



Saturday 25 February 2012 7.30pm
Barbican Hall

Murray Perahia

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

Murray Perahia *piano/conductor*

Kenneth Sillito *violin/director*

Ries Liska, oder Die Hexe von Gyllensteen –
Overture

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 2

Interval

Schubert (orch. Joachim) Grand Duo

Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838)

Liska, oder Die Hexe von Gyllenstein (1830–1) — Overture

Friend and one-time piano pupil of Beethoven, Ferdinand Ries achieved fame as one of the new breed of European touring virtuosos before settling in London in 1814 and marrying an English girl, Harriet Mangan. During his decade here he was acclaimed both for his keyboard and chamber works and for the ‘romantic wildness’ of his playing. After his virtual retirement as a pianist in 1824, at the early age of 40, Ries returned with his wife to his native Rhineland, where he made a second career as a conductor. He also wrote his first opera, *Die Räuberbraut*, whose success in London in 1829 led to an invitation to compose a

‘grand romantic opera’ for the Royal Adelphi Theatre. The upshot was *The Sorceress*, premiered on 4 August 1831 and staged in Frankfurt, as *Liska, oder die Hexe von Gyllenstein* (‘Liska, or the witch of Gyllenstein’), the following year. *The Sorceress* was at best a mixed success in London. The librettist, Edward Fitzball, complained that it was ‘too heavy, and too Germanic’ – which didn’t prevent *Liska* from being a resounding flop in Frankfurt. But Teutonic heaviness is surely the last charge one could level at the overture, jaunty and plaintive by turns, and leavened with a fair dash of Rossinian ebullience.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19 (1787–1801)

- 1 Allegro con brio
- 2 Adagio
- 3 Rondo: Molto allegro

Murray Perahia *piano*

Beethoven’s B flat Piano Concerto, eventually published as No. 2, had the most involved genesis of any of his instrumental works. Inspired by the example of Mozart’s concertos from the early 1780s, Beethoven began to sketch the concerto in Bonn around 1787–8. He returned to the concerto during his early years in Vienna, first in 1793 and

then in the winter of 1794–5, when he wrote a new slow movement and rondo. Beethoven probably gave the premiere at a private concert in the palace of Prince Lobkowitz on 2 March 1795, following it with a public performance at a Tonkünstler-Sozietät. There may have been one or two more Viennese performances over the next

few years, though no records survive. But we do know that Beethoven took the concerto with him on a concert tour to Prague in 1798, where he made further revisions and wrote out a new autograph score of the orchestral part. The final stage in the concerto's protracted history came early in 1801, when he offered it to the publisher Hoffmeister, requesting a fee of just 10 ducats (half the going rate) because 'I do not consider it one of my best concertos ... yet you need not be ashamed to print it.' Only then did he write out the piano part, having previously played it from memory – thus ensuring that no rival pianist could 'steal' the concerto.

By 1801 Beethoven no doubt found the work old-fashioned, too decorously 18th-century in its rhetoric, hence his disparaging remarks to Hoffmeister. To us it seems a youthful charmer. Much of the piano writing has a Mozartian transparency; and the very opening – a brusque summons followed by a pleading response – is an arresting take on a favourite Mozartian gambit. But later, where Mozart would have introduced a new tune, Beethoven plunges into the remote key of D flat to develop the main theme's beseeching answering phrase. This surprise move to D flat has consequences when the soloist later introduces a mysterious new theme in this key – an early example of Beethoven's concern for long-range tonal planning.

The noble theme of the E flat Adagio, somewhere between an aria and a hymn, has that exalted simplicity typical of Beethoven's early slow movements. Equally typically, he

embellishes this melody with increasingly lavish figuration as the movement progresses, just as an operatic heroine would decorate a slow cantilena; and we can be pretty sure that the composer improvised these embellishments differently each time he played the work. The movement's expressive climax comes in the coda, one of the young Beethoven's most poetic inspirations. Instead of the expected (and emphatically prepared) cadenza, we have a recitative for the soloist marked *con gran espressione*, which sets the piano's increasingly florid phrases against dying echoes of the main theme on the strings.

Mozart liked to end his B flat concertos, most famously the last of all, K595, with 'hunting' rondos in 6/8 time. Beethoven's rondo follows this tradition, though he adds his own subversive twist by peppering his catchy main theme with stinging offbeat accents. Even the rum-ti-tum second theme, almost like a nursery rhyme, is disrupted by abrupt *sforzandos*. There are more rhythmic dislocations in the central episode, where the theme is subjected to boisterous, boogie-like syncopations. Beethoven reserves his wittiest stroke for the coda. Here the piano slips nonchalantly into G major for a 'normalised' version of the rondo theme before the orchestra noisily reasserts B flat with the theme in its original, unruly form.

INTERVAL

Franz Schubert (1797–1828), orch. Joseph Joachim (1831–1907)

Grand Duo in C major, D812 (1824; orch. 1855)

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Andante
- 3 Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- 4 Allegro moderato

‘I often long damnably for Vienna, despite a certain attractive star’, wrote Schubert to the painter Moritz von Schwind in June 1824. As in the summer of 1818, the composer had been engaged as music tutor to the daughters of Count Johann Karl Esterházy on their estate in Zseliz, Hungary. Although Schubert often complained of boredom and frustration in what was in effect a private summer school, there were compensations in the domestic music-making with the family and their friends. The two young countesses, Karoline and Marie, were already accomplished pianists; and we can guess that the various piano duets Schubert composed at Zseliz were intended either for the two sisters, or for himself to play with one of them. The ‘certain attractive star’ to whom he alluded in his letter to Schwind was evidently the elder sister, Karoline, then 18. According to another friend, Schubert was ‘head over heels in love’ with Karoline; and when she teased him that he had not dedicated any of his works to her (he would later make amends with the F minor Fantasy, D940), he reportedly replied: ‘What is the point? Everything is dedicated to you anyway.’

Most substantial by far of the four-hand works he created at Zseliz that summer was the Sonata in C major (as Schubert titled it), now universally known under its published title ‘Grand Duo’. Like so many of Schubert’s unpublished works, this was ‘discovered’ and championed by Robert Schumann a decade after Schubert’s premature death. His unmatched legacy of music for piano duet is always likely to conjure

other soundworlds: brass chorales, string quartets, male-voice choirs and, not least, the sonorous splendour of a full orchestra. Seizing on this, Schumann surmised that the Duo was in fact an arrangement of a symphony, despite the evidence of Schubert’s manuscript: ‘One who wrote as much as Schubert could not have been overly fussy about titles; and he may hastily have written “sonata” over something that was already complete in his head as a symphony ... I cannot but regard it as an orchestral work. One hears strings, winds, *tutti*, solos, the rumble of timpani, the broad symphonic form.’ Schumann also stressed the reminiscences of Beethoven’s Second Symphony in the Duo’s slow movement and, more questionably, of his Seventh in the finale, prompting a (to us) laughably sexist contrast between the two composers: ‘Compared with Beethoven, Schubert is a feminine character, much more voluble, softer and broader; or a guileless child romping among giants. Such is the relationship of these symphonic movements to those of Beethoven.’

Schumann’s view of the Duo as a disguised symphony was shared by the great Hungarian violinist-composer Joseph Joachim who, with the encouragement of his friend Johannes Brahms, scored the work for full orchestra (including trombones) in 1855. Others, including Felix Weingartner and René Leibowitz, have followed suit, though Joachim’s orchestration, in a style somewhere between Schumann and Brahms, has remained the best known. It was first championed in Britain by the composer and

musicologist Donald Tovey, who, emphasising the quasi-orchestral style of Schubert's duet writing, proclaimed that Joachim's orchestration had 'rescued' it as 'one of the most important symphonies in the Classical repertoire'.

Although most Schubert lovers would still prefer the original, Joachim's skilful, if (by Schubertian standards) slightly sober scoring does underline the work's extraordinary symphonic breadth and reach. Launched by a quiet octave theme of barely concealed power, the first movement has a leisurely grandeur that prefigures the 'Great' C major Symphony. It is characteristic of Schubert's later works that the first move away from C major – less a modulation than an explosion – is to the far-distant key of C sharp minor. Schubert thrillingly exploits the drama of such remote shifts later in the movement, most startlingly at the climax of the development, where a huge crescendo on the dominant of B major resolves out of the blue to the key a semitone lower, B flat. Typical, too, is the way the second theme – rhythmically related to the first – initially appears, on cellos, in a rich, mellow-sounding A flat, before slipping to the expected key of G, enhanced by Schubertian equivocations between major and minor modes. Schubert further exploits this major-minor contrast, with intensified pathos, when the second theme returns in the recapitulation.

With a nod to the Larghetto of Beethoven's Second – his most luxuriant symphonic slow movement – the Andante likewise combines melodic expansiveness with inspired harmonic audacity. Again, Schubert broadens the tonal spectrum, and

the time-scale, by setting his exposition around three distinct key centres, each explored at leisure: A flat (a key prominently flagged in the first movement), E major and finally E flat, in a playful cello tune under pulsing violins that pays overt homage to Beethoven. Although there is no central development section as such, the second half of the movement evokes breathtaking new harmonic vistas, right through a coda whose drama startles in the context of such a lyrically relaxed movement.

Beethoven's First and Seventh Symphonies seem to be the distant models for the Scherzo. But this music, at once powerful and capricious, is quintessentially Schubertian, not least in the banter between violins and cellos against bell-like chords for wind and brass in the second half. (Tovey dubbed the Scherzo 'one of Schubert's grandest grotesques'.) In extreme contrast, the F minor Trio is sombrely mysterious, with unquiet syncopations in the violas and horns. Brahms was to remember the Hungarian-tinged main theme of the finale, which only reaches C major after a prolonged bout of A minor, in the finale of his own Piano Quintet. Despite the popular, dancelike flavour of its themes (the 'second subject' is positively flippant), Schubert's finale matches the opening movement in ambition and symphonic grandeur. It culminates in a vast and imposing coda that softly replicates the first movement's shock shift from C to C sharp minor before building, via a majestic sequence of shifting harmonies, to a torrential climax.

Programme notes © Richard Wigmore

About tonight's performers



Murray Perahia *piano/conductor*

In a career spanning 40 years, Murray Perahia has become one of the most sought after and cherished pianists of our time.

Recognised worldwide as a musician of rare musical sensitivity, he performs in all of the major international music centres and with the world's leading orchestras. He is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, with whom he regularly tours as conductor and pianist throughout the USA, Europe, Japan and South East Asia.

Highlights of the current season include a recital tour of Asia and the current European tour with the Academy of St

Martin in the Fields. He is also Artist-in-Residence at the Philharmonie Berlin, taking part in a variety of projects throughout the season.

Murray Perahia was born in New York, and studied at Mannes College. His summers were spent in Marlboro, where he worked with such musicians as Rudolf Serkin, Pablo Casals and members of the Budapest Quartet, also studying with Mieczyslaw Horszowski.

His international career was launched when he won the 1972 Leeds International Piano Competition. The following year he gave his first concert at the Aldeburgh Festival where he met and worked closely with Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, accompanying the latter in many Lieder recitals. He was Co-Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1981 to 1989.

His latest project is editing the revised text edition for Henle of the complete Beethoven sonatas.

Murray Perahia has a wide and varied discography. His most recent release, Brahms's *Handel Variations* won a 2011 *Gramophone Award*, one of several he has received. He has also

won two Grammys. In addition, he has produced and edited the recently discovered recordings of masterclasses by Alfred Cortot, which were released on Sony.

He is an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, and holds honorary doctorates from Leeds University and Duke University. In 2004, he was made an honorary KBE in recognition of his outstanding services to music.



Eoin Carey

Kenneth Sillito *violin/director*

Kenneth Sillito is Artistic Director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and has been director and leader of the

Academy since 1980. Renowned worldwide as a chamber musician, he founded the Gabrieli Quartet in 1967 and remained its leader for 20 years, making numerous recordings and establishing the Quartet's international reputation.

Having joined the English Chamber Orchestra at an early age as an Associate Leader, he subsequently took over the leadership and remained until 1973, touring with the orchestra as both director and soloist.

With the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Kenneth Sillito tours throughout Europe, North and South America, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia and is a regular visitor to concert halls and festivals throughout the UK.

Kenneth Sillito's many recordings encompass music by Bach and Handel to Walton and Tippett.

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields is renowned for its polished and refined sound and the quality of its musicianship. Formed in 1958 from a group of leading London musicians, and working without a conductor, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church on 13 November 1959. Today, the Academy performs some 100 concerts around the world each year, with as many as 15 tours each season. In 1993, the Academy became the first and only orchestra to be awarded the Queen's Award for Export.

The Academy's partnership with its founder Sir Neville Marriner remains the most recorded pairing of orchestra and conductor and, with over 500 recordings to its name, the Academy is one of the most recorded chamber orchestras in the world. It was originally directed by Sir Neville from the leader's chair, and the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductorless ensemble remain Academy hallmarks. This tradition continues today with the appointment

of violinist Joshua Bell as its Music Director.

Alongside its performances with Life President Sir Neville, Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia and Music Director Joshua Bell, the orchestra continues to collaborate with some of today's most exciting musicians including Julia Fischer, Julian Rachlin, Janine Jansen and Anthony Marwood. This season's five-concert London series features Joshua Bell and Anthony Marwood; there are European tours with Murray Perahia, Sir Neville Marriner and Håkan Hardenberger; and a 15-city American tour with Joshua Bell.

The Academy has also initiated Outward Sound, a programme of outreach activities open to participants of all ages, backgrounds and abilities which seeks to connect with the communities in which it performs and bring music-making opportunities to those who otherwise might not have access to music.

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields gratefully acknowledges the support of its Principal Sponsor, Siemens.

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

Violin 1

Kenneth Sillito *leader*
Harvey de Souza
Robert Salter
Pauls Ezergailis
Helena Smart
Jeremy Morris
Matthew Ward
Clare Hoffman

Violin 2

Martin Burgess
Jennifer Godson
Mark Butler
Simon Lewis
Martin Smith
Richard Milone

Viola

Fiona Bonds
Nicholas Barr
Catherine Bradshaw
Alexandros Koustas

Cello

Stephen Orton
John Heley
William Schofield
Judith Herbert

Double Bass

Leon Bosch
Lynda Houghton

Flute

Samuel Coles
Sarah Newbold

Piccolo

Rebecca Larsen

Oboe

Christopher Cowie
Ruth Contractor

Clarinet

Fiona Cross
Helen Paskins

Bassoon

Robin O'Neill
Laura Vincent

Horn

Timothy Brown
Susan Dent
Stephen Stirling
Michael Murray
Nicholas Hougham

Trumpet

Ross Brown
Michael Laird

Trombone

Roger Harvey
Dan Jenkins
David Stewart

Timpani

Tommy Foster

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