



Thursday 13 July 2023, 7.30pm – 9.20pm
St Mary's Church, Petworth

Jack Liebeck (violin) and Friends - From the Haunted Forest

Jack Liebeck	<i>violin</i>
Alexandra Raikhlina	<i>violin</i>
Benjamin Roskams	<i>viola</i>
Josephine Knight	<i>cello</i>
Katya Apekisheva	<i>piano</i>

PROGRAMME NOTES

<i>Schumann</i>	<i>Waldszenen</i> - solo piano
<i>Rebecca Clarke</i>	<i>Midsummer Moon</i> for violin and piano
<i>Dvorak</i>	<i>From the Bohemian Forest</i> – cello and piano
<i>G. Lange</i>	<i>Edelweiss</i> arr. Sonnenfeld for violin and piano

INTERVAL

<i>Elgar</i>	Piano Quintet in A Minor Op.84
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Waldszenen (Forest Scenes) Op. 82

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

1) Eintritt 2) Jäger auf der Lauer 3) Einsame Blumen 4) Verrufene Stella 5) Freundliche Landschaft 6) Herbage 7) Vogel als Prophet 8) Jagdlied 9) Abschied

A late work, *Waldszenen* was begun towards the end 1848 following a busy year that saw the completion of his opera *Genoveva* and his *Album für die Jugend*, comprising some forty-three miniatures. No less imaginative are the distinctive evocations of *Waldszenen*, notable for their wide-ranging moods, their titles added as an afterthought. The cycle opens with the welcoming strains of 'Eintritt' (Entry), its gentle breeze bringing the sound of horns to unclouded textures. A more agitated 'Jäger auf der Lauer' (Hunters on the lookout) follows, the sense of pursuit unmistakable. Abundant charm permeates the quiet musing of 'Einsame Blumen' (Lonely flowers), but its peaceful introspection darkens for the brooding 'Verrufene Stella' (Notorious Stella), the very essence of the Romantic view of nature. By contrast, 'Freundliche Landschaft' (Friendly landscape) is a carefree portrait yielding to a companionable 'Herbage' (Wayside inn). Launched by a folk-like melody, it returns one last time in the closing bars as if to suggest 'one for the road'. After the gossamer surfaces of 'Vogel als Prophet' (Bird as Prophet), driving rhythms propel the chordal textures of 'Jagdlied' (Hunting song) with a renewed momentum. We leave this richly imagined forest with 'Abschied' (Farewell), an affectionate final chapter where craftsmanship and storytelling are artfully combined.

Midsummer Moon

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

Composer and acclaimed viola player, Rebecca Clarke left a modest body of chamber music that includes a Cello Rhapsody, Viola Sonata and a Piano Trio. After studies at the Royal Academy of Music and privately with Charles Villiers Stanford she had the distinction of being amongst the first women players in the Queen's Hall orchestra. A move to New York in 1917 brought partial compositional success (twice runner up at the Berkshire Festival Chamber Music Competition), and much professional chamber music playing at an international level. Her *Midsummer Moon* is an impressionistic piece for violin and piano from 1924, premiered the same year at London's Wigmore Hall. Its brooding and folk-like expression bring echoes of Debussy and Vaughan Williams.

From the Bohemian Forest – Ze Šumavy Op. 68

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

- 1 In the Spinning Room
- 2 By the Dark Lake
- 3 Witches' Sabbath
- 4 On the Watch
- 5 Silent Woods
- 6 In Stormy Times

Like Clarke, Dvořák was also a string player, yet several of his piano works, especially those for four hands such as the 'Slavonic Dances', have secured a regular place in the repertoire and include the original version of his 'Bohemian Forest' cycle. Conceived on woodland walks during 1883, these highly imaginative character pieces demonstrate Dvořák's romantic sensibilities and skill in scene-setting. The first is a melodically winsome portrayal of flax spinners, while the mercurial 'By the Dark Lake' suggests a twilight world, its variable moods swept aside in the annual ritual of banishing evil spirits in the 'Witches' Sabbath'. A lively hunting scene is conjured in 'On the Watch', an engaging lyricism colours 'Silent Woods' and the set closes with 'In Stormy Times', its fury subsiding only briefly across its agitated traversal.

Edelweiss, Op. 31 arr. Sonnenfeld for violin and piano

Gustav Lange (1830-1889)

Gustav Lange is best known for his salon-like piano pieces amongst which is this much cherished arrangement of *Edelweiss*, a work that, along with his *Blumenlied*, keeps the name of this 19th century German composer alive today.

Piano Quintet in A minor, Op. 84

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

- 1 Moderato - Allegro
- 2 Adagio
- 3 Andante - Allegro

Sketches for Elgar's Piano Quintet, along with a string quartet and a violin sonata, were begun in the autumn of 1918 when he and Lady Elgar had retreated to 'Brinkwells' in the heart of Sussex. Completed early the following year, the Quintet prompted his wife to comment on its 'wonderful weird beginning' with its 'reminiscence of sinister trees'. This last is a reference to Elgar's fascination for a group of gaunt-looking trees near their rented cottage. According to the violinist W.H. Reed they invoked a legend about a group of Spanish monks who were struck down while dabbling in the occult. Even Elgar acknowledged the 'ghostly stuff' of the Quintet's opening movement.

It begins ominously with a plainsong-like melody outlined by the piano in bare octaves, framed by halting string interjections. A plaintive string passage leads to the main 'Allegro' characterised by two themes: one assertive, the other hesitant. The benign second idea develops into a broad string melody; its cumulative tensions expanding into a turbulent development where a disturbing version of the hesitant theme is heard. As the music subsides, the broad melody is recalled, and the movement closes with reminiscences of the opening. The second movement is one of Elgar's most heartfelt creations in which a withdrawn, hymn-like theme unfolds from the viola. A new theme soon emerges based on the nostalgic tune derived from the first movement, eventually reaching a passionate climax. The finale begins calmly, until a self-assured theme emerges, and within this confident mood the work closes. After hearing the Quintet, the critic Bernard Shaw declared, 'The Quintet knocked me over at once'.

David Truslove, 2023