

BBC New Generation Artist: Oleg Shebata-Dragan

Pittville Pump Room
Weds 8 July

Oleg Shebata-Dragan *clarinet*

Dominic Degavino *piano*

Leo Popplewell *cello*

Paul Juon	Trio Miniatures for clarinet, cello and piano	11'
	Rêverie	
	Humoresque	
	Elegy	
	Danse Fantastique	
Ludwig van Beethoven	Piano Trio "Gassenhauer", Op 11	21'
<i>Interval</i>		
Max Bruch	Eight Pieces for clarinet, cello and piano, Op 83	25'
	No 1. Andante	
	No 2. Allegro con moto	
	No 6. Nachtgesang	
	No 7. Allegro vivace, ma non troppo	
Johannes Brahms	Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op 114	25'

About the Programme

Paul Juon (1872-1940) – Trio Miniatures for clarinet, cello and piano

The "Trio Miniatures" are among the most frequently played chamber music works by the Russian-Swiss composer Paul Juon (1872-1940). Originally written for piano, the four pieces "Rêverie" (after op 18 no 3), "Humoresque" (after op 18 no 7), "Elegy" (after op 18 no 6) and "Danse fantastique" (op. 24 No. 2 after) give a wonderful insight into Juon's sound poetry, art of storytelling in music, and his joy in dancing and rhythmic surprises.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) – Piano Trio "Gassenhauer", Op.11 Programme note by Chris Darwin

This genial trio in three movements was originally composed for clarinet, cello and piano, although Beethoven included an almost literal transcription of the clarinet part for violin as an alternative. Clarinets were still rather new, and their possibilities and limitations provided an interesting challenge for the composer, but a conventional piano trio

would probably sell better. The work is one of only a handful of Beethoven's early works involving wind which rate as serious works; most are the lighter wind-band Tafelmusik that he rather apologetically sent to publishers when he needed the money. The work is dedicated to Countess Maria von Thun, mother-in-law to two of his patrons the Princes Lichnowsky and Razumovsky. Some suggest it might have been a peace offering, since Beethoven could treat the eccentric Countess discourteously: she was reportedly seen on her knees unsuccessfully begging Beethoven, sat on the sofa, to play for her.

The theme to the last movement was suggested to Beethoven by the clarinettist Josef Berr. It comes from a light opera by Joseph Weigl, *L'amor marinaro*, and its words translate roughly as "Before I get down to work, I must have something to eat". It had become wildly popular, being whistled on the streets - a *Gassenhauer* (a popular hit or earworm) of its time. When Beethoven realised this, he toyed with substituting a theme of his own, such was his fear of his music becoming popular.

Max Bruch (1838-1920) – Eight Pieces for clarinet, cello and piano, Op 83 Programme note by Willard J. Hertz

Max Bruch is most well-known today for his First Violin Concerto, one of the great works for solo violin and orchestra; The Scottish Fantasy, also for solo violin and orchestra; and Kol Nidre, a treatment for cello and piano of the traditional Jewish Yom Kippur prayer. During his lifetime, however, he was an internationally recognized composer whose output included three operas, three symphonies, two other violin concertos, a piano trio, two string quartets and, most played of all, a series of secular and sacred choral works.

Late in his career, Bruch wrote two works for his son Max Felix, who was a theory teacher at the Hamburg Conservatory and a skillful clarinetist: Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Op. 83, and the Concerto for Clarinet, Viola and Orchestra, Op. 88. He liked the mellow quality of the alto register, so in each work he combined the clarinet with the viola. To enhance the work's commercial appeal, however, he published alternative versions for violin, viola and piano and for clarinet, cello and piano. All three versions are encountered today, and the last is the version we hear this morning.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) - Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op 114

Programme note by Orrin Howard

When he was 58, Brahms indicated in his will that he would compose no more; he would be retiring. But the best-laid plans... This one was set aside because of the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, whom Brahms had heard on a visit to Meiningen. Mühlfeld's playing clearly renewed Brahms' desire to compose, and barely two months after Brahms had drawn his will, he sent the score of the Clarinet Trio to his devoted young friend, Eusebius "Mandy" Mandyczewsk, librarian of the Museum of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. In the same summer, he composed the Clarinet Quintet, and in 1894, the two Clarinet Sonatas. Thus, the "dear nightingale" - as Brahms referred to Mühlfeld - goes down in history as the person without whom four of the composer's most touching and beautiful "twilight" works would not have been written. The utterances in the Trio may not evolve as a cumulative statement quite as achingly beautiful as that of the Clarinet Quintet, but in their thematic and textural austerity they speak, even in their lighter moments, with a sobriety that shares everything about the composer's state of world-weariness.

Artist Biographies

Oleg Shebeta-Dragan *clarinet*, **Leo Popplewell** *cello*, **Dominic Degavino** *piano*

Ukrainian clarinettist Oleg Shebeta-Dragan is one of today's most distinctive young artists. He first gained international recognition in 2022, when he won the prestigious Carl Nielsen International Competition in Denmark. His performances captivated the jury with technical brilliance, expressive depth and natural musicality, earning him the First Prize, alongside the Special Prize of the Odense Symphony Orchestra and the Junior Jury Prize. Following this milestone, Oleg recorded his debut album with the Odense Symphony Orchestra for Orchid Classics, which received high praise from Gramophone Magazine, described it as 'exceptionally fine' and highlighting his warm tone, agility and characterful interpretations.

In a one-off collaboration, Oleg is joined by two former New Generation Artists and members of the award-winning Mithras Trio: Leo Popplewell and Dominic Degavino. Praised for their "exhilarating, highly toned" performances (The Arts Desk), the Mithras Trio established themselves as one of the next generation's most exciting and dynamic piano trios after winning first prize at the 10th Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition (2019). In the same year they also achieved first prizes in the 67th Royal Over-Seas League Music Competition and Cavatina Intercollegiate Chamber Music Competition and were recipients of the Royal Philharmonic Society Henderson Award. Named BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists for the 2021-2023 seasons, they have recorded extensively for BBC Radio 3, as well as giving many live-broadcast concerts.

