

Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

16 April 2023 – 4pm

EWAN MILLAR

Oboe

TOMOS BOYLES

Piano

PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750): Adagio from The Easter Oratorio

The Easter Oratorio BWV 249 was composed in Leipzig and first performed on Easter Sunday 1 April 1725. It opens with two instrumental movements the second of which is an Adagio in B minor for solo oboe and ensemble, from which has been transcribed this version for oboe and piano.

This may have been intended as a recollection of the Death of Jesus on Good Friday, and may have been the slow middle movement of a lost instrumental concerto. When Bach revised the score he replaced the oboe with a flute, but the work is still often played by oboists as an encore.

Marina Dranishnikova (1929 - 1994): Poem

Marina Dranishnikova was born into a musical family. Her father was conductor and composer Vladimir Alexandrovich Dranishnikov, who was music director at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg (1925-1932), and a friend and contemporary of Prokofiev. She wrote Poème for oboe and piano in 1953, a challenging work, not least for its shifts of key and its changing figuration.

Clara Schumann (1819 - 1896): Romance, Op. 22 No. 1 (Andante molto)

These are the Clara Schumann Three Romances. Her husband, Robert Schumann also wrote Three Romances, although they were written for oboe and piano, whereas Clara's were originally intended for violin and piano but are often adapted for oboe and piano.

"You can be rightfully pleased with what is coming!" announced Clara Schumann self-confidently in late 1855 to the 24-year-old Joachim upon sending him a copy of the Three Romances, op 22 for violin and piano that had just been published by Breitkopf & Härtel. There is no doubt

that her acquaintance with the young virtuoso had stimulated her to write the pieces already back in 1853. The two remained linked to the Romances after publication as well: Clara Schumann and Joachim often successfully performed them in their concerts in later years. No. 1 works particularly well in this arrangement for oboe and piano but was lost for a century until recent long overdue exploration into the works of 19th century women composers revealed these gems, which give nothing away when compared with her husband's own Romances.

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856): 'Abendlied' from an album of twelve piano pieces for four hands for small and large children, Op. 85

These pieces were composed for a family occasion: on 6 September 1849 Schumann sent the first, the Geburtstagsmarsch (Birthday March) to Friederike Malinska, the mother and teacher of Marie and Elise, so that she could help the girls learn the piece for her 30th birthday, on 13 September. Unfortunately, the March was too difficult for little Elise, so Schumann himself took her

place, playing 4-hands with Marie. Every single piece in the collection became very well-known, especially the last of the series, Abendlied (Evening Song) for 3 hands. During the 19th century it turned out to be one of Schumann's most famous pieces, giving rise to innumerable arrangements, including this one for oboe and piano.

Jan Kalivoda (1801 – 1866): Morceau de salon, Op. 228

The name Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda (German spelling) is familiar among oboists if no one else, because his favourite instrument seems to have been the oboe.

Kalivoda was born in Prague in 1801 and as early as 1811 started studying violin and composition at the Prague Conservatory. He made his debut as a violinist at the age of 14. Upon completion of his studies he became a member of the Prague Opera Orchestra. His diploma from the Conservatory read "Excellent player solo or in an orchestra...shows great talent in composition." More prosperous tours as a violinist, for instance to Linz and Munich, followed.

Kalivoda lived what appears to have been a stable, hardworking musical life. For more than 40 years, from 1822 to 1865, he held the post of conductor at the court of Prince Karl Egon II of Fürstenberg and his successor in Donaueschingen (where the Danube begins in the Black Forest). He was a prolific and widely known composer whose works are nowadays almost completely unknown.

Kalivoda's "Morceau de Salon" from the year 1859 was once very popular. "It was played simply everywhere - at the court, in bars. His temperamental melodies really draw you in, while the slow parts are ardent and emotional."

~~~~~ Interval ~~~~~

# Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

## Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach (1714 – 1788): Flute Sonata in A minor, H.562 (arr. for oboe) (1<sup>st</sup> Movement – Poco adagio)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was arguably the most talented member of the enormous Bach family of musicians. A son of the great Johann Sebastian Bach, he survived his father by thirty-eight years. This places him in a transitional period between the late Baroque and early Classical periods. Despite his originality and adventurous "modern" style, he never forgot what his illustrious father had taught him.

For a time, Bach was chief harpsichordist to Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (1712-1786). The King was a keen flutist and composer, whose flute master and official composer was J. J. Quantz. This Sonata, published in 1763,

is among the composer's finest works for flute, but the work has also been often been borrowed by oboists. Both instruments have a similar range. Mozart's second flute concerto is another example of a work which is shared by the two instruments.

The dignity and grace of the first movement (poco Adagio) displays the inspired craftsmanship found in J. S. Bach's own works for solo instruments, such as the violin Partitas and Sonatas. The embellishment of the melodic line is natural, and its elaborate development unforced; in places a competent player can give an impression of polyphony with two, or even three, interweaving voices.

## César Franck (1822 – 1890): Violin Sonata in A Major, FWV 8 (Arr. David Walter for Oboe & Piano)

- I. Allegretto ben moderato
- II. Allegro
- III. Ben moderato: Recitativo-Fantasia
- IV. Allegretto poco mosso

The Violin Sonata in A was written in 1886, when César Franck was 63, as a wedding present for the 28-year-old violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Twenty-eight years earlier, in 1858, Franck had promised a violin sonata for Cosima von Bülow. This never appeared; it has been speculated that whatever work Franck had done on that piece was put

aside, and eventually ended up in the sonata he wrote for Ysaÿe in 1886.

Franck was not present when Ysaÿe married, but on the morning of the wedding, on 26 September 1886 in Arlon, their mutual friend Charles Bordes presented the work as Franck's gift to Ysaÿe and his bride Louise Bourdeau de Courtrai. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe and Bordes' sister-in-law, the pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène, played the Sonata to the other wedding guests.

The work has been transcribed for many different instruments and by David Walter for the oboe.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Oboist **Ewan Millar** won the Woodwind Category Final of the BBC Young Musician competition 2020 at the age of eighteen. He performed 'Legacy' by Óscar Navarro with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth at Bridgewater Hall in the Finals, broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and 4.

In 2022 he appears as soloist with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra having won their 2020 Senior Concerto competition. Previous highlights include performances at Windsor Festival and at The Royal Albert Hall in 'Gabriel's Oboe' with Berkshire Youth Symphony Orchestra, in addition to concerto performances with Reading Symphony Orchestra and Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra.

Ewan is currently reading Music at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and performs regularly with numerous ensembles including Oxford University Orchestra, Oxford Sinfonietta, the Holywell Wind Trio, the Oxford Baroque Players, and contemporary music group 'Ensemble ISIS'.

Originally from Reading, Ewan has been playing the oboe since he was eight, firstly with Nicky Fairbairn and now with Melanie Ragge at Royal Academy of Music. He has participated in masterclasses with Gilles Silvestrini, Celia Craig and Jonathan Small in addition to one-off private lessons with Nicholas Daniel and Gordon Hunt.

Ewan is grateful to the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) for their generous support in their aftercare scheme for BBC Young Musician Finalists.

**Tomos Boyles** is a young Welsh musician developing a career as a pianist. He has performed in numerous venues, including St Martin in the Fields, the Holywell Music Room in Oxford, the Wales Millennium Centre, Christ Church Cathedral, and the Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

He has enjoyed success in competitions, having recently been awarded the first prize at the Wales International Piano Festival in Caernarfon; this came with a generous scholarship to help fund future studies. Other top prizes include the Blue Ribband at the National Eisteddfod, and first place in the EPTA competition.

Tomos graduated from Christ Church, Oxford University in 2022 with a first-class degree in music, having been the recipient of an academic scholarship during his studies. While at Oxford, he gave recitals at many of the University's colleges, including Christ Church, Mansfield, and Jesus; he also live-streamed recitals from Christ Church Cathedral during the Covid-19 pandemic when there were restrictions on live music-making.

As a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, Tomos studies under pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff, having previously studied with Alison Bowring at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's junior department. Tomos has also benefitted from one-off lessons and masterclasses with pianists such as Joanna MacGregor, Piers Lane, and Artur Pizarro, among others.

**We hope that you will join us for our concert on 7 May 2023**