

Ruth Palmer

"Strident, shocking, imperious and beautiful."

Anna Picard, The Independent on Sunday

Fast developing an international reputation for her intense physical performances, deeply sonorous sound and championing of new music, award winning violinist Ruth Palmer has been described by Raphael Wallfisch as "One of the most gifted and musical players of her generation".

2006 saw Ruth performing Vivaldi's Four Seasons with the English Chamber Orchestra at Kenwood House and playing for HRH Prince Charles at St James's Palace. Ruth has recorded her debut CD with the Philharmonia Orchestra, released in July 2006. She has performed in St Petersburg for a BBC Radio 4 documentary that celebrates the 100th anniversary of Shostakovich's birth, and in Italy and Taiwan.

Past performances include her Wigmore Hall debut, described as "liberating violin playing of great stature"- Musical Opinion, and recitals at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago, Royal Opera House, Edinburgh Festival, Cheltenham International Festival of Music, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Teatro Albeniz Madrid, Munich Opera House Gala and Snape Maltings.

Ruth has frequently worked with some of Britain's leading choreographers and dancers. In 2004/5 she toured as a soloist with Rambert Dance Company performing to over 50,000 people around the country to critical acclaim; *"the violinist was so compelling"* (Sunday Telegraph).

As a student at Royal College of Music her teacher was Dr. Felix Andrievsky. In 2005 Ruth was made the first ever recipient of the prestigious Ritterman Junior Fellowship at the RCM, having previously been the Mills Williams Junior Fellow in 2004.

www.ruthpalmer.com

Alexei Grynyuk

"...astonishing personality and absolutely transcendental virtuosity."

'Le Figaro Scope', Paris

Born in Kiev, Alexei began touring former Soviet Union while still at school and at only thirteen gave performances of Chopin E Minor & Mozart D Minor Concertos with Ukrainian orchestras as well as won the first prize at the Dyagilev All-Soviet-Union Competition in Moscow. Since then numerous successes at international competitions followed, notably first prizes at the Vladimir Horowitz Competition in Kiev and the Shanghai Competition in China..

Alexei studied at the Kiev Conservatoire and later won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music to continue his studies with Hamish Milne. Meanwhile his constantly growing concert activities have taken him to the stages of Wigmore Hall, South Bank Centre in London, Salle Cortot, Salle Gaveau in Paris, Great Hall of Moscow Conservatoire, Metropolitan Museum in New York, and many other prestigious venues in Europe, USA, Morocco, Mexico, South Korea and Japan. He has broadcast on several European Radio and TV companies and Chinese and Russian Television.

Highly acclaimed in the press worldwide for his recitals and concerto performances Alexei has appeared in many international festivals, such as Chopin Festival in Dushniki (Poland), Cervantino' (Mexico), 'Musical Kremlin' (Moscow), 'Musica Sacra' (Holland), and Newport Music Festival (USA).

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-sixth
season
2006-7

8.00pm
Friday
8 December
2006

Constable Hall
East Bergholt



SVAM is a member of NFMS and a
Registered Charity (No 276640)

Ruth Palmer Violin Alexei Grynyuk Piano

W A Mozart (1756-1791)
Sonata in E minor K304

I - Allegro

II - Tempo di Menuetto

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Sonata in F minor Op 4

I - Adagio; Allegro moderato

II - Poco adagio

III - Allegro agitato

INTERVAL

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
Sonata Op 134

I - Andante

II - Allegro

III - Largo-Andante-Largo

George Gershwin (1898-1937)
transcribed by **Jascha Heifetz** (1901-1987)
Melodies from **Porgy and Bess**

Programme Notes

In his twenty-second year, **Mozart** wrote to his employer, the Archbishop of Salzburg, requesting a few months leave of absence. The reply was a letter of dismissal, and so, accompanied by his mother, Mozart made visits to several European courts in search of a new post. Meeting no success in Munich, Augsburg and Mannheim, a letter from his father suggested trying his luck in Paris, at the time the intellectual capital of Europe. The Mozarts were guests of the influential Baron Grimm, through whom they made the acquaintance of many leading Enlightenment figures. But it was an unpropitious time for Mozart's prospects: he despised French musical style, and also suspected malicious intrigue, whilst Parisian interest was absorbed in the ongoing controversy between adherents of the declining French opera and those who favoured the newer Italian style of *opera buffa*. He published a number of sonatas for piano and for violin, thereby placing himself alongside Haydn and CPE Bach in the first rank of European instrumental composers. During the summer of 1778, after some weeks of illness, Mozart's mother died. The violin sonata in E minor was written soon afterwards - Mozart's only instrumental piece to employ that key. The intensity of the composer's feeling is reflected in the terse theme of the first movement and in the generally concentrated style. Two movements for a sonata is relatively unusual, and where a minuet movement might often be thought to be lightweight, this one is not. It has a central section in E major, a key which, in most contexts, sounds very bright and optimistic, but here generates a poignancy which anticipates the more tender moments of Schubert's songs. The sonata was the favourite work of scientist Albert Einstein, a lifelong amateur violinist.

Mendelssohn wrote about half of his sonatas, including all those for piano, in the six years from age twelve to eighteen. Of these, only the Sonata in F minor for violin and piano was published in the composer's lifetime: it was written in 1823, when he was fourteen. It is a derivative work, owing much to Mozart and Beethoven, but the young composer's command of contrapuntal resource is strongly in evidence, and also his remarkable skill in modulation. The work is romantically coloured, and begins with an unaccompanied recitative for the violin. The second movement starts sedately, like a slow minuet, but soon becomes rhapsodical, with careful directions for the use of the second, third and fourth strings of the violin. The last movement culminates in another cadenza leading to a coda whose rather vapid brilliance is redeemed by the graceful sentiment of the final pianissimo cadence. After its use in this early Sonata, the tragic key of F minor was to be absent from Mendelssohn's chamber music until nearly twenty years later, when it returned in his last and possibly greatest string quartet.

The story goes that, in 1968, **Shostakovich** presented David Oistrakh with a 60th birthday present, the Violin Concerto No. 2. But the composer was premature by a year, and felt obligated to write another composition for the violinist's actual 60th birthday. The result was the Sonata for Violin and Piano, one of his finer late works. In the last decade of his life, perhaps because of a recent heart attack, Shostakovich's thoughts and creative projects turned increasingly to the topic of death. At the same time he became interested in 12-note composition, which was still a subject of official disapproval in the USSR. In this he was inspired by the example of Britten, whose *The Turn of the Screw* he had seen in Edinburgh in 1962. Like Britten, he never applied the technique in the rigorous manner of the Second Viennese School; rather, themes using all twelve chromatic

notes took on symbolic associations with death or stasis. The sonata opens with such a theme on the piano. A second theme appears, march-like and cynical. The two instruments exchange renditions of it, and then the main theme is reprised by the violin - shortly thereafter another engaging idea is presented by the violin, seeming to glide eerily downward from its upper ranges as the piano delivers chilling harmonies in both registers. There is also some ghostly *sul ponticello* playing (a special effect made by placing the violin bow directly above the bridge). Not long after the work appeared, Soviet musicologists tried in vain to explain the mood of this bleak music as pastoral... The second movement begins with a heroic-sounding theme, but the mood quickly becomes anxious. A waltz seems to promise relief from the unbounded energy and tension, but without quite managing to break the rigid mood. The finale has a sombre introduction before the violin presents the dark main theme, played pizzicato. After this come thirteen variations, the mood of which ranges from pensive to playful, from sinister to simple. An outburst on the piano just past the middle of the movement leads to a climactic episode on the violin. The eerie music from the first movement returns, as does the march-like theme, before a somewhat chilling end.

Attracted to ragtime as a teenage pianist, borrowing blues vocabulary for songs as early as 1920 and identified publicly as a 'jazz' composer from the time of the *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), **Gershwin** held a substantial stake in black American music long before the day in autumn 1926 when he happened upon Heyward's novel *Porgy*. He responded to his reading of it as if to the voice of destiny, devoting nine years to *Porgy and Bess*, which he called a 'folk opera'. His belief in the need for a label is understandable, for it is a work whose precise nature was questioned from the beginning. Gershwin's background in popular song, and the show's original venue (it played nightly on Broadway) raised questions about its operatic pedigree, and indeed the work's essence lies in the appeal of individual numbers rather than the impact of its overall form. Its initial production was less successful than a later one which put spoken dialogue, instead of music, between the well-known songs - it is these which, once heard, stay in the memory. Jascha **Heifetz** played the violin for 83 of his 86 years, for over 60 of them in front of audiences the length and breadth of the world. The name of Heifetz has become synonymous with violinistic perfection. Yet he did not stress technical exhibitionism. As the *New Grove* observes 'his stance was almost immobile; he held his violin high and far back, with his face turned towards his fingers. His tone was powerful and produced with great pressure; equalizing this was an intense vibrato giving a glowing tone without a trace of sentimentality... he had the ability to blend his tone and interpretation with other artists, as is proved by his chamber music playing with Feuermann, Primrose, Piatigorsky and Rubinstein.'

© Peter Shave 2006

Forthcoming SVAM events at the Constable Hall:

Supper Concert: Saturday 13 January 2007 at 7.30: Returns only (call 01206 299448)

SVAM Lecture: Richard Ormond on *John Singer Sargent*: Friday 16 February 2007 8 pm

Recital: Elizabeth Watts *soprano* and Paul Plummer *piano*: Friday 2 March 2007 8 pm