

LSO St Luke's

CHAMBER MUSIC

BBC
RADIO 3

**ESSENTIALLY STRAUSS
NOTOS QUARTETT**

Thursday 21 September 2023 1-2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

Richard Strauss Piano Quartet in C minor
Gustav Mahler Quartet Movement in A minor

Notos Quartett

Recorded for future broadcast on **BBC Radio 3**

LSO

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ACOUSTIC TRIAL

While LSO St Luke's undergoes an acoustic trial, there will be window coverings in place until the end of January 2024. We welcome any feedback you may have on the impact of these coverings, be it acoustically, aesthetically and operationally. Please email tickets@lso.co.uk to share feedback.

THE CRYPT CAFÉ & BAR

The Crypt café and bar is open from one hour before the concert and during the interval (where applicable), selling hot and cold drinks. Please note we can accept card payments only. Only cold drinks will be permitted inside the Jerwood Hall.

PROGRAMME NOTE WRITER

Wendy Thompson studied at the Royal College of Music, before taking an MMus in musicology at King's College, London. In addition to writing about music she is Executive Director of Classic Arts Productions, a major supplier of independent programmes to BBC Radio.

In accordance with the requirements of Islington Council persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly forbidden without formal consent from LSO St Luke's.

Please make sure that digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

Please recycle this programme after use.

Richard Strauss

composer



Richard Strauss was born in Munich in 1864, the son of Franz Strauss, a brilliant horn player in the Munich Court Orchestra; it is therefore perhaps not surprising that some of the composer's most striking writing is for the French horn. Strauss had his first piano lessons when he was four, and he produced his first composition two years later, but surprisingly he did not attend a music academy; his formal education ending rather at Munich University where he studied philosophy and aesthetics, continuing with his musical training at the same time.

Following the first public performances of his work, he received a commission from Hans von Bülow in 1882 and two years later was appointed Bülow's Assistant Musical Director at the Meiningen Court Orchestra, the beginning of a career in which Strauss was to conduct many of the world's great

orchestras, in addition to holding positions at opera houses in Munich, Weimar, Berlin and Vienna. While at Munich, he married the singer Pauline de Ahna, for whom he wrote many of his greatest songs.

Strauss' legacy is to be found in his operas and his magnificent symphonic poems. Scores such as *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Don Juan* and *Ein Heldenleben* demonstrate his supreme mastery of orchestration; the thoroughly modern operas *Salome* and *Elektra*, with their Freudian themes and atonal scoring, are landmarks in the development of 20th century music, and the neo-Classical *Der Rosenkavalier* has become one of the most popular operas of the century. Strauss spent his last years in self-imposed exile in Switzerland, waiting to be officially cleared of complicity in the Nazi regime. He died at Garmisch Partenkirchen in 1949, shortly after his widely celebrated 85th birthday.

Composer profile by Andrew Stewart

Piano Quartet in C minor

Richard Strauss



1886



39 minutes

- 1 **Allegro**
- 2 **Scherzo: Presto**
- 3 **Andante**
- 4 **Finale: Vivace**

Richard Strauss' output of chamber music was very small and mostly dates from his teenage years. It amounts to a couple of piano trios and a handful of smaller pieces, a string quartet, sonatas for violin and cello, and this Piano Quartet in C Minor, composed in the winter of 1884–85, when he was 20 years old. At the time Strauss was infatuated with the music of Johannes Brahms, and the Piano Quartet was clearly influenced by Brahms' works for the same combination. A few weeks after he finished the piece on New Year's Day 1885, Strauss entered it in a competition run by the Berlin Tonkünstlerverein, and won the first prize of 300 marks. It was first performed in Weimar on 8 December 1885, with Strauss at the piano and string players from the court orchestra, including the violinist Karel Halíř and the cellist Leopold Grützmaker.

The score was published some six months later, with a dedication to the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, of whose orchestra Strauss had been principal conductor since October 1885. The duke expressed

his thanks for the 'inventive, beautiful quartet', and his regret that Strauss had decided to leave Meiningen to accept a conducting post at the Munich Court Opera – an indication of the future direction his career would take.

The opening movement of the Piano Quartet proceeds in broad, Brahmsian strokes, with a song-like second subject. The energetic Scherzo is characterised by a leaping motif and spiky octave drops, with a smoother, more romantic trio section. It's followed by a flowing Andante in F minor, in which the piano unfolds a long, meditative theme, taken up more hesitantly by the strings, before the viola propounds a lyrical second theme, subsequently developed in conjunction with the first. The robust finale similarly contrasts a dramatic opening theme with a more tranquil and expressive second subject, both of which undergo a thorough work-out before a brief coda brings the piece to a close.

Quartet Movement in A minor

Gustav Mahler



1876



10 minutes

Like Strauss, his junior by only four years, Gustav Mahler pursued a dual career as conductor and composer. Although the decade he spent as principal conductor at the Vienna Hofoper (1897–1907) was one of the most illustrious in its history, he never wrote an opera himself, preferring to concentrate on symphonies and songs. His career was tragically curtailed by heart disease, but had he enjoyed Strauss' longevity, he would certainly have been forced to emigrate once Nazi policies took root in Central Europe.

This single movement, possibly intended as the opening movement of a lost or never-completed piano quartet, is Mahler's only surviving piece of instrumental chamber music. He composed it towards the end of his first year as a student at the Vienna Conservatory, where he was studying piano, harmony and composition.

The piece was first performed at the conservatory on 10 July 1876 with Mahler (who had just turned 16) as pianist, and had two subsequent performances over that summer, one at the home of Theodore Billroth, a Viennese surgeon, amateur musician and close friend of Brahms; and the other at Iglau. The manuscript then vanished, and was rediscovered in the

1960s by Mahler's widow Alma, after which the piece was performed in the US and UK.

The Quartet movement is a romantic piece in the mid-19th-century style of Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann, both composers keenly studied by Mahler. Marked 'Nicht zu schnell' (not too fast), it is constructed on sonata-form principles, with two main themes, one presented by the piano, the other by the strings, both of which are then developed in conjunction. A veiled and mysterious statement of the opening theme introduces the recapitulation, which is interrupted shortly before the end by a brief violin cadenza.

Notos Quartett



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Audiences and critics worldwide celebrate the Notos Quartett for its 'sense of balance and ensemble playing revealing every detail of the composition' and praise the musicians for their 'profound musicality that goes straight to the heart'. Since its foundation in 2007, the Notos Quartett has won many prizes on the international stage. The current season includes concert tours to Switzerland, Spain, Italy, UK, Japan and US. Furthermore the ensemble will be premiering works dedicated to the Notos Quartett by Bryce Dessner and Bernhard Gander.

The Notos Quartett's vision is to perform the well-known masterpieces, to reveal lost and forgotten treasures, and to champion the new compositions for the unique genre of the piano quartet. This is evident on the ensemble's debut album *Hungarian Treasures* released by Sony Classical/RCA in February 2017. It includes the world premiere recording of Béla

Bartók's piano quartet, a rediscovery for which the ensemble receives international acclaim. The second recording, again released by SONY Classical, is dedicated entirely to the great Romantic Johannes Brahms – with the famous Piano Quartet in G minor and an arrangement of the Symphony No 3 by Andreas Nikolai Tarkmann, created especially for the Notos Quartett.

In addition to appearances at major festivals and leading concert halls throughout Europe, such as Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie Berlin and Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the group regularly travels worldwide to Japan, China, Australia and south-east Asia.

Besides its concert activities, the Notos Quartett regards promoting the careers of young musicians as an important part of its work. The ensemble has taught at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, lead the Saigon Chamber Music Masterclass in Saigon in Vietnam and since autumn of 2015 holds the Notos Chamber Music Academy, organised since 2019 in collaboration with Jeunesses Musicales, the most prestigious institution for musical education in Germany.

The Notos Quartett on Strauss

When did you first start playing as a group?

In 2007, the original three string players of the Notos Quartet met Antonia at a chamber music course led by the Mandelring Quartet. In this formation, they worked on the Schumann Piano Quartet, which is one of the most iconic works of the piano quartet repertoire. This musical experience inspired everyone to delve into all of the other great pieces for this formation, so we stayed together as a fixed piano quartet. When you come together as a group at such an early age, it's not surprising that two of the quartet members eventually decided to pursue different paths. This led to Andrea and Philip joining the group in 2015, which turned out to be a perfect match!

What do you love most about the ensemble of a piano quartet?

We are most fascinated by the sheer range of colours and versatility that each instrumental voice brings to the group. We love that once you've found the right balance between the string trio and the piano to create a unique quartet sound, the range spans everything from intimate moments to symphonic grandeur. You can even perform whole symphonies with a piano quartet and never lose the intimacy of a chamber music formation.

What does Richard Strauss and his music mean to your group?

Richard Strauss' piano quartet is one of our repertoire's central pieces, a work we have been performing for more than 10 years. So, in short, it means a lot to us! Like many composers who composed for our formation, Strauss wrote his piano quartet before the age of 20. Yet you won't find the unfinished ideas of an inexperienced composer, rather an incredibly thoughtful quartet with a very distinct voice, which makes rehearsing and performing this piece a humbling experience.

What three Strauss pieces would you recommend to those reading?

Besides the Piano Quartet, we recommend listening to two further chamber works: the Violin Sonata and the *Metamorphosen* for 23 strings. In terms of Strauss' symphonic works we'd recommend listening to *Also sprach Zarathustra* which is just incredible.

FUTURE CONCERTS

Friday 22 September 1pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

ESSENTIALLY STRAUSS: LSO WIND ENSEMBLE

Richard Strauss Serenade in E-flat major
for 13 Wind Instruments

Jonathan Dove Figures in the Garden

Richard Strauss Suite in B-flat major for
13 Wind Instruments

LSO Wind Ensemble

Nicolò Umberto Foron conductor

Wednesday 4 & Thursday 5 October 7pm
Barbican

ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA

Hannah Kendall Five Lieder Op 15

Franz Liszt Totentanz

Richard Strauss Also sprach Zarathustra

Alice Sara Ott piano

Sir Antonio Pappano conductor

London Symphony Orchestra

Friday 13 October 1pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

ESSENTIALLY STRAUSS: CATRIONA MORISON

Richard Strauss Five Lieder Op 15

Gustav Mahler Lieder eines
fahrenden Gesellen

Plus songs by **Alban Berg** and
Johannes Brahms

Catriona Morison mezzo-soprano

Malcolm Martineau piano

Friday 27 October 1pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

ESSENTIALLY STRAUSS: ELENA URIOSTE

Luise Adolpha Le Beau Violin Sonata in
C minor

Fritz Kreisler Selection of Miniatures

Richard Strauss Violin Sonata in
E-flat major

Elena Urioste violin

Tom Poster piano