his student days when he was deeply influenced by Sándor Végh. He also returned to the Menuhin School for several years as a teacher.

Born into a musical London family, **Rachel Isserlis** began playing at an early age and soon developed a deep love for chamber music. She studied with Jaroslav Vanecek at the Royal College of Music, where she won prizes and an exhibition, and continued her studies in Düsseldorf and Amsterdam with the former leader of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Herman Krebbers. After a period as principal second violin in Kent Opera, conducted by Roger Norrington, she became leader of English Touring Opera and also spent several summers leading the festival opera orchestra Musica nel Chiostrò in Tuscany.

Whilst still studying, Rachel became interested in period instruments and worked with all the major English groups in this field, as well as the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra. She is a founder member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with whom she has played as principal second violin at Glyndebourne and Covent Garden. She performed Handel's Violin Sonatas for Irish television, recorded Locatelli's Trio Sonatas with Elizabeth Wallfisch, and played for the BBC Radio 3 series *The Early Music Show*.

**Matthew Jones**, described by *Fanfare* magazine as "the finest violist since William Primrose", enjoys a diverse career, equally at home as soloist or chamber musician, performing classical or contemporary repertoire or fully improvised concerts. He is violist of the Bridge Duo, Debussy Ensemble and Instrumental Quintet of London, was a member of the Badke String Quartet when they won the 2007 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, and is violist in Ensemble MidtVest, an innovative chamber ensemble based in Denmark.



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Matthew has recorded sixteen CDs, including *Britten: Reflections*, with pianist Annabel Thwaite, which was named Chamber CD of the Month by *BBC Music Magazine*. Matthew is Senior Tutor of String Chamber Music and Professor of Viola at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, director of Pro Corda's Intermediate Course, and Professor at the British Isles Music Festival.

Born in London, **Sebastian Comberti** studied in Italy with Amedeo Baldovino and later with Derek Simpson and Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music, from where he graduated in 1977. In 1976 he became a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet, giving concerts throughout the UK and in Europe. Since 1983 he has been principal cello of the London Mozart Players, and has appeared on numerous occasions as soloist, as well as being an active member of the LMP Chamber Ensemble.

A keen interest in historically informed performance has resulted in participation with a great many of London's period instrument groups, and research into early cello repertoire has led to several recitals being recorded by the BBC. It has been this interest that has led to the founding of his own record label, Cello Classics, through which he has released several acclaimed recordings in recent years.

Also born in London, **Jane Salmon** has established a reputation as one of the busiest and most successful cellists of her generation. A member of the Schubert Ensemble, her work as a chamber musician and as a recital soloist has taken her to more than forty countries across the world and has involved her in more than forty CD recordings, broadcasts for radio and television, festivals, and performances in many leading venues. With the Schubert Ensemble she was a winner of the Royal Philharmonic Chamber Music Award for Best Chamber Ensemble.

As a recitalist, Jane has premiered solo works on BBC Radio 3 and in concerts at London's South Bank and Wigmore Hall. Recital tours have included two visits to India, where solo performances to large audiences were juxtaposed with educational work in Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. A graduate of Cambridge University, Jane studied the cello with Amaryllis Fleming, Pierre Fournier and Johannes Goritzki, and won numerous prizes and awards.

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## Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805)

### String Quintet in C Major, Op.28, No.4, G310

- I *Allegro con moto*
- II *Minuetto con moto*
- III *Grave*
- IV *Rondeau: allegro con moto*

Born in Lucca (Italy) in 1743, Boccherini was a fine cellist and a composer of instrumental music, especially chamber music, of which he wrote enormous quantities, including nearly fifty string trios, over one hundred string quartets, and a similar number of string quintets. This quintet was written in 1779.

The first movement's opening bravura trills from the first cello set the scene for a display of cello fireworks throughout the whole work, which never sacrifices lyricism for mere showing off. The 'trotting music' that re-appears in many of Boccherini's works conjures up the scenic, mountainous journeys to and from Madrid. The *Minuet*, placed second, starts in optimistic mood but the *Trio* brings a pall of sadness through a reflective soliloquy for the first cello in the minor key.

The *Grave* is a place of tranquillity among the other three movements, all of which are marked *con moto*. The intimacy of the music in this movement is of a purity and serenity that is so tender as to be almost unbearable. It demands the well-known *Rondeau* that follows as a 'tiramisu'; dispelling any notion of self-indulgence, it celebrates the recurrent nature of life itself.

## **Niels GADE (1817-1890)**

### **String Quintet in F minor**

Neils Gade is a name unfamiliar to many music-lovers, but an important one in his time. His chamber music is marvellously written and does not deserve to disappear into the footnotes of musical historiography. Danish by birth, Gade trained in Rome and Leipzig, where he met and befriended Mendelssohn (conducting the premiere of his violin concerto) and Schumann (conducting the first performance of his piano concerto). Schumann considered Gade a 'rare talent', dedicating one of his trios to him, and basing another on the G-A-D-E, coincidentally the four notes of the strings on a violin.

With his one-movement Quintet in F minor, Gade created a work comparable in expression and form to the one-movement dramatic concert overtures with which he had occupied himself ever since his earliest youth. This work remained unpublished in the composer's lifetime, and its inspiration is unclear. Written in the dark key of F minor (coincidentally the same key as the Brahms Quintet to be played after the interval), this brooding work is tumultuous, restless, never really settling.

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### **INTERVAL 15 MINUTES**

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church, and downstairs via the stairs beside the stage. If you are not already a member of Seaford Music Society and would like to join, please see our Treasurer, Paul Moore, at the desk in the entrance lobby. The cost of your ticket today will be credited towards your remaining annual membership subscription.

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## **Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)**

### **String Quintet in F minor, Op.34**

- I *Allegro non troppo*
- II *Andante, un poco adagio*
- III *Scherzo: Allegro*
- IV *Sostenuto – allegro non troppo – presto non troppo*

Brahms completed this piece in August 1862, shortly before his first visit to Vienna. He sent copies of his manuscript to Clara Schumann and the violinist Joseph Joachim, and meanwhile organised a play-through of the piece with Viennese musicians. Schumann and Joachim heard the new quintet and declared it to be a "piece of deepest significance", but found fault with its scoring. Joachim refused to perform it in public, stating that it lacked "delicacy of sound", and that its instrumentation moved from being "woefully thin" to "excessively thick for long periods at a stretch".

Influenced by Joachim's views, over the next ten months the composer recycled his quintet into a Sonata for two pianos. It is thought that he then destroyed the manuscript of the quintet. Clara Schumann considered this two-piano Sonata to be a compromise, a view shared by the conductor Hermann Levi. Their suggestions for a reworked piece convinced Brahms to create yet a third version of the work, a Piano Quintet, which he completed by the end of October 1864.

Three-quarters of a century later, Sebastian Brown examined the Piano Quintet and the Sonata for two pianos, and concluded that Brahms had made "hardly any attempt to make a genuine re-casting of the work in the new medium of piano quintet", which bore "little of that spontaneous certainty of score-design ... that is so typical of Brahms in his great original works." "Was there a possibility of bringing the [original] work back?" Brown wondered. Despite having carried out intensive study of the Brahms work, the idea seemed to him to be "completely hopeless".

However, the outbreak of the second world war resulted in Brown's spending five years performing police and air-raid duties. "Whilst engaged on the solitary nocturnal perambulations involved," he wrote, "I realised that what appeared to be the actual scoring of the lost quintet was revealing itself to me in great detail." Brown began sketching solutions to the quintet conundrum, "sometimes diving under the grand piano when bombs fell nearby".

Brown's wartime work of 'reconstruction' took six months of 1941 to complete. Following the cessation of hostilities, André Mangeot, the London-based French violinist, gave a performance of it with his quartet and his new friend, the cellist Amaryllis Fleming, at Chelsea Town Hall in October 1946. Ernest Newman's review in *The Sunday Times* reported how the crowded audience gave the quintet's premiere a "remarkable ovation". Newman also delivered his approval for Brown's 'thesis': "the original work must have been substantially as he has reconstituted it, and the dominant impression of the listener is that the musical *thinking* finds its true correlative in the pure string texture."

The intense sonata-form first movement of the piece is stormy and sombre. The principal theme, initially presented in unison, is balanced by a quieter, more lyrical second subject. The brighter closing theme offers some relief from the intensity. The gentle *Andante* is in tripartite (A-B-A) form. The *Scherzo* is one of Brahms's best. The main part's three ideas – a rising, rhythmic subject, a theme with a precise, dotted rhythm, and a march-like melody – are juxtaposed throughout the movement. The march-like idea, lyrically transformed, is the basis for the *Trio* section. The *Finale* begins pensively with highly emotional chromatic harmonies; the main part is a combination of rondo and sonata forms. The overt, Gypsy-like themes brighten the movement, but cannot dispel the sombre mood of the whole work.

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**Please come and join us downstairs after the performance, for a cup of tea or coffee!**

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## **Our next concert**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road, Seaford**

A not-to-be-missed concert, '**Sounds of the Unexpected**', featuring the world's most flamboyant virtuoso recorder player, **Piers Adams**, of Red Priest fame, and keyboard player **Lyndy Mayle**. This will be a shorter, one-hour concert, suitable for all ages.

Membership of the Society grants you free entry to both the remaining concerts this season. Children and young adults (under 26) may also attend without charge, but children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult. You can purchase your concert ticket in advance from Newberry Tully Estate Agents in Church Street; Seaford Tourist Information Centre; online through TicketSource; or from our Treasurer, Paul Moore. Or, of course, you can become a member! To join, see Paul at the desk in the entrance foyer.

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## **Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society**

As a Member, you can receive a £3 discount on your ticket when attending Uckfield Music Club, Haywards Heath Music Society and Nicholas Yonge Society concerts. Simply produce your Seaford Music Society membership card when you pay at the door. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website.

**Uckfield Music Club** ([www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk](http://www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk)): tickets £15 instead of £18 (subject to review)

**Haywards Heath Music Society** ([www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk](http://www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk)): tickets £12 instead of £15

**Nicholas Yonge Society** ([www.nyslewes.org.uk](http://www.nyslewes.org.uk)): tickets £17 instead of £20