

The London Debussy Trio

Susan Milan was the first woman to be appointed a member and Principal of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, beginning an extremely broad career as an orchestral principal, chamber musician, soloist, teacher and lecturer. In Great Britain she has performed concertos with all the major orchestras and she tours frequently throughout Europe, USA, Australia and the Far East. She has given numerous world and UK premieres and has inspired contemporary composers to write for her, among them Richard Rodney Bennett, Antal Dorati, Carl Davis, Jindrich Feld, Edwin Roxburgh, Robert Saxton, Ole Schmidt, Robert Simpson and Keith Gates. Susan Milan is often featured on BBC radio and records primarily for the Chandos, Upbeat and Master Classics labels. In the academic field, she has researched and published 19th century repertoire for Boosey & Hawkes and is presently restoring her collection of historic 78 recordings of flautists 1910-1945 and issuing them on the Master Classics label. Susan is a Professor of the Royal College of Music, where she was herself a scholar at the age of 16. She also gives annual Master Class courses in Charterhouse School, Surrey, UK.

Christina Rhys studied in London from the age of eleven with Maria Korchinska. She continued her studies with a Foundation Scholarship from the Royal College of Music with Marisa Robles and then as a Post Graduate in Basel with Ursula Holliger. She appears as soloist both in UK and abroad, is often heard on BBC radio and as a freelance player she works with leading symphony and chamber orchestras, in particular the BBC Philharmonic, the Hallée Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia and the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford. She is also a member of the London Debussy Trio with Susan Milan and Yuko Inoue, as well as the Gemini Ensemble, which specialises in 20th Century music and education.

Christopher Wellington, first ever Principal Viola of the National Youth Orchestra, won 1st class honours in Music at Oxford and studied viola with Frederick Riddle and Keith Cummings. In a varied career he has appeared at the Queen Elizabeth Hall as soloist on viola and viola d'amore, given recitals in the Purcell Room and elsewhere, played as Principal with the Philharmonia Orchestra and several chamber orchestras and has been the viola player of the Zorian and Amici String Quartets and the Music Group of London. After teaching for 21 years at the Royal College of Music and 4 years at Trinity College of Music he is now active at University College Chichester. Masterclasses and chamber music coaching have taken him as far afield as USA, Australia and China. Currently he gives recitals with the pianist Alan Brown and the contralto Emily Bauer-Jones, is the viola player of the Razumovsky Quartet and the Reinecke Ensemble, conducts a long-established string orchestra course in the Midlands and is editor of the new edition of Walton's Viola Concerto (published by Oxford University Press) and other compositions for viola.

STOUR VALLEY ARTS & MUSIC

53rd Season: 2003-2004

London Debussy Trio

Susan Milan *flute* **Christopher Wellington** *viola*
Christina Rhys *harp*

Friday 30 January 2004 at 8pm at the Constable Hall, East Bergholt

PROGRAMME

Sonatine en Trio for flute, viola, and harp	Maurice Ravel (1875 –1937)
<i>Modéré Mouvement de Menuet Animé</i>	
Élégie Op 44, for viola and harp	Aleksandr Glazunov (1865-1936)
Chanson dans la Nuit for solo harp	Carlos Salzedo (1885-1961)
Zodiac Trio Op 70, for flute, viola, and harp	William Mathias (1934-1992)
<i>Moderato (Pisces) Allegro vivo (Aries) Andante (Taurus)</i> <i>Allegro alla danza</i>	

INTERVAL

Fantaisie Op 124, for flute and harp	Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
Sonate en Trio for flute, viola, and harp	Claude Debussy (1862 -1918)
<i>Pastorale (Lento, dolce rubato) Interlude (Tempo di minuetto)</i> <i>Finale (Allegro moderato ma risoluto)</i>	



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PROGRAMME NOTES

Ravel was known for being fastidious in every aspect of life: his tastes, his dress, his choice of friends, and, especially, his music. It reveals no overt emotion, and resembles a ritual process, abstract and pure. It demonstrates exquisite skill and taste, but its creator is difficult for us to know. The *Sonatine* began life as a single movement written in 1903 as a test piece for pianists at the Paris Conservatoire. The second and third movements were completed later and it was published in 1905. The French born American harpist Carlos Salzedo, whose student years at the Paris Conservatoire overlapped with Ravel's, arranged the *Sonatine* for Flute, Harp and Viola (or Cello) in order to extend the repertoire for the combination of instruments pioneered by the 1915 Sonata of Debussy. The first movement, in unusually transparent sonata form, bears two of Ravel's fingerprints – a first theme whose texture places the melody both above and below the accompaniment and a second subject built from unrelated chords with parallel fifths. The gently astringent harmonies of the beautiful second movement are followed by a brilliant toccata-like finale, whose subject is a version in 5/4 time of the opening of the work.

Glazunov began private composition lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov at age fourteen. Despite the difference in age, a lifelong friendship developed between teacher and student. Two years later, Glazunov completed his First Symphony, the première of which under Balakirev was received with great enthusiasm. "An amazing work, frightening in its precocious maturity" was the verdict of yet another of the Mighty Handful, César Cui. The symphony was followed by a series of similarly fine works. In 1905, Glazunov became director of the St. Petersburg conservatoire, a post he kept until 1930, working ceaselessly to improve the curriculum, raise the standards of staff and students, and defend the dignity and autonomy of the conservatory, which acquired special status among Russian institutions of higher learning. The *Élégie* for viola was written in 1893.

An unprecedented winner of the premier prix in two instruments, Carlos **Salzedo** graduated from the Paris Conservatoire the age of sixteen. His career opened the door to a new concept of harp playing - through extensive experimentation he analysed the multiple timbres a harp could produce, inventing symbols to notate new sounds and introducing terms or phrases to describe them. These began to appear in his compositions around 1919. The atmospheric piece *Chanson de la nuit* was composed in July 1927 at Seal Harbour, Maine, and was included in his published teaching book *Method for the Harp* as a kind of advanced study. Another composer with an interest in harp music was William **Mathias**, who was by instinct a lyricist who rejected serial music early in his career: characteristics perhaps unsurprising in a son of Wales. He began composing as a small boy in Whitland and later studied at the University College of Wales and the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he worked with Sir Lennox Berkeley. The Zodiac trio was written in 1975 for the flautist Christopher Hyde Smith (Pisces),

viola player Frederick Riddle (Aries), and harpist Marisa Robles (Taurus). Each of the first three movements was intended to express the characteristics of one of the players and their birth sign. Astrological horoscopes are regarded by many, particularly those of a scientific turn of mind, as an aspect of popular culture which should not be taken too seriously. Given this, it is intriguing how closely some of the characteristics conventionally associated with their birth signs fit the perceived reputations and personalities of the trio's dedicatees.

During his lifetime, **Saint-Saëns** was often compared to Mozart, no doubt because he was versatile and prolific, and also a brilliant craftsman who contributed to every genre of French music. Towards the end of the century, he began to write for piano in a manner generally more linear and less heavy than previously, whilst at the same time developing a growing preference for the thin sonorities of the harp. This is demonstrated in the *Fantaisie* op.95, the *Morceau de concert* op.154 for harp and orchestra, and the *Fantaisie* op.124 for violin and harp of 1907, presented here in transcription for flute. Whilst Saint-Saëns lived a long and healthy life, **Debussy** was less fortunate. In 1915 he was diagnosed with cancer, from which, despite major surgery, he died in 1918. During the last three years of his life, he set himself the task of writing six sonatas for various instruments or combinations, of which he completed only three: the Cello Sonata, the Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp, and the Violin Sonata. The trio deliberately combines three instruments whose individual timbres are each slightly mysterious and exotic. It is a reflective work, perhaps showing how deeply Debussy was affected both by the war years and his declining health. He observed of it that "it is so terribly melancholic that I cannot say whether one should laugh or cry. Perhaps both?" Fifty years later, Darius Milhaud recalled this period: "I had the possibility of hearing Debussy in concerts. I was always extremely moved by the tenderness with which he touched the notes; he played magnificently. I never dreamed that that I could once meet him. At this time, when there was no radio, no television, there was still a sort of mystery about great men, and nobody of my generation would dare to try to disturb them. During the war, I was regularly playing chamber music...we tried this sonata with harpist and flautist. Then publisher M. Jacques Durand asked me if I would like to give the first performance as violist in Debussy's Sonata. I was extremely excited about the project. Durand told me: 'You'll go to Debussy's house and he will give you all the tempi'. I went there with my heart beating hard and saw the master whom I admired so much. He was very pale, with a little shawl on his shoulders, and his hands were trembling on the piano; but with extraordinary serenity he twice played his sonata for me on the piano, though I could not get all the details - tempi, rallentandi, etc. At that time, of course, I did not tell him I was composing myself because we were more shy than young composers might be now. For Debussy I was a young violist full of deference and respect. After so many years, I keep for Debussy the same admiration, the same tenderness, the same love".