

Andrew Eccles



Sammy Haart/DG



Catherine Pluchart



Thibaudet/ Batiashvili/ Capuçon Trio

Monday 12 November 2018 7.30pm, Hall

Shostakovich Piano Trio No 1 in C minor, Op 8
Ravel Piano Trio in A minor

interval 20 minutes

Mendelssohn Piano Trio No 2 in C minor, Op 66

Lisa Batiashvili violin
Gautier Capuçon cello
Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano

Part of Barbican Presents 2018–19

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Welcome

A warm welcome to this evening's concert given by three of the most in-demand musicians around today. Violinist Lisa Batiashvili, cellist Gautier Capuçon and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet are longtime friends and musical collaborators and on this, the London leg of their European tour, they present three strikingly different piano trios.

We start with Shostakovich, and his single-movement C minor Trio, written while he was still in his teens. It was inspired by an early love and it's a work that is striking for its mercurial shifts of mood.

We return to the key of C minor for the final work. Mendelssohn's Second Piano

Trio is almost symphonic in its ambition and it demands from the players not just a quicksilver reactivity but, in its luscious melodic writing, a generosity of tone too.

Ravel was working on his only Piano Trio as the First World War broke out. As ever with this composer, it's a piece that reveals a fascination with form as much as with musical content. In particular, Ravel addresses the challenge of allowing the cello, sonically the weakest of the three instruments, to make itself heard, with a work that abounds in imaginative textures.

It promises to be a very memorable concert. I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys, Head of Music, Barbican

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–75)

Piano Trio No 1 in C minor, Op 8 (1923)

Andante – Molto più mosso – Andante – Allegro – Adagio – Andante – Moderato – Allegro – Prestissimo fantastico – Andante – Allegro – Allegro moderato – Allegro

Shostakovich's adolescent years were crowded with incident. His country underwent the Revolutions of 1917, followed by Civil War, economic collapse and partial recovery with the New Economic Policy. His personal life was scarcely less fraught. His father died in February 1922, and in the following year he himself was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the bronchial and lymph glands. Appeals on his behalf to the cultural authorities from the director of the Petrograd Conservatoire, Alexander Glazunov, procured special rations, and in July 1923 Shostakovich was able to continue his recuperation in the Crimean resort of Gaspra.

There he fell in love with Tatyana Glivenko, daughter of a Moscow philology professor, and began to compose his First Piano Trio, which he dedicated to her. At one point renamed 'Poem', this single movement represents a vital stage in Shostakovich's development on the way to his First Symphony, especially in terms of its languishing lyricism. This was also the first time he had tried his hand at sonata form, and he

was determined not just to master its rules but to bend it to his own expressive ends too.

Languor is the tone immediately struck at the outset, but no sooner has the piano taken over the main thematic line from the strings than the tempo doubles and the mood flips over into a Prokofievian scherzo. This too turns out to be a false trail, and the languishing music resumes as though nothing has happened, only to metamorphose into a determined, chromatic idea on the cello, which at long last forms the first subject of the Allegro proper. A short bridge passage ushers in a mellifluous second subject, which seems to come straight from the world of Ravel's *Mother Goose*. In a strenuous development section all these themes are worked over, and a return to the introduction heralds an abbreviated recapitulation, with the first subject saved up for the passionate coda.

The original manuscript of the last couple of pages has not survived, and the movement is now almost always performed using the completion by Shostakovich's favourite pupil Boris Tishchenko.

Programme note © David Fanning

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Piano Trio in A minor (1914)

1 Modéré

2 Pantoum (Assez vif)

3 Passecaille (Très large)

4 Final (Animé)

The tension between Ravel the objective, Apollonian craftsman and Ravel the subjective, Dionysian artist is nowhere better heard than in this Piano Trio. Although he had had such a work in mind for some years, he finally settled down to writing it in March 1914 and completed it that August, shortly after the outbreak of war. On the surface, the plain designation 'Trio' might seem to indicate a concern with form and texture at the expense of exoticism or any kind of extra-musical influence. Formal problems were indeed very much in his mind, notably in the two central movements, but the initial material of the first movement has ethnic roots deriving from his childhood. He himself described the opening theme as 'de couleur basque', but in fact it goes beyond that, being lifted from a projected Basque rhapsody for piano and orchestra that never came to fruition.

It has been pertinently remarked that Ravel's music is never so mysterious as when it seems to be plain sailing. When, after the opening piano phrase, the string instruments echo it, playing two octaves apart with the piano right hand filling in chords between them, we applaud the composer's solution to the problem of balance, traditionally held to dog the piano trio medium. What only careful scrutiny reveals is that the two versions of the tune are phrased differently: the piano groups the eight quavers as 3+3+2, the strings as 3+2+3. Already seeds of dissension are being sown. From here the sonata-form movement quickly assumes astonishing power, aided by a quantity of tempo changes unusually high for Ravel, even suggesting that the musical material might possibly run out of control. Of course, Ravel being Ravel, it doesn't, and the gentle C major coda comes as a satisfying resolution to all the earlier turbulence.

At first hearing, the second movement is all about speed, colour and sparkle – bearing out Ravel's comment that the only composer ever completely to solve the medium's textural problems (mainly to do with not obscuring the cello) was Saint-Saëns. For years Ravel's title 'Pantoum' was dismissed as a piece of vague exoticism. But in 1975 Brian Newbould showed that the composer had based his structure closely on the Malayan verse form of this name, copied most notably by Baudelaire in his poem *Harmonie du soir*. In a 'pantoum' the poet pursues two distinct ideas in continuous alternation with each other, the second and fourth lines of one four-line verse becoming the first and third lines of the next. In Ravel's case, the two ideas can roughly be characterised as staccato and legato. As if this wasn't enough, in the central section he introduces a chorale-like theme on the piano which then combines with each of these two ideas, before they take over the field once more.

Ravel dedicated the Trio to his Conservatoire professor André Gedalge, who had instructed him in the mysteries of counterpoint, and the 'Passecaille', perhaps even more than the 'Pantoum', is a tribute to his inspired teaching. For Gedalge, and for Ravel, the essence of counterpoint was that, rightly administered, it enabled a composer to say a maximum with a minimum of notes. The shape of this 'Passecaille' is that of an arch, with the passacaglia theme expanding after three strict appearances to reach an imposing climax just after the midpoint, before returning to its original shape. At the same time, the whole movement is held within a rigid framework of 11 eight-bar phrases. Apollo and Dionysus each give the other his due.

The last movement, alternating between 5/4 and 7/5 metres, recalls the metrical instability of the first. And it too is in sonata form, with some unorthodox keys (F sharp major, D major) for the second theme, a series of massive piano chords. Did Ravel intend these as a reference to the work's opening triads? Or are they topical trumpet calls, prefiguring the conflict that had been brewing for months, and which, as

everyone knew, would be over by Christmas? At all events they serve the extrovert purposes of the finale which seems to proceed on the premise that the heroics of the first movement had been prematurely curtailed. Not much sign here of Ravel the academic, the cold Apollonian, the 'petit maître'.

interval 20 minutes

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

Piano Trio No 2 in C minor, Op 66 (1845)

1 Allegro energico e con fuoco

2 Andante espressivo

3 Molto allegro quasi presto

4 Allegro appassionato

The shadow of Beethoven lay over all German composers of 'serious' music throughout the 19th century, and often beyond. Were they trying hard enough, going deep enough? Brahms's response to those noticing the similarity between the C major tune in the last movement of his First Symphony and the 'Ode to Joy' theme in Beethoven's Ninth – 'any fool can see that' – was a cover for any amount of 'influence anxiety'. Mendelssohn didn't escape nor, to some extent, did he want to. Very early on, he was aware of the things he could do differently from Beethoven and these capacities stayed with him throughout his life.

He wrote his Second Piano Trio in C minor in 1845, the year after the Violin Concerto in E minor, and there are one or two connections between the two works. Both display an apparently effortless command of lyrical counterpoint, even though we know this to be the result of hard childhood training, involving 5.30am starts. Whereas his First Trio had begun with a legato tune for cello, here Mendelssohn's intentions are plainly symphonic, in that the rather severe C minor theme is audibly constructed of motifs that can later be developed separately. The second theme, in E flat major, is reminiscent of the composer's *Songs without*

Words, but altogether new (and magical) is a kind of 'dream' passage in the development, looking forward to similar moments in the chamber music of Fauré (born, incidentally, in the year this Trio was composed). The main theme returns under an already continuing pattern, following the example of the Violin Concerto's first movement. The coda is Beethovenian in length and unpredictability.

With the Andante in 6/8 we return to the world of the *Songs without Words*, and to the key of E flat. As frequently with Mendelssohn's major-key movements, minor keys are used as launch pads for new ideas; also typical is the opposing motion of treble and bass, following Baroque and Classical models. There are hints of deeper matters unspoken, things Brahmsian even, but Mendelssohn reins back from any truly troubling display. Maybe it was this discretion, and the familiarity of the overall tone, that prompted one contemporary critic to condemn the whole Trio as 'stale, like a dish made of leftovers'. But then the same critic also found the Violin Concerto weak and ephemeral!

The third movement takes us into Mendelssohn's favourite, and unBeethovenian, fairyland where lyrical (minor) tunes float above a sea of rushing

semiquavers, contrasted with a (major) folksy one. Repeated notes help to bind everything together, while the piano's occasional forays into the bass regions add a touch of menace, even danger to the proceedings. These fairies are surely not entirely good-hearted, but quite likely to give you a nip when you're not looking. Mendelssohn's tempo indication, 'Molto allegro quasi presto', is interesting too: 'quasi presto' would seem to suggest that the performers should give an impression of playing 'presto', but through precise, rhythmic articulation rather than sheer speed – easier said than done, and a taxing testimony to the composer's own prodigious skills at the keyboard.

Robert Philip has nicely described the finale as a 'sturdy Baroque jig'. Beyond that, it seeks coherence with its predecessors both through the 6/8 metre from the Andante and through

yet a third lyrical tune in E flat major. These references might conceivably have been enough to round off the work. But Mendelssohn has one more idea to offer: a chorale-like theme, played initially *pianissimo*, ultimately *fortissimo*. He had done the same as far back as 1827, in the Fugue of the E minor Prelude and Fugue. There the chorale makes a grand entrance. Here it appears first as a kind of thoughtful consolidation, with the 6/8 figures reduced to an accompanying role. But what, we may ask, is the need for consolidation? The answer may be that it not only shares the upward pattern of the lyrical E flat tune, but gives it a new rhythmic weight – Mendelssohn's solution to the age-old 'finale problem', that last movements, with seriousness already dealt with in first movements and speed in scherzos, have nowhere to go. Certainly the final combination of the movement's three themes provides one of Mendelssohn's most exciting and satisfying conclusions.

Programme notes © Roger Nichols

About the performers

Sammy Hart/DG



Lisa Batiashvili

Lisa Batiashvili violin

Lisa Batiashvili, the Georgian-born German violinist, is admired for the virtuosity and sensitivity of her playing. She has developed long-standing relationships with some of the world's leading orchestras, conductors and soloists. From 2019 to 2021, she will be Artistic Director of Audi Sommerkonzerte, Ingolstadt.

This season's highlights includes concertos with the Berlin and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic orchestras, and the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago and the BBC. She also tours in the US with the Philadelphia Orchestra and around Europe with Camerata Salzburg and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and is Artist-in-Residence with the Münchner Konzertdirektion Hörtnagel. Tonight's concert is part of a European tour with Gautier Capuçon and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

Last season she was Artist-in-Residence with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and toured Europe with the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Staatskapelle Dresden and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. She also gave the UK premiere of Anders Hillborg's Violin Concerto No 2.

She has an exclusive recording contract with DG and her latest album, *Visions of Prokofiev*, won an *Opus Klassik* Award. She has recorded concertos by Bartók, Brahms, Shostakovich, Sibelius and Tchaikovsky and, with Gautier Capuçon, Brahms's Double Concerto.

She studied with Ana Chumachenco and Mark Lubotsky, gaining international recognition at the age of 16 as the youngest-ever winner of the Sibelius Competition. She was named *Musical America's* Instrumentalist of the Year in 2015 and this year received an honorary doctorate from the Sibelius Academy (University of Arts, Helsinki).

Lisa Batiashvili plays a Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù' violin from 1739, generously loaned by a private collector.

Gregory Batardon



Gautier Capuçon

Gautier Capuçon cello

Gautier Capuçon performs each season with many of the world's foremost conductors and instrumentalists and is also founder and leader of the 'Classe d'Excellence de Violoncelle' at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris – based in the new Auditorium designed by Frank Gehry. He is acclaimed for his combination of expressive musicianship, exuberant virtuosity and the deep sonority of his 1701 Matteo Goffriller cello; this season he is Artist-in-Residence with the Orquesta de Valencia.

Other highlights this season include the premiere with Jean-Yves Thibaudet of Richard Dubugnon's Concerto for cello and piano, *Eros Athanatos*; concerto appearances with the Czech, Los Angeles, Munich and New York Philharmonic orchestras, the Chicago, NHK and Sydney Symphony orchestras, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Orchestre de Paris. In addition to the current tour with Thibaudet and Lisa Batiashvili,

he also gives chamber concerts with Frank Braley, Gabriela Montero and Yuja Wang.

He has developed a number of long-standing relationships with the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin, Los Angeles, New York and Vienna Philharmonic orchestras and the Chicago, London and San Francisco Symphony orchestras; he regularly works with conductors such as Lionel Bringuier, Semyon Bychkov, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Valery Gergiev, Andris Nelsons and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Composers with whom he has collaborated include Lera Auerbach, Karol Beffa, Esteban Benzecry, Nicola Campogrande, Qigang Chen, Jérôme Ducros, Thierry Escaich, Philippe Manoury, Bruno Mantovani, Krzysztof Penderecki, Wolfgang Rihm and Jörg Widmann.

As a chamber musician he performs with partners such as Nicholas Angelich, Martha Argerich, Daniel Barenboim, Lisa Batiashvili, Frank Braley, Renaud Capuçon, Jérôme Ducros, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Menahem Pressler, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and the Artemis and Ébène quartets.

He records exclusively for Erato and his discography includes many award-winning discs. His latest album – *Intuition* – was released earlier this year, and he will release a CD of Schumann in January.

Gautier Capuçon was born in Chambéry and began playing the cello at the age of 5. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Philippe Muller and Annie Cochet-Zakine, and later with Heinrich Schiff in Vienna.



Jean-Yves Thibaudet

Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano

For more than three decades, Jean-Yves Thibaudet has performed worldwide, recording

more than 50 albums, and building a reputation as one of today's finest pianists. From the start of his career, he has enjoyed exploring music beyond the standard repertoire, from jazz to opera. His profound professional friendships criss-cross the globe and have led to fruitful collaborations in film, fashion and visual art.

He launched the season with Khachaturian's Piano Concerto with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Other highlights include a tour of Schumann, Fauré, Debussy and Enescu with Midori, the current European tour with Lisa Batiashvili and Gautier Capuçon and chamber concerts with Renaud and Gautier Capuçon. With the latter he also premiered Richard Dubugnon's *Eros Athanatos* with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, with subsequent performances with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra across Belgium, at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. He joins the Cleveland Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra for Sir James MacMillan's Piano Concerto No 3, a work he premiered. He also performs the solo part in Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety*, a piece he has performed widely, including at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh Festival, in the composer's centenary celebrations this year.

Education is a particular interest and he is the first-ever Artist-in-Residence at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, a residency that was recently extended for an additional three years; the school has also announced the Jean-Yves Thibaudet Scholarships scheme, which will provide aid for music academy students, regardless of instrument.

Jean-Yves Thibaudet's recordings have received two Grammy nominations, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, a Diapason d'Or, a Choc du Monde de la Musique, an Edison Prize, and Gramophone awards. He was the soloist on the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning film *Atonement*, as well as on those of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and *Wakefield*. His concert wardrobe is designed by Dame Vivienne Westwood.

In 2010 the Hollywood Bowl inducted him into its Hall of Fame. Previously a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, he was awarded the title Officier by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012.