

SONATA IN G MINOR, BWV 1020

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

There is much debate over the origin of several of Bach's Flute Sonatas, including the G minor, BWV 1020. Based on information presented by Bach scholars, it is widely believed that this sonata was not written by J S Bach, but by one of his sons or pupils, probably Carl Philipp Emanuel. There are three different original manuscripts for the G minor sonata, and they are not consistent in naming their composer. Whilst it is generally accepted that this sonata was written specifically for flute and continuo, there are, however, many published articles that state it was actually composed for the violin.

Therefore, this arrangement by John Harle, for soprano saxophone, does have some historical precedent and justification. Unlike many modern works, in which instrumentation and texture are so intertwined that one would rarely consider deviating from the composer's intentions, Baroque musicians would play on whatever they had to hand, and in whatever manner it pleased them! There are three movements: *Allegro – Adagio – Allegro*

RHAPSODIE

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

The *Rhapsodie* for alto saxophone and piano (or orchestra) was composed between 1901 and 1911. Debussy did not finish the work, which was completed by Roger Ducasse in 1919. After being encouraged by a doctor to learn a wind instrument to help alleviate her breathing problems, wealthy Boston socialite, Elise Hall, took up the saxophone. Among her many commissioned pieces was Debussy's *Rhapsodie*, though the composer was decidedly half-hearted about the project, coming up with four lines only, which he entitled *Rhapsodie mauresque*.

In 1911 Roger Ducasse attempted to salvage the piece, but did so in such a way as to accommodate Mrs Hall, whose pulmonary problems prevented her from playing long, extended passages. Sigurd Rascher made yet another attempt to bring the piece to the forefront of saxophone literature, but it was only later, when John Harle re-orchestrated the piece, that it became a full saxophone concerto. French saxophonist, Vincent David, subsequently made the present piano-reduction version

PIÈCE EN FORME DE HABANERA

Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937)

On the surface this may appear to be another of Ravel's Spanish-influenced works, and although it is generally thought that the habanera is a Spanish song and dance, in fact its roots go back further. The habanera was introduced from Africa to Cuba – Havana, hence the name and its French alternative, Havanaise – and from here it was very naturally imported to Spain. Ravel's

piece began life in 1907 as a *Vocalise en forme de Habanera* for wordless voice and piano. It has since been arranged for many different combinations of instruments, including piano trio, and for soprano saxophone by Jules Viard.

SIX STUDIES IN ENGLISH FOLKSONG

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

Vaughan Williams is one of relatively few nineteenth-century composers who used a saxophone in their orchestral works, the most famous example being the saxophone solo in *Job*, where it is used to depict the somewhat shifty character of *Job* himself. In a more pleasant light, the composer asks for three saxophones in the Sixth and Ninth Symphonies, all of which reflects, perhaps, the fact that, as a child, Vaughan Williams took saxophone lessons.

The *Six Studies in English Folksong* were originally written for cellist, May Mukle, in 1926, with alternative settings for violin, viola, clarinet, bassoon, tuba, and even baryton! The present version for alto saxophone is by American saxophonist and arranger, Robert Stanton. Vaughan Williams's own admonition on the setting of folksongs was that they be 'treated with love', and so they are here. Each study is tastefully framed to reveal the beauty of the individual song, the whole considerably enhanced by the work's overall brevity. The songs thus treated are: *Lovely on the Water (The Springtime of the Year)*, *Spurn Point*, *Van Dieman's Land*, *She Borrowed Some of Her Mother's Gold*, *The Lady and the Dragon*, and *As I Walked Over London Bridge*.

CONCERT STUDY IN D FLAT MAJOR ('Un Sospiro')

Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886)

This is the third of Liszt's *Trois Études de Concert* although it is likely that the title did not originate with the composer himself. Although there is no evidence that Liszt actively attempted to remove the subtitle *Un Sospiro*, none of the editions or subsequent prints of the *Trois Études* published by Kistner during the composer's lifetime made use of it. Liszt simply ignored such subtitles in later years, always referring to the piece by key instead. This well-known piano solo was, in fact, dedicated, along with the other two in the set, to the composer's uncle, Eduard Liszt, the youngest son of Liszt's grandfather and the step-brother of his own father. Eduard handled Liszt's business affairs for more than thirty years until his own death in 1879.

CONCERTO FOR SAXOPHONE IN E FLAT MAJOR, OP 109

Alexander Glazunov (1865 – 1936)

The last of five instrumental concertos by Glazunov, the *Concerto for Saxophone and String Orchestra*, was composed between March and June 1934. It was written for, and dedicated to its first interpreter, the Danish virtuoso, Sigurd Rascher. The work not only shows Glazunov to be a masterful composer, but also demonstrates a fine understanding of the capabilities of the saxophone, presenting all the lyrical qualities of the instrument, as well as displaying fully its technical resources

The concerto is a concise one-movement work. Opening with a somewhat noble-fashioned *allegro moderato*, after ten bars the saxophone enters with a free-flowing melody which develops on scherzo-like lines, and leads to a second, more refined theme. An *andante* episode ensues, the work's 'slow movement', its melancholy mood gradually gaining strength and developing into a virtuosic cadenza for the soloist. This, in turn, leads to a *fugato* section, a reprise of all themes, with the main melody of the exposition following on. The tempo quickens and the concerto ends with a triumphant flourish from the saxophone. On this occasion, the piano-reduction is by the composer himself.

INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES

Tickets for the BELCEA STRING QUARTET at the Sherwell Centre on Saturday 10 February, and for the remaining concerts in the season, will be on sale during the interval.

HISTOIRE DU TANGO (Bordel 1900 – Café 1930)

Astor Piazzolla (1921 – 1992)

Astor Piazzolla was keenly aware of the changing style of the Argentine national dance during his lifetime. His four-movement *Histoire du Tango* covers the dance's evolution through the twentieth century, and was originally written for flute and guitar. Other arrangements have followed, including this transcription for soprano saxophone and piano by Ken-ichiro Isoda and Nobuya Sugawa.

The tango was initially regarded as a lowly dance and, like North American jazz, it originated in bordellos. The first movement, *Bordel 1900*, depicts the relatively genteel *Milonga* (a precursor to the tango) as having been jolted into a new form by a heavy injection of eroticism, where the typical dotted rhythms are now exaggerated, in a manner certainly not becoming in polite society. By 1930, the tango was the favourite dance of all classes in Argentina, and had become known as a 'daring dance' around the world. In *Café 1930* Piazzolla is here writing directly from his memories of the type of tango played in Buenos Aires, now a respectful portrayal of the full-blown traditional tango. *Nightclub 1960* and *Concert d'aujourd'hui* would normally complete Piazzolla's investigation of the dance-form.

TWO ELEGIES FRAMING A SHOUT

Mark-Anthony Turnage (born 1960)

The première of his first opera, *Greek*, in 1988, established Turnage's reputation as an artist who dared to forge his own path between modernism and tradition by means of a unique blend of jazz and classical styles. In 1996, *Blood on the Floor* was commissioned by Ensemble Modern, and written for the distinguished jazz musicians, John Scofield, Peter Erskine and Martin Robertson. It continues the probing social critique of *Greek*, exploring the tragedy of contemporary drug culture in terms of tough, yet heartfelt lyricism. *Two Elegies Framing a Shout* is closely linked to *Blood on the Floor*, in both style and content, since its closing *Elegy*, entitled *Elegy for Andy*, originally formed the sixth movement of the latter work, and refers to Turnage's own brother, who had died from a drug overdose. This three-movement work is written for soprano saxophone which Turnage actually described as his 'favourite instrument'.

ANDANTE AND RONDO CAPRICCIOSO, OP 14

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

Opinions differ on the date of composition for Mendelssohn's *Rondo capriccioso*. The most recent research shows that the work was finished by 1828, but lacked the introductory *Andante* section. However, in 1830 he revised the piece, and the autograph version now includes both sections. Linking the initial slow section in E major to the brilliant E minor finale became a model for a number of Mendelssohn's subsequent works, and the progression from major to minor also occurs, of course, in the *Italian* Symphony. The piano was Mendelssohn's main instrument and so this extremely well-written piece has always been a firm favourite with pianists, despite its somewhat salon-like qualities.

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)

Gershwin's original intention had been to write an extended blues for orchestra, but he abandoned this in favour of a piece very free in form, and given the title by which it is now known. Its shape apparently came to him while he was travelling to Boston. In the composer's words: 'It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty-bang, that is often so stimulating to a composer ... I frequently hear music in the heart of noise. And there I suddenly heard – even saw on paper – the complete construction of the *Rhapsody in Blue*. No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America – of our vast melting-pot, of our blues, our metropolitan madness ...' Japanese composer, Jun Nagao, skilfully combines soprano, alto and tenor saxophones with piano, in an exciting version, rarely performed in the UK.

Programme Notes by Philip R Buttall

NAOMI SULLIVAN (Saxophone)

Naomi Sullivan studied at Chetham's School of Music, the Royal College of Music and Northwestern University, Chicago. She has won numerous awards and prizes in the UK, Europe and the USA.

As a soloist, Naomi has played with orchestras in the USA, Germany and UK, and continues to perform under the auspices of the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme with pianist Tim Sidford, and for *Live Music Now!* Her orchestral playing includes engagements with the Bournemouth Symphony and Hallé Orchestras, and Birmingham's Contemporary Music Group. As a chamber musician, she has performed at numerous London venues, as well as in the Park Lane Young Artists Series. She also plays alto saxophone in the Paragon Quartet.

Recent projects include two CD releases with the Paragon Quartet, quintet and concerto performances with Jean-Yves Fourmeau, and working as musical director for the 2006 London Saxophone Festival. Future projects include a further CD with Paragon, and a solo concerto performance with the RSO. Naomi also teaches at the Purcell School, and at a number of prestigious educational establishments in the London area.

TIM SIDFORD (Piano)

Tim Sidford was an Associated Board Scholar at the Royal College of Music, where he studied with John Barstow and Niel Immelman. During his time there he won four of the College prizes for Piano and Chamber Music, and was chosen to perform for HM The Queen. He has participated in master-classes by Stephen Hough, Peter Katin, Howard Shelley and Gordon Fergus-Thompson.

As soloist and chamber musician, Tim has performed at the Purcell Room, St Martin-in-the-Fields and St James's, Piccadilly, and has appeared extensively throughout the UK, Germany, Holland and the Czech Republic. He has been involved in world premieres of works by Anthony Payne and Ben Fosskett, and contributed to Joanna MacGregor's CD, 'Neural Circuits'. Tim enjoys working with children, and currently teaches at various London schools.

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Plymouth Chamber Music

**NAOMI
SULLIVAN (Saxophone)**
**TIM
SIDFORD (Piano)**

**7.30pm Saturday 20 January 2007 at the
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