

A photograph of a concert hall. In the foreground, a dark-colored Steinway & Sons grand piano is visible, with its keyboard and the brand name clearly seen. The piano is positioned on a wooden stage. In the background, there are several rows of light-colored seats, mostly empty, arranged in a semi-circle. The walls of the hall are made of light-colored wood panels, and there are large, vertical, illuminated panels at the top of the wall. The lighting is warm and soft.

kings place

**Sunday 26 October**

LONDON CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

York, Graffin, Wallfisch Piano Trio

Curated by the  
London Chamber Music Society

## **London Chamber Music Series**

Since 1999 the London Chamber Music Society has managed the celebrated London concert series which can trace its origins to the Sunday concerts at South Place from the 1880s and then Conway Hall from 1929. Their legacy is extraordinary, the concerts having been associated with many important premieres and numerous famous performers over the years, including Henry Wood, Frank Bridge, Albert Sammons, Eugene Ysaie and Percy Grainger. Now this much loved series finds a new home at Kings Place.

### **Hall One - 6.30pm**

#### **York, Graffin, Wallfisch Piano Trio**

John York                    *piano*  
Philippe Graffin         *violin*  
Raphael Wallfisch      *cello*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)  
Piano Trio No 1 in D minor Op 49

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)  
Sonata for violin and piano

### **INTERVAL (20 minutes)**

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)  
Piano Trio in D minor

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)  
Piano Trio No 3 in C minor Op 101

### **JOHN YORK**

John York's career has taken him around the world as soloist with such orchestras as the LPO and the London Mozart Players and as a chamber music partner, primarily with the cellist, Raphael Wallfisch and in the piano duo team of York 2 (with his wife, Fiona). He has performed in festivals in Europe, Australia and South America. His extensive discography includes the complete Beethoven cycle, with Raphael Wallfisch. John York is Professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Senior Music Head at St Paul's Girls' School. He also works with students of the highest level in Australia and Switzerland.

### **PHILIPPE GRAFFIN**

A highly sought-after chamber musician, Philippe Graffin is the founder and artistic director of the 'Consonances' chamber music festival. He is invited regularly to appear at the major chamber music festivals across Europe and the United States. As a concerto soloist, he has performed all over Europe. He has made numerous landmark recordings for Hyperion. Recent highlights have included a special 150th anniversary performance of the Elgar Violin Concerto with Vernon Handley and the Liverpool Philharmonic and a concert in the Wigmore Hall's Grieg centenary celebrations and tours to Germany, Holland, France and Finland.

### **RAPHAEL WALLFISCH**

Raphael Wallfisch has enjoyed a worldwide career playing with such orchestras as the LSO, LPO, Philharmonia, Leipzig Gewandhaus and many others. He is regularly invited to play at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh. His extensive discography covers a wide range of composers and orchestras. Teaching is one of his passions and he is in great demand as a teacher all over the world.

## **Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy – Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 49**

- I. Molto allegro agitato
- II. Andante con molto tranquillo
- III. Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro assai appassionato

A gifted prodigy, the composer, conductor, pianist and organist Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy embodied the tensions between Classicism and Romanticism that emerged in the generation after Beethoven. Standing at the forefront of German music during the early-to-mid nineteenth century, he drew upon the chromatic counterpoint of Bach as much as Mozart's grace and clarity and Beethoven's dramaticism. Likewise, both of his piano trios – he wrote this, his first, in 1839 and his second (Op. 66) six years later – descend from Beethoven's Archduke and Schubert's pair in the medium. But with a heightened sense of "symphonic" momentum, Mendelssohn's expressive emotion and controlled Romanticism surpass his forebears. His soloistic writing generally puts the instruments on an equal footing, a result perhaps of his thorough revision of Op. 49's first draft. Advised by his friend Ferdinand Hiller, he updated the piano part and entirely reworked its figurations in a more contemporary style.

In a fast-moving waltz rhythm, the opening movement's themes are doubly distinctive as the cello is the first instrument to play each. Echoes in the piano and violin lead to a central development characterised by the piano's rapid passage-work. An imaginatively scored recapitulation heralds the veiled counterpoint of the violin and stirring energy of the piano's embellishments in the coda's final pages. The slow movement is a pensive "Song without Words" in which the piano is entrusted with the theme before further interplay ensues. A B-flat minor variant follows, setting triplets against serenely flowing semiquavers. The 'Scherzo', placed in the tonic major, is dazzling and virtuosic: shades here of the Bee's Wedding piano piece. The Finale, a rondo, is on a heroic, symphonic scale and restores the tonic, D minor, but shifts episodically around related keys.

## **Maurice Ravel – Sonata for Violin and Piano**

- I. Allegretto
- II. Blues: Moderato
- III. Perpetuum mobile

In the lineage of famous French violin sonatas, the reputation of Ravel's curiously ranks behind that of Fauré, Debussy and Franck. Perhaps, conversely, the great showmanship and success of his concert rhapsody *Tzigane*, which he completed while working on the sonata, has the more immediate appeal, but it is no less impressive. Ravel took five years to complete the sonata (1927), and this relatively long gestation appears to have influenced the manner in which the work absorbs the musical vogues of the 1920s: from the blues, jazz and "American" pentatonicism that fleets throughout, to a cellular approach more redolent of Stravinsky. Ravel made a habit of visiting the countries that inspired his music – his newest piece to be performed during a four-month North American tour in 1928 was this sonata, and its allusions attracted much comment in the press. If the second 'Blues' movement, with its unusual pizzicato opening and meandering theme, had caught the critics' attention, then the flamboyant outer movements deserve equal praise. The opening 'Allegretto' is moulded in an instantly recognisable idiom, and pits fixed ostinato elements against a more conventional, prevailing sense of development. Despite its candid style, the 'Blues' movement is just another outlet for Ravel's economy of means,

a technique which is reinforced by the virtuosic 'Perpetuum mobile'. This relatively short finale begins with a hesitant reference to the first movement before belatedly bursting into life with further passing references to jazz.

### **Edward Elgar – Piano Trio in D Minor**

This piano trio is among the rarest and least known of Elgar's works. The composer was not yet thirty when he sketched it in 1886, the same year in which Brahms composed the C-minor trio that brings the programme to a close. This was a time in which the young Elgar still performed as violinist for the Worcester festivals, although with a burgeoning career as a composer around the corner, he had already relinquished the idea of becoming a concert violinist. His juvenilia works span most genres, even if most of them are unexceptional. He suffered rebuffs, professionally and personally, before he first encountered his future wife – Caroline Alice Roberts, then his piano pupil – again in 1886. Elgar's talent would of course prevail, but, remarkably, his piano trio remains unpublished. Its appearance during this evening's concert marks the latest stage in attempts by its performers to mine Elgar's forgotten works: the violinist Philippe Graffin has already made it his mission to resuscitate the composer's original vision of the epic Violin Concerto. Consulting manuscripts that lay for decades in the vaults of the British Library, he released a recording in 2006 that sifted out the numerous alterations made to it by its dedicatee, Fritz Kreisler.

### **Johannes Brahms – Piano Trio No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 101**

- I. Allegro energico
- II. Presto non assai
- III. Andante grazioso
- IV. Allegro molto

Summer holidays afforded Brahms the chance to compose away from the bustle of Vienna. In 1886 he rented a villa near Thun, Switzerland, and there he composed his third and final work for piano, violin and cello. Brahms had by now all but trademarked his distinctive brand of economical lyricism, especially in his chamber music. To common acclaim, the work was performed in Budapest and Vienna that December by the composer, together with the violinist Jenő Hubay and the cellist David Popper. As the title of the opening movement suggests, a strident and energetic intensity characterises the principal subject, which is followed by a subsidiary theme sung together by the violin and cello. The development cleverly combines both subjects before unexpectedly progressing to C sharp minor, a semitone above the home key, leading in turn to a succinct recapitulation and coda. The strings are muted as the scherzo begins, and Brahms's mastery of developing variation is at its clearest: a motif spanning only a minor third is stretched to fill out the musical fabric of the movement, especially in the central F-minor trio section; the contrasting articulation Brahms uses here, with pizzicato string arpeggios above agitato piano chords, goes hand-in-hand with his closely imitative texture. The strings also open the C-major slow movement, with its curiously irregular meter and phrasing. Gone is the sense of a unified ensemble – the interplay between instruments is much more discrete, with exquisite writing for strings this time set against the piano and allowed to go unreconciled. The finale forcefully returns us to the minor mode. Its syncopated, off-beat feel is fleeting, but coupled with the pianistic lacework which follows, the affect is never entirely cohesive. The repetition of the second theme gradually leads to the brighter realm of C major (the tonic major), in which the movement escalates to its conclusion.