

## Niels Bijl and Diedre Irons

### Programme

#### ***Chant du ménestrel* Opus 71                      Glazunov (1865 – 1936)**

Russian composer Alexander Glazunov was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. He joined the staff of the Moscow Conservatory in 1888, and though he remained a friend and colleague, his admiration for his former teacher waned. Glazunov held the music of Tchaikovsky and Brahms in high regard, and his own music continued to be written in the Romantic style even though other composers around him were exploring Nationalism in their music. *Chant du ménestrel* ("Song of the Minstrel") was composed in 1900 for cello and orchestra. After the poignant beginning, a change of mood occurs in the central section before the first melody returns.

#### ***Evening Song* Opus 56                              Smirnov (1948 – )**

Born in Minsk in 1948, Dmitri Smirnov entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1967. He has received many international awards for his compositions. He is now a freelance composer and teacher at Goldsmiths College of Music in London. Composed in 1990, *Evening Song* was written for tenor saxophone and piano.

#### ***Sonata in A minor 'Arpeggione' D 821*    Schubert (1797 – 1828)**

*Allegro moderato*

*Adagio*

*Allegretto*

The arpeggione was a curious hybrid instrument, also known as the 'guitare d'amour'. It was a six-stringed instrument fretted like a guitar and played with a cello bow. The work was discovered by Sir George Grove in 1867 while researching in the Musikverein Library in Vienna and when it was published in 1871 so little was known about it that parts were also included for violin or cello. Today it is usually heard on cello but the work suits the viola's mellow voice equally well.

#### ***Five Preludes* Opus 16 No 1                      Scriabin (1872 – 1915)**

Like most of his early sets of piano preludes, Scriabin's Opus 16 belong very much to this "Chopinesque" tradition. Although composed at the same time as the Etudes Opus 8, they are far simpler in scope and technique. The first prelude emulates Chopin's *Berceuse* and *Barcarolle* in its undulating bass motion and impressionistic harmonies.

### Interval

#### ***El Cant del Ocells* Trad arr                      Casals (1876-1973)**

The greatest cellist of his generation, Pablo Casals was also a composer who published under his Catalan birth-name, Pau Casals. He is perhaps best known for his recording of the Bach Cello Suites, made in the 1930s. An ardent supporter of the Spanish Republican government, Casals went into self-imposed exile once Francisco Franco's dictatorial government came to power, but did not live to see its end, dying in Puerto Rico in 1973. As a composer, his modest output was mostly rooted in the Catalan tradition, including this arrangement of the popular "Song of the Birds", which swept Catalonia after it was introduced and became known as a symbol of the Catalan nation during the Franco regime.

## ***La Belle Epoque***

### ***Pavane pour une infante défunte* Ravel (1875 – 1937)**

This exquisite pavane, despite its title which evokes images of castles in Spain, was written long before Ravel's Spanish obsession coloured his compositions. We are not told who the Infanta was and it is probably not essential to know because the music encompasses much more than an individual reference. The *Pavane* conjures up the picture of a formal Spanish court, where all expression of grief is formally held within the bounds of rigid ceremony, and the gentle and unforced melody is reconciled to a patrician grief.

### ***Après un rêve Op 7 No 1* Fauré (1845 – 1924) *Nocturne Op 43 No 2***

Widely considered the greatest master of French song, one of Fauré's most famous songs, *Après un rêve* (After a Dream) was written during the composer's temporary fascination with the Italian style. The lyrics, an anonymous poem transcribed by Romain Bussine, describe a lover's reverie in dreaming, and the yearning to return to the dream after awakening: "In a sleep which your image charmed, I dreamt of happiness, ardent mirage ... You called me, and I left the earth, to flee with you towards the light ... Return, return, radiant, mysterious night!"

Originally titled *Éblouissement* ("Enchanting Dusk"), *Nocturne* was written in 1886 for voice and piano. Based on a work by one of Fauré's favourite poets, Villiers de L'isle-Adam (1838 – 1889), the text describes the night slowly unfolding, but the narrator's own "darkly veiled night" is only charmed by "my love and your beauty!"

### ***Méditation* Massenet (1842 – 1912)**

*Massenet was the leading operatic composer in France in the nineteenth century. Thais, one of his most successful and enduring operas, tells the story of the courtesan-turned-saint and was written for American soprano (and one-time lover of the composer) Sybil Sanderson. The famous Méditation is played by a solo violin between Acts 2 and 3, and symbolises Thais's conversion to the religious life.*

### ***Adagio and Allegro Opus 70* Schumann (1810 – 1856)**

Towards the end of his life, Schumann turned to some of the less usual solo instruments. 1849 was the year of the horn. As well as the *Adagio and Allegro*, he wrote the *Konzertstück* for orchestra and four horns, and five *Hunting Songs* for male chorus and horns. Schumann also allowed for the *Adagio and Allegro* to be played by the cello. To him, musical substance took precedence over instrumental colour.

### ***Contradanza* Paquito D'Rivera (1948 – )**

Born in 1948 in Havana, Cuba, Paquito D'Rivera was a child prodigy, playing both clarinet and saxophone and performing with the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra at a young age. After seeking asylum in the United States, he moved there in 1981, leaving behind his wife and child in Cuba. D'Rivera is well-known as a cross-over artist and composer, having won six Grammy Awards in both classical and jazz categories.