

Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

2 April 2023 – 4pm

JAREN ZIEGLER

Viola

LYNN ARNOLD

Piano

ARIS SABETAI

Cello

PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

Bach (1685 - 1750): Prelude - 6th Cello Suite

The six Cello Suites, BWV 1007-1012, are suites for unaccompanied cello by Johann Sebastian Bach. They are some of the most frequently performed and recognizable solo compositions ever written for cello. Bach most likely composed them during the period 1717–23, when he served as Kapellmeister in Köthen. The title given on the cover of the Anna Magdalena Bach manuscript was Suites à Violoncello Solo senza Basso (Suites for cello solo without bass).

The cello suites have been transcribed for numerous solo instruments, including the violin, viola, double bass, viola da gamba, mandolin, piano, marimba, classical guitar, recorder, flute, electric bass, horn, saxophone, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, euphonium, tuba, ukulele,

and charango. They have been transcribed and arranged for orchestra as well.

The prelude, mainly consisting of arpeggiated chords, is the best-known movement from the entire set of suites and is regularly heard on television and in films.

The Prelude consists of two parts, the first of which has a strong recurring theme that is immediately introduced in the beginning. The second part is a scale-based cadenza movement that leads to the final, powerful chords. The subsequent allemande contains short cadenzas that stray away from this otherwise very strict dance form. The first minuet contains demanding chord shiftings and string crossings.

Bridge (1879 - 1941): - Two Pieces for Viola

Frank Bridge was an English composer who flourished during the early part of the 20th century. A student of Charles Stanford, Bridge was a generation younger than Edward Elgar, a contemporary of Ralph Vaughan Williams and a generation older than Benjamin Britten, one of his students. This places Bridge within a complex intersection of artistic and historical developments. The French music of Debussy and Ravel had a strong impact on Bridge's generation which found a comfortable blend within a tradition of English "pastorale" music that emphasized a kind of foggy impressionism of modality, mist and melancholy. The new Viennese school of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern staged a musical revolution within Bridge's lifetime that would strongly influence his own mature chamber compositions in a stylistic shift that would obscure his popularity.

The early part of the century witnessed a renaissance of chamber music in England with a rediscovery of Elizabethan consort music that helped inspire the Cobbett's "Phantasy" competitions for new English string chamber music. Both Bridge and Vaughan Williams submitted outstanding compositions for these contests to create a modern "fancie." And it was during this time that Lionel Tertis, a fellow Englishman just a few years Bridge's senior, became the first internationally famous violist, thereby granting his instrument a new respectability among its kin, the violin and cello. Bridge was an

outstanding violist who played with professional chamber ensembles and contributed to the English musical literature noted for its special love affair with the viola.

In the fashion of the times with a thriving market for relatively mass consumption of domestic chamber music, many of Bridge's miniatures were published with a variety of scorings featuring any one of the stringed instruments and piano. Among this cache of skilfully crafted character pieces, one finds two that were written specifically for viola and piano, and were published during his lifetime. It was the famous Lionel Tertis who asked Bridge to compose some new works for the initial issues of the "Tertis Viola Library", an effort to establish a new repertoire for the instrument. Written around 1906, they were published in 1908 and provide a lovely showcase for Bridge's early style. Very much a reflection of their time and place, both pieces evoke that haunting admixture of French-derived impressionism, English folk modality and an atmosphere of wistful reverie that graces the music of Elgar, Delius and Vaughan Williams among others. The mellow and husky tone of the viola is ideally suited to the character of the music. Titled *Pensiero* (contemplation) and *Allegro appassionato*, they offer a wonderful introduction to Bridge's art by way of contrast. In the words of John Bishop, they "... show two of the most important sides of Bridge's musical personality—the former piece restrained and elegiac, the latter exuberant and expansive.

Bruch (1838 - 1920): Romance for Viola and Piano

The Romance for viola Op.85 by Max Bruch is a little known lovely work, only about eight minute long. As the name says, Romance or romanze or romanza it is a work

expressing a romantic mood. Originally from the 15th century the romance was a sung work, in Spain and Italy. In France and Germany it indicated a romantic tale. From

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the 18th century the term has been used for both vocal and instrumental works, keeping the original romantic, lyrical mood and character.

Bruch composed this Romance for Maurice Vieux, the principal viola player at the Paris Opera and Conservatoire orchestra. He later prepared a version for performance with solo piano.

The composition is in F major, in one movement marked *Andante con moto*. However, during the movement Bruch makes the viola express a variety of moods, more and more agitated, through the use of mixed rhythms, triplets and dotted notes, a series of fast arpeggios and abrupt chords, with the head of the theme always recognisable throughout the piece, played by one instrument or the other one, whilst the viola elaborates.

Pärt (1935): Fratres (arr. for Viola and Piano)

Fratres (original setting for violin and piano) was commissioned by the Salzburg Festival and premiered on August 17th, 1980 at that very place (violin: Gidon Kremer, piano: Elena Kremer). Composed in Pärt's very own 'Tintinnabuli'-style, this piece allows many different settings because it is not bound to a specific tone colour.

'The highest virtue of music, for me, lies outside of its mere sound. The particular timbre of an instrument is part of the music, but it is not the most important element. If it were, I would be surrendering to the essence of the music. Music must exist of itself ... two, three notes ... the essence must be there, independent of the instruments.' (*Arvo Pärt*)

~~~~~ Interval ~~~~~

## Knox (1956): Pocket Concerto – 1st Movement

Garth Knox wrote the *Pocket Concerto* as a concerto for viola in which the solo violist dialogues not with a full symphony orchestra, but with a single cello. This radical reduction of the forces involved avoids the balance problems often associated with viola concertos, and allows the soloist to bring out the intimate personal qualities of the viola. We will hear the first movement, meant as a tribute to the composer Paul Hindemith, himself both a violist and conductor. Garth Knox, the composer, is at the

forefront of the new music scene in many fields. Drawing on his vast experience as viola player of the Arditti Quartet and the Ensemble intercontemporain and his close collaboration with most of the leading composers of today, he has become a unique performer of music of many different styles, ranging from minimalist understatement to the cutting edge of new techniques and new technologies.

## Vierne (1870 - 1937): Le Soir, Op. 5 No. 1

Louis Vierne is best known as an organist and composer for his own instrument. Vierne was born blind; his sight was partially restored when he was six years old, although it remained very poor.

He studied the organ with Franck and Widor at the Paris Conservatoire, and won his premier prix in organ in 1894. In 1900 Vierne was appointed as titular organist at Notre Dame Cathedral. He died of a heart attack while giving an organ recital at Notre Dame.

Although Vierne wrote works in many different genres, his organ compositions, particularly the six organ symphonies, remain the best known.

The *Deux pièces* were composed in 1894–5, and they fit within the nineteenth-century tradition of pictorial miniatures. In this first piece, 'Le soir' ('The evening') in F major, tranquillity is evoked through the slow tempo and the viola's serene melodic lines.

## Brahms (1833 - 1897)– Sonata for Viola and Piano in F minor, Op. 120 No. 1

In 1894 the sixty-one-year-old Brahms presented the clarinet maestro, Richard Mühlfeld with two works—a pair of sonatas for clarinet and piano, his very last pieces of chamber music, composed that summer at Bad Ischl. Mühlfeld; Brahms introduced them first at a private concert in Berchtesgaden for the Duke and Duchess of Meiningen on 19 September of that year, and in January 1895 they gave the public premieres in Vienna. Whenever they played the sonatas together afterwards, Brahms gave Mühlfeld his own performing fees; and he granted the clarinetist all the performing rights in the sonatas in his lifetime. Brahms lavished particular care and affection on these works, and he clearly wished them to have the widest possible circulation, for he adapted them—with a certain amount of recomposition in each case—in two parallel forms: as sonatas for viola and piano, and for violin and piano.

The violin versions are rarely heard, but the viola sonatas have become cornerstones of that instrument's repertoire, just as the original forms have for the repertoire of the clarinet. Brahms was effectively establishing a new genre, since before they appeared there were virtually no important duo sonatas for viola and piano (there is an unfinished sonata by Glinka), though Schumann and Joachim had used the viola for a number of lyric pieces. While in the Op 114 Trio his viola part was virtually the same as its clarinet original, merely transposing some passages downward to come within the viola's compass, in the Op 120 sonatas the recasting of the part went a good deal further. Brahms entirely rewrote some figurations, added double-stopping, and sometimes extended the melodic line at places where the clarinet part was silent. Subtly and unobtrusively, he accommodated the music to the different expressive character of the viola.

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## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

In 2022 **Jaren Ziegler** won the BBC Young Musician String Final becoming the first violist in the competition's history to do so. In the Grand Final, he performed William Walton's Viola Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Mark Wigglesworth. Jaren was also the youngest semi-finalist in the 2021 Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition. He has been awarded 1st prize in the Peter Morrison Concerto Competition - Junior Royal College of Music, Bromsgrove Young Musicians' Platform, Junior Academy Viola Prize and the North London Music Festival String Recital.

In 2021 he joined the renowned international string ensemble LGT Young Soloists and has recorded with them at Abbey Road Studios. He regularly tours with them having performed in Europe, Asia and Australia. Jaren has also appeared as a soloist at the Royal Festival Hall and as a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He is a passionate chamber musician and has won numerous awards with Parkview Chamber as well as performing at St John's Smith Square.

Jaren has recently been selected for the Verbier Academy's 2023 Soloist Programme. This year he will perform with the London Mozart Players at St Jude's Proms and as a soloist with The Purcell School Orchestra for the opening of the Chiltern Arts Festival. He will also present recitals at Bath Festival, Holeywell Coffee Concerts as well as Wethersfield Chamber Concerts.

Jaren is a Year 12 student at University College School in London. He currently attends the Junior Royal College of Music, having previously studied at the Junior Royal Academy. He began playing the viola at age 6 and studies with Jacky Woods. He has participated in masterclasses with Nobuko Imai, Lawrence Power, Maxim Rysanov, Timothy Ridout, Thomas Selditz, Jonathan Barritt, Martin Outram and Juan Miguel Hernandez. He has also taken further studies with Matthew Jones, Professor of Viola at Guildhall School. Jaren is grateful to the Young Classical Artists Trust for their generous support in their aftercare scheme for BBC Young Musician finalists. Jaren plays a Stefano Scarpella viola, kindly loaned to him by a generous donor through the Beare's International Violin Society.

Pianist **Lynn Arnold** is well-known for her collaborative musicianship and for her commitment to advocating and performing British music. Recognised for the breadth, scope and depth of colour of her interpretations, Lynn performs frequently both across the UK and internationally as a chamber musician, soloist and accompanist. Since 2009, Lynn has been the Founder Director of the Butlers Marston Concert Society, bringing outstanding chamber music to rural, and most recently, online, audiences since 2009.

A founding member of the Warwick Piano Trio, the Arnold Ensemble and the piano duet "Four Hands" with Charles Matthews, Lynn also collaborates with individual artists including Roderick Williams, Gabriela Demeterova, Roger Coull and Peter Mallinson. "Four Hands: Lynn Arnold & Charles Matthews" have recently released two CDs for Albion Records, and Lynn is delighted to be collaborating with the Tippett Quartet for Dutton Epoch in a series of CDs.

An alumna of Cambridge University where she held a celebrated Instrumental Award, Lynn won much recognition in various competitions during her subsequent study at the Royal Academy of Music, not least the prestigious Sir Henry Richardson Award from the Musicians Benevolent Fund. A former Park Lane Group Young Artist, Lynn studied with Vanessa Latarche, Michael Dussek and Patsy Toh.

Lynn is on the staff of the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Department and has coached chamber music at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. A member of the ABRSM grade examining panel, Lynn also nurtures her select private teaching practice.

**Aris Sabetai** is a 19 year old cellist and guitarist. He is currently in his second year of reading music at the University of Oxford. In his early years, Aris was the lead cellist of the National Children's Orchestra, subsequently progressing to the National Youth String Orchestra. He has previously studied joint first study cello and composition under William Bruce and Jeffery Wilson respectively at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's junior department. He has played in venues such as the Barbican, Royal Festival Hall and Bridgewater Hall.

In 2019 Aris featured as a cellist on post-rock band MONO's 'Beyond the Past' live album, and since then has been working as a session cellist for up-and-coming bands in Oxford and London. In 2022, he had the honour of performing the first movement of Garth Knox's 'Pocket Concerto' with contestant Jaren Ziegler in the BBC Young Musician Strings Final. Recently, Aris joined Oproductions for their rendition of 'An American in Paris' at the Oxford Playhouse, and frequently contributes to both the classical and modern sides of musical life of his college, Lady Margaret Hall. His compositional work encompasses songwriting, ambient music and shoegaze, all of which incorporate the recording and manipulation of cello sound.

Outside classical music, Aris plays guitar and bass in several funk and rock groups in Oxford. He is looking forward to playing bass with acoustic-indie band Iris and Steel this year in their opening slot for George Ezra at Latitude Festival.

*Thank you for your support – your presence helps us run these wonderful concerts.*

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