

## Programme & Programme Notes

### 1. J.S. Bach. Partita in A Minor for Flute Solo BWV 1013

The Cöthen period from 1717-1723, when J. S. Bach (1685-1750) was serving as a music director at the Calvinist court, was probably the most prolific period of instrumental chamber music. Calvinism rejected the excessive musical displays of Lutheranism, therefore Bach had no formal church music duties during this six-year appointment. However, his patron, Prince Leopold of Anhalt, enjoyed the music to such an extent that he regularly requested for secular solo and ensemble works for entertainment purposes. Bach's works from this period of time included instrumental suites, sonatas, and partitas, the keyboard suites and inventions, the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, and *the Brandenburg Concertos*.

At the same time, the 18th-century baroque flute was progressively becoming one of the most popular instruments among both amateurs and virtuosos — Bach's flute works, including *Partita in A Minor* and the *Six Sonatas*, were certainly composed for the latter. The technical challenges of the unaccompanied *Partita* require the flutist to demonstrate harmonic and melodic awareness through the complex polyphonic writing, where the role of an evolving bass-line (providing the harmonic progression), incorporated with a general horizontal melody-line, should be clearly distinguished. Bach adopted the form of this four-movement work from the genre of French baroque instrumental dance suites.

There is a hypothesis that Bach composed the piece for the most prominent flutist of his days, Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin, with whom his elder brother Johann Jakob Bach had once studied. The *Partita* consists of four movements in different dance styles. The opening *Allemande* (German dance), with its constant running sixteenth-notes, therefore requiring an exceptional breath control, gives the impression more of a prelude than of a dance. The *Corrente* (an Italian equivalent of the French *Courante*) begins with a theme of vigorous rhythmic profile and wide leaps, which interrupt the expected smooth and continuous flow of passages but it eventually takes on the “running” character (which is what the word “corrente” means) in rapid sixteenth notes. The *Sarabande* (of a Spanish origin) surprisingly, doesn't contain a typical pattern of a regularly occurring emphasis on the second beat. Similarly, the last dance is not typical in its nature - *Bourée anglaise* (which is of a French origin, and has no relation to the English dance), instead of repetitive dactylic rhythm (one long, two short notes), full of totally

opposite rhythmic patterns when the two short notes are followed by the long one and the strong emphasis constantly comes to the second (weak) beat instead of the customary first one.

## 2. Sergei Prokofiev. Flute Sonata in D, op. 94

The Sonata for Flute and Piano in D Major is Prokofiev's only work for flute. The piece is written with a use of a conventional four-movement structure, with the first movement in a sonata form, the second is a Scherzo, the third is a slow movement in a ternary form, and the fourth is a rondo. Composer described with the following words his musical intentions: "I wanted to write a sonata in delicate, fluid classical style." The challenging and exquisitely written flute part, which is filled with expressive and unique melodic themes, as well as the technical demands placed on the ensemble, has brought sonata a reputation as among the most difficult and revered in the flute repertoire.

The Flute Sonata was composed during Prokofiev's evacuation from Moscow, between 1942-43 (Second World War time), mostly during his time in Alma-Ata and Perm. The masterpiece was a commission from Levon Atovmyan, finance officer of the financial division of the Union of Soviet Composers in Moscow and Prokofiev's creative and personal assistant. Atovmyan visited the composer during his evacuation and advised him on personal and financial issues.

The piece was premiered on December 7, 1943 with flutist Nikolay Ivanovich Kharkovsky and pianist Svyatoslav Richter. It is internationally and worldwide one of the most frequently performed flute sonatas even nowadays and often required as a compulsory piece on the prestigious international competitions.

As it was mentioned before, there are 4 movements. The first movement, in a textbook sonata form, is the most frequently performed, mostly because of its diverse and uniquely developed thematic material, technical challenges (extreme usage of all the registers ranging from low c-sharp up to the highest d) and inventive use of the flute color (all the types of dynamics from . The second movement contrasts with the broad, lush nature of the first movement before in its witty and brilliant thematic material and often transparent texture. Prokofiev creates rhythmic contrast in his juxtaposition of hemiola with a clear waltz-like meter to be felt in one. The stillness and fairy-tale-like beauty of the middle section allows the performer to showcase the unlimited possibilities of the flute as a versatile instrument. The third movement provides tranquility in the midst of its vivid and brilliant surrounding movements. In addition to its Andante tempo, this movement is composed in the simplest of all in terms of form, harmony and melodic content. It demands a great sensitivity to tone colour which is being varied by vibrato, dynamics and registers. Finally, the last martial and full of energy 4<sup>th</sup> movement concludes the entire Sonata. Its uniqueness is revealed in a masterful mixture of the characters applied by composer in the alternating sections of a rondo form. The importance of the piano part is being

highlighted in a grand middle section, which is followed by the tender and at the same time extremely simple flute melody line. Through the multiple stages of the motivic development the whole Sonata is finished with the furious fanfares played in unison between the flute and piano, symbolising the utmost power which has reached its peak development in the end of the 4-movements journey.