

ANAM RECITAL: FERGUS ASCOT (CELLO)

A 6-Course Feast

WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 3.30PM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Francesco GEMINIANI (1687-1762) Cello Sonata in C Major, op. 5 no. 3 (1746) 12'

- i. Andante*
- ii. Allegro*
- iii. Affetuoso*
- iv. Allegro*

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856) *Fantasiestücke*, op. 73 (1849) 11'

- i. Zart und mit Ausdruck*
- ii. Lebhaft, leicht*
- iii. Rasch und mit Feuer*

Bohuslav MARTINŮ (1890-1959) Variations on a Slovakian Theme (1959) 11'

Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841-1904) arr. **ASCOT** *Lasst mich allein*, op. 82 no. 1 (1888) 4'

Paul WIANCKO (b. 1983) *when the night* (2017) 8'

VISION STRING QUARTET *Copenhagen* (2020) 5'

Fergus Ascot * (VIC) cello

Ariel Volovelsky * (NSW) cello

Liam Furey * (NZ) harpsichord

Heesoo Kim * (QLD) cello

Boudewijn Keenan * (NZ) cello

Max Wung * (WA) cello

Maddison Furlan * (VIC) bass

Sophia Jones * (QLD) violin

Noah Coyne * (VIC) violin

Daniel Casey * (VIC) viola

Leigh Harrold (ANAM Associate Faculty)
piano

Approximate duration: 50 minutes

Fergus is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Jannie Brown, Tom and Fiona Clarke, Aurel Dessewffy and Olga Vujovic, Peter and Yvette Hiscock, Ken, Margaret and Edward King, Robert Whitehead, Anna and Mark Yates. Fergus currently plays a Virgilio Capellini 2006 Cello on loan to ANAM from Jannie Brown.

This concert will feature ANAM's harpsichord, funded by Rosemary and the late John Macleod

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PROGRAM NOTES

At first glance this program may seem to have no theme and no common thread connecting all six of the magnificent works that you'll hear today — and that it because there really isn't, besides the obvious "cello" theme. The essence of this program is diversity and freshness, a characteristic that can be found in the variety of styles, configurations of instruments, aided by the inclusion of some lesser-known composers, including music from the Baroque period through the Romantic and into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

When one thinks of Baroque cello music, it's likely that Bach's suites or Vivaldi's double cello concerto spring to mind first. While they are undeniably masterpieces, I think it's important that we include other great works of the time, such as the six sonatas for cello and continuo by **Francesco Geminiani**, from which I have chosen the C major sonata. This work has been a joy to learn, and has challenged me with its diversion from predictable patterns. The irregular phrases and sudden musical surprises, popping out when you least expect them, create a freshness and lightness that keeps both performer and listener on their toes, and it is this freshness that makes it a perfect start to the program.

Many scholars believe **Robert Schumann** was afflicted by a personality disorder, likely bipolar, and would go through ecstatic highs and depressive lows. In his twenties, Schumann created characters for the two sides of his inner dialogue. Florestan was fiery, passionate and energetic, while Eusebius was quiet, orderly and introspective. Much of Schumann's music is filled with characters that reflect his own personality, and his *Fantasiestücke* is no exception. The first movement, marked as "tenderly and with expression", weaves gentle, lyrical passages with flowing secondary lines in the piano, and takes us on a journey from the sombre key of A minor to the warmer and more positive A major. As a fantasia, each movement runs into the next without pause, like back-to-back episodes, and as such the second movement, "lively, light," continues where the first left off, in A major. In the middle, the cello and piano chase each other like a game of cat and mouse, with triplets in F major running back into the A major theme. The coda slows things down, like the calm before the storm of the third movement, "quickly and with fire". The coda of the third movement brings back to the theme of the second, and rushes to the end in a flurry. See if you can identify which passages are Florestan and which are Eusebius!

The *Slovak Variations* were composed during the last year of **Bohuslav Martinů's** life, and are based on the Slovak folk song *Kde bych já vedela* ('If I Only Knew'). Czech speech patterns often consist of a short, stressed syllable followed by a longer, unstressed syllable, and the same patterns can be found in this work, most obviously in the theme. This piece is truly a joy to play, and takes you on a journey of emotions from sombre to playful, tranquil to enthusiastic, each variation creating a different perspective of the original theme.

The rest of the program is kind of like dessert — small treats that come after all the hard work. **Antonín Dvořák's** *Lasst mich allein* is a beautiful piece based on a poem that highlights the many emotions that one goes through in the early stages of love — the title translates to "Leave me alone." *When the night* has been described by **Paul Wiancko** as "a lullaby that incorporates soul, R&B, and jazzy elements," and is based on Ben King's classic song "Stand by Me." Finally, *Copenhagen* by the **Vision String Quartet** is just a truly joyful way to end the concert. The rhythmic ostinato and other rhythmic elements such as chopping creates an infectious energy and vibe that truly makes it hard not to dance, even while playing!

This year has been so incredibly fun and rewarding, and I've learned so much and had so many great experiences. This program is a culmination of all my efforts and everything I've learned this year, so I'm very excited to perform it for you. I hope you enjoy!

Words by Fergus Ascot