

EVENT THREE

Saturday 14 September 2024 1.00pm – 2:00pm
Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York



CONCERT BY FESTIVAL ARTISTS

Sam Coles (Flute)

Tim Lowe (Cellos)

Andrew Brownell (Piano)

Carl Maria von Weber (1786 – 1826) (arr. Hummel)
Overture to Euryanthe

Many composers arranged Weber's operatic overtures. Hummel seems to have arranged just about everything he could lay his hands on, mainly at the instigation of his publisher, J.R.Schulz in the 1820s. The enthusiasm of amateur musicians for playing adaptations of orchestral works, including the symphonies of contemporary composers such as Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, naturally attracted Hummel. His choice to arrange orchestral works for piano, flute, violin and 'cello met the requirement of this increasing market for both publishers and players; publishing in Germany seems to have become an expanding and lucrative business in the late eighteenth century.

This operatic overture, tuneful and dramatic, is ideal for the piano, with the flute playing its attractive melodies and sometimes the 'cello also, despite its more familiar role to reinforce the bass line.

The music offers quickly changing characterful tunes and contrasting ideas and it is clearly structured in these three sections. Weber's original brilliant orchestration is served surprisingly well by this arrangement.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778 – 1837)

Adagio, Variations and Rondo on a Russian Theme, Op 78

Writing a set of variations based on a well-known tune has been a familiar form of composition through the centuries. It was an especially suitable means of expression for a fine pianist like Hummel with a facility for improvisation. Sadly, although he was such a skilled composer, he was also a contemporary of Beethoven and forced to live somewhat in his shadow.

In the introduction all three instruments are presented at their most expressive, eloquently singing the beautiful melodic lines and preparing for the simple folk theme in two sections which follows and on which the variations are based.

These turn out to be delightfully contrasted. **Variation 1** played by the piano alone creates its own flowing counter melodies, later to be joined by the other instruments. **Variation 2** presents questioning upward motifs from the flute and in **Variation 3** stormy triplet octave scales erupt in the piano part aided by chattering dialogue between flute and 'cello. The serenity of **Variation 4** is memorable for its continuous dialogue now relaxed and flowing, but dotted rhythms and rapid rising scales are featured in two brief but dramatic episodes.

Variations 5 and 6 both start in minor keys but contrast with one another. In the fifth the piano accompanies the flute theme with deft arpeggios and in the sixth there is an extended serene flute melody, later flowing into the 'cello part. They are accompanied by soft and very fast repetitive piano chord patterns, all of which prepare the listener for the brilliance of **Variation 7**; its intensity largely due to continuous athletic display from the pianist. A fine ending!

Carl Maria von Weber (1786 – 1826)

Trio in G minor, Op 63

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Schafers Klage: Andante espressivo

Finale: Allegro

'...melodic profusion, in all its variety permeates the movement and it is in the extremes of contrast that the essence of the whole work lies.' (John Warrack)

This is a flute, piano and 'cello trio completed in 1819 and written by the operatic master himself. Weber, known for his operatic reforms, insisted on preserving the inherently dramatic qualities of the music and stagecraft as

opposed to indulging in existing Italian operatic composers' increasing preference for composing display pieces for its soloists. His chamber music reflects Weber's orchestral and vocal writing. Unlike Haydn's piano trios, the 'cello plays a much more independent role, providing a proper adversary to the flute, therefore its part is more technically demanding.

Although the work follows Classical proportions, the Romantic idiom is constantly gaining the upper hand with a more subjective approach to the music. But the ending of the engaging first movement is poignant and understands its second movement is a playful *Scherzo* full of character with insistent rhythmic repetition, and ending with a flourish.

The title of the third movement 'Shepherd's Lament' was inspired by Goethe's poem of the same name. Containing hints of simple folk song in its tunes it also echoes operatic practices, proving the cello with opportunities to soar in its high registers in Plaintive duet with the flute whose expressive cadenzas recall a singer's natural improvisation.

Opening the final movement tentatively the flute and piano introduce themselves once again but soon all three players are exchanging alluring melodic dialogue. This movement is not unlike the last act of an opera where individual characters often express and share different emotions and points of view; towards the end there is almost coquettish duetting between 'cello and flute in their exchange of wry comments and dramatic trills and hesitations. The operatic metaphor continues to the end with a repetitive and insistent conclusion which seems so very human!