

PROGRAMME NOTES**SUBMITTED FOR****THE EXAMINATION OF****THE DIPLOMA OF THE ASSOCIATED BOARD
OF THE ROYAL SCHOOLS OF MUSIC
(DipABRSM)****IN****MUSIC PERFORMANCE (VIOLIN)****MONDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2005****PROGRAMME ORDER****Scherzo in C minor****J. Brahms****Violin Concerto no.4 in D****W. A. Mozart***1. Allegro***'Chant de Roxane' from *King Roger*****K. Szymanowski****Moto Perpetuo****F. Bridge****From My Native Country****B. Smetana***1. Moderato**2. Andantino – Moderato – Allegro Vivo – Presto***WORD COUNT: 1188**

Scherzo in C minor, op. 4 (1853)**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

It was Robert Schumann who suggested that Brahms, along with the composer Albert Dietrich and Schumann himself, compose a collaborative violin sonata as a surprise present for the violinist Joseph Joachim. The piece became known as the 'F.A.E.' Sonata after Joachim's own, somewhat poignant, motto: *Frei Aber Einsam* ('Free, yet lonely').

Brahms composed this scherzo, which was to form the third of the four movements. The violin sets the tempo of the piece with an insistent – almost aggressive – announcement on the open G string before the piano emphatically announces a preference for its chromatic neighbour, A flat. This interval (a minor second) in fact forms the basis of much of the piece's original theme.

Brahms includes two trios in the work – the first of which is repeated – giving the piece an overall arch-like structure of ABACABA (also known as sonata-rondo form). The first trio is a potentially triumphal melody which is never allowed to fully settle before the original theme returns. The second is a luscious, romantic interlude in a completely new key (G major) and provides a contrasting mood to the tempestuous original theme. Eventually, the major keys win this particular battle, the piece concluding with a joyful C major coda.

Violin Concerto no.4 in D, K.218 (1775)**W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)***1. Allegro*

'I played as though I were the finest violinist in Europe!' Such was the nineteen-year-old Mozart's triumphant declaration to his father after the first performance of his fourth violin concerto in 1775. It was to be an important year for the violin repertoire: four of Mozart's five concertos for the instrument were written, while Mozart was employed as Konzertmeister at the court of the Prince Archbishop in Salzburg.

Whereas the first three violin concertos are somehow more introspective in mood and perhaps even more rhetorically conventional, the fourth and fifth concertos present the audience with an increased sense of compositional bravura. In the fourth concerto this confidence manifests itself through the abundance of thematic material: the first movement's opening march-like theme is only referred to once at the entry of the soloist before being completely overtaken by a number of new themes, all convincingly packed into the six minutes.

The music naturally calls for a very particularly 'Mozartian' sensitivity from the performer, who must be careful not to over-sentimentalise the more melodic passages (through overuse of vibrato and rubato, for example), and must maintain a sense of control and lightness in the more technically challenging moments.

'Chant de Roxane' from *King Roger***Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937)
arr. Pawel Kocharński**

This beautiful arrangement of a haunting song from Szymanowski's opera *King Roger* (1932) exploits the violin's superlative potential to mimic the human voice – and also to transcend it. For this piece is very much about the transcending of boundaries.

Szymanowski's music written after the First World War can be seen as a conscious attempt to transcend, or negotiate with, the German tradition which dominated Europe. It does this by drawing on a vast number of non-Germanic influences: French Impressionism, oriental and Arabic culture and, especially, Ancient Greece. *King Roger* is a reworking of the tensions arising from the opposition of the Greek gods Apollo (god of the sun and order) and Dionysus (god of wine and ecstasy), embodied here by King Roger and the shepherd, respectively.

Through her attraction to the shepherd, Queen Roxana violates the boundary between these worlds: her song, from which this piece is arranged, is her song of Dionysian ecstasy:

In the dance of joy
in merry madness
a radiant dawn!
Share all your secrets!
Lead me to your world!

The violinist's opening instruction, 'improvisando', suggests the notes ought to sound like a spontaneous, ecstatic outpouring, rather than a rational set of prescribed notes. The influence of Debussy and Ravel is evident through the colorific effects such as the use of the mute, chromatic intervals and parallel octaves, as well as the artificial harmonics at the very end of the piece, which echoes the stratospheric heights of the opening; but this time within the more 'rational' constraints of C sharp major.

Moto Perpetuo (1900)**Frank Bridge (1879-1941)**

1900 was an important year for Frank Bridge. Three years into study at the Royal College of Music he won a Foundation Scholarship, enabling him to study with Charles Villiers Stanford, then the most influential and famous composition teacher in Britain.

Bridge was originally a violinist himself (later gaining a reputation as an outstanding viola player), so he was well aware of the technical challenges posed by the instrument. Indeed, the *Moto Perpetuo* could be interpreted as a technical exercise, focusing mainly on the martelé bowing technique, but also including chromatic scales, arpeggios, double stopping and glissando. The challenge to the performer is to give the piece convincing melodic and rhythmic shape, rather than approaching it as a purely technical study.

This is certainly more of a showpiece for the violinist than the pianist: Bridge's piano writing is highly economical and designed to carry forward the linear argument of the piece, rather than engaging and experimenting with harmonies for sensuous effect: this was to happen through Stanford's teaching (Stanford himself developed a style which drew heavily on the German Romantic tradition of Brahms with its often thick, luscious textures). As Anthony Payne has pointed out: 'Bridge was the type of artist whose creative personality was initially founded on a natural gift for composition and a strong feeling for good taste, rather than a burning sense of his own uniqueness as a human being. That was only to develop later.'

From My Native Country (1880)

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

1. *Moderato*

2. *Andantino – Moderato – Allegro Vivo – Presto*

'I am not ashamed,' Smetana wrote in March 1860 (his second ever letter in the Czech language), 'to reply to you in my mother tongue, however imperfectly, and am glad to be able to show that my fatherland means more to me than anything else'. Inspired initially by the nationalistic Russian operas of Glinka, Smetana decided to compose music that would express the essential 'Czech' spirit for his people, who had recently been liberated from Austrian rule and who desperately needed new ways to express their nationalist feeling.

Up until this time, much 'nationalistic' music consisted of the weaving of existing vernacular folk melodies into composers' own works. Recognising that this tradition of *Volkslied* quotation was a method of composition firmly rooted in the Austro-German tradition, Smetana composed his own melodies which had the taste of genuine Czech tunes but which were actually entirely original compositions: the A major melody in the first movement and G minor melody in the second movement of this piece are excellent examples. In this way, he was able to resist merely adopting a German compositional method and the result was music that could claim to be even more in the 'spirit' of the new nation, consciously steering itself away (both musically and politically) from its Germanic past.

With this in mind, the music can be seen as continuously unfolding and evolving into new expressive realms, unhindered by any fidelity to real, existing folksong or to any conventional compositional form. It is possible to view the whole piece as a gradual crescendo, starting with a plaintive-sounding *piano* but ending in a triumphal *fortissimo* and a sense of assurance that Smetana, only a few years away from death, had certainly accomplished his aim of creating a distinctive musical voice for his nation.