

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 11th July 2021 at 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble

Ruth Rogers	<i>Violin</i>
Judith Busbridge	<i>Viola</i>
Sebastian Comberti	<i>Cello</i>
Chris O'Neal	<i>Oboe</i>

Described as “the finest of the younger generation of violinists” (*Musical Opinion*) and hailed by the *Guardian* as “superb”, **Ruth Rogers** is in demand as soloist, leader, and chamber musician. She has an impressive list of awards, including the Tagore Gold Medal – the Royal College of Music’s highest accolade – and has performed as soloist at such prestigious venues as Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and St John’s Smith Square. Ruth was appointed Leader of the London Mozart Players in 2015. She was previously Co-Leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 2008 until 2012, and appears as a guest leader of many other major orchestras including the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Ruth has played to orphans, landmine victims and malaria patients in refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

Judith Busbridge graduated in Music from Birmingham University and completed her viola studies with Thomas Riebl in Salzburg, where she was solo violist in the Camerata Academica under the directorship of Sándor Végh, a post she held for 5 years. Outside her schedule with London Mozart Players she was, until 2011, a founder member of the multi-award-winning Dante String Quartet, with whom she performed at major concert halls and festivals throughout the UK and Europe, winning the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music in 2007. From 2010 to 2013 she was violist with Ensemble 360, a versatile group of eleven musicians of international standing who enjoy a residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, and with whom she again won the RPS Award for chamber music in 2013.

Sebastian Comberti was born in London and studied in Italy with Amedeo Baldovino and later in London with Derek Simpson and Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music. He was a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet until 1983, when he became principal cello with the London Mozart Players. He plays with a number of chamber groups, including Trio Goya and Divertimenti Ensemble, and has recorded chamber and solo CDs for CRD, EMI, Harmonia Mundi, Hyperion, Meridian, RCA, CPO and Cello Classics.

Christopher O'Neal's varied career has always centred on a core of chamber music-making with the finest ensembles in Britain. A founder member of award-winning ensembles Capricorn and the Elysian Wind Quintet, he has been the oboist of the Fibonacci Sequence since the group's inception in 1994. He is a long-standing principal oboe and soloist with the London Mozart Players, the Orchestra of St John’s, and formerly the English Sinfonia, playing concertos across the length and breadth of the UK and Europe. Chris has played as guest principal with virtually every major symphony orchestra in the UK, and his versatility extends to the commercial studio, where he has numerous films to his name, notably *The Madness of King George*. His acclaimed recital CD *Oboe*, with the Fibonacci Sequence, is regularly broadcast by classical radio stations worldwide. Chris is now Professor of Oboe at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music.



Seaford Music Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Newberry Tully Estate Agents.

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Variations in C major on "Là ci darem la mano" from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, WoO28

Theme: *Andante*

v.1 *Allegretto*

v.2 *L'istesso tempo*

v.3 *Andante*

v.4 *Allegro moderato*

v.5 *Moderato*

v.6 *Lento espressivo*

v.7 *Allegretto scherzando*

v.8 *Allegretto giocoso*

Coda: *Vivace*

Beethoven was fond of writing variations on tunes that would have been familiar to his contemporaries. Most of these tunes are now largely forgotten, and even their composers are now, by and large, known only to historians of music. But Beethoven had a particular liking for the music of Mozart, and it was to Mozart's operas that he turned most frequently in choosing a theme on which to write variations. In the 1790s he wrote four different sets of variations on Mozartian themes, including the set we hear today.

Beethoven wrote a good deal, and very successfully, for wind ensembles, but these happy and extrovert compositions nearly all belong to the period before the onset of his profound deafness in 1802. The current piece was written in 1795 and originally scored for two oboes and a cor anglais. Beethoven was inspired to write for this unusual combination of instruments by the brilliant playing of three Viennese brothers, the Teimer brothers, for whom he had previously written a substantial work, the *Trio in C, Op.87*. It was first performed in 1797 but, like a number of other compositions for wind, it was not published in the composer's lifetime and so is identified, not by an Opus number, but by a WoO number ('*Werke ohne Opuszahl*', or 'Works without opus number'), according to a catalogue of posthumously published works.

These variations were based on the well-known theme of the duet in *Don Giovanni* where Giovanni makes an offer of marriage to Zerlina. Beethoven had himself, it has been claimed, proposed marriage in the same year that he wrote these variations, to a singer then in Bonn, Magdalena Willman. But the choice of theme is more likely to have been influenced by its popularity and its potential for Beethoven's musical purposes. All the variations are in the tonic key except the slow Variation 6, which is allowed to slide into the minor mode. In most of the variations one of the instruments takes a lead role and the others accompany, but the final variation makes the theme into a fugue subject before leading into the *Coda*.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and String Trio, Op.2

Britten's musical gifts became apparent at an early stage. He won an open scholarship for composition to the Royal College of Music in July 1930 when he was only 16. He studied there under John Ireland (with whom he did not see eye-to-eye) and won various composition prizes, before being awarded his ARCM in 1933. This quartet is a college work, dedicated to Leon Goossens, whose artistry inspired its writing, and who was the oboist at its first performance on BBC radio in August 1933. The work was selected for performance at the ISCM Festival in Florence in April 1934 where it made a considerable impression – "a work of distinct originality".

The quartet is in one movement of about 13 minutes, and Britten shows skilful control in the design of the work, preventing its falling into shapeless chaos. Strangely, the first bar is one of total silence (apparently

for the audience to strain its ears!) before the opening *Andante alla marcia*, an eccentric ghostly march for strings. This is followed by a gentle *cantabile* melody for oboe. Both these ideas will return later. A short transition using lots of trills leads to the main *Allegro giusto*, in which a new theme is presented first by violin, and developed in the manner of continuous variations, the last of which, with a change of tempo back to *Andante* (strings high, oboe low), reverts to the oboe tune of the first section.

The oboe then remains silent during a long intensive development of the *Andante* theme (led off by the viola), re-entering only as the development begins to subside, with its own florid extension of the theme. Finally the material of the *Allegro* returns (now *più agitato*) and the circle is completed by a slightly varied recapitulation of the opening string *Andante alla marcia*.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Duo for Viola and Cello in E-flat major: mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern [‘with two obbligato eyeglasses’], WoO32

- I *Allegro*
- II *Andante poco adagio*
- III *Minuet and Trio*

Beethoven was born in Bonn, but, following a visit to Vienna for three months at the age of 17 (during which time he received a little teaching from Mozart, who recognised his genius), in his twenty-second year he returned to Vienna to settle there permanently. One of the first people he met in Vienna was Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, Secretary in the Hungarian Chancellery and a skilled amateur cello player and composer. The two men remained lifelong friends.

There are many letters that show the close relationship between the two men, and these are very different from the letters written to other friends or patrons. Beethoven calls Zmeskall “Count of Music”, “Most beloved Conte di Musica”, “Most excellent Count of Music”, “Baron (and still bachelor)”, teasing him in many ways. In one of these letters he apparently teases Zmeskall for his short-sightedness, saying “*je vous suis bien obligé pour votre faiblesse de vos yeux*” (“I am most obliged for the weakness of your eyes”).

In 1811 Beethoven was to dedicate his *F minor String Quartet, Op.95*, to Zmeskall, but it was 15 years earlier, in 1796, that he wrote this *Eyeglasses Duo* for viola and cello. Most certainly he wrote it for Zmeskall, and since Beethoven himself played the viola it seems clear that he intended it for them to play together. Beethoven, too, needed to wear glasses, hence the joking title ‘*with two obbligato eyeglasses*’.

The viola begins the piece energetically with the theme, played immediately afterwards by the cello. Through the whole movement the two instruments in turn play the theme and accompany each other, playing fragments one after the other, and together, with also *cantabile* phrases accompanied by arpeggios. Before the recapitulation there is a very nice play of alternated *pizzicato* and bow playing.

The *Eyeglasses Duo* was not published until 1912, more than a century after it was written. It is not complete, with only a brief sketch of the slow movement surviving. However, the movement has been newly completed by Sebastian Comberti, and today we shall be hearing the world premiere of this completed slow movement.

The *Minuetto* is a gentle movement, with phrases played in chords and in canon between the two instruments, but Beethoven suddenly pulls the rug from under the listener’s feet by veering from E flat to the remote C flat – a comic effect probably reflecting the influence Haydn had on him.

Programme note prepared using material from www.viola-in-music.com website, whose co-operation we gratefully acknowledge, and from where sheet music may be purchased.

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Oboe Quartet in F major, K.370

- I *Allegro*
- II *Adagio*
- III *Rondeau: Allegro*

Mozart was treated by his employer, Salzburg's Archbishop Colloredo, as a servant. Hating both the Archbishop and Salzburg, Mozart was delighted when, in 1780, Karl Theodor, the Elector of Bavaria (a prominent political position), commissioned him to write an opera for the Munich Court Opera's 1781 Carnival season. Acknowledging the Elector's power, Colloredo reluctantly gave Mozart leave of absence for six weeks. Staying in Munich for four months, Mozart spent most of his time on his new opera, *Idomeneo*.

Three years earlier, in 1777, Mozart had encountered the gifted oboist Friedrich Ramm, then in the Mannheim Orchestra. During his stay in Munich, Mozart was delighted to find that Ramm had become a member of the Munich Court Orchestra. Early in 1781 he wrote this *Oboe Quartet* expressly for Ramm, and dedicated it to him.

Although technically a quartet, this work is very concerto-like in structure: it has three movements, and thematic material is exchanged between the oboe and the strings. With Ramm's exceptional capabilities in mind, Mozart wrote a spectacular composition for him; in turn, Ramm fulfilled all the demands made upon him by Mozart's brilliant writing.

In the opening *Allegro*, in sonata-form, Mozart treats all four instruments contrapuntally. Although the violin and oboe are especially prominent, each instrument makes an important contribution. The second theme is unusual: instead of introducing new material, Mozart reuses the main theme, but with new scoring and transposed to a different key. The movement is light-hearted, but the oboist's technical skills are constantly challenged.

In the beautiful, poignant D minor *Adagio*, the oboe steals the show, and there is even a short cadenza. In the sparkling *Rondeau* finale (Mozart's spelling), Mozart does something startling: near the end, the oboe plays in 4/4 time (duple metre) while the strings play in 6/8 time (triple metre) – much later, this polyrhythmic technique was to become a prominent feature of twentieth-century music.

Programme note courtesy of Making Music

Our next season

We are planning a season of concerts from October 2021 to May 2022. The first concert will be on Sunday 24th October 2021. Members of Seaford Music Society who paid their subscriptions for 2019-20 remain members until our AGM in July 2021, and will receive full details of the 2021-22 season at the AGM, or by post as soon as possible afterwards.

If you are not a member, and would like to be informed about the 2021-22 season, please leave your contact details at the desk by the entrance, or contact us by email at treasurer@seafordmusicsociety.com.

Our Annual General Meeting

This will be held on Sunday 18th July at 3.00pm in Bishopstone Village Hall. It will be a short, functional meeting, without any refreshments or other social element. A minimum of ten members need to be present in order to form a quorum, and, in response to an earlier request, a sufficient number of members have indicated that they expect to attend. If you would like to attend but have not yet told us, please do so immediately, to ensure that we do not exceed government-imposed regulations regarding indoor gatherings.