

Total performance time: approximately 110 minutes, including an interval of 20 minutes

## **Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien**

**Alina Ibragimova** violin  
**Cédric Tiberghien** piano

**Leoš Janáček** (1854–1928)

Violin Sonata (1914)

17'

- i. Con moto*
- ii. Ballada*
- iii. Allegretto*
- iv. Adagio*

**George Enescu** (1881–1955)

Violin Sonata No.3 in A minor, 'in Romanian style', Op.25 (1926)

27'

- i. Moderato malinconico*
- ii. Andante sostenuto e misterioso*
- iii. Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso*

INTERVAL

**Gerald Barry** (b.1952)

Triorchic Blues (1990, rev. 2024),

first performance of this arrangement

4'

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827)

Violin Sonata No.9 in A, Op.47, 'Kreutzer' (1803)

40'

- i. Adagio sostenuto – Presto*
- ii. Andante con variazioni*
- iii. Presto*

Alina Ibramigova is regularly described as 'fearless' or 'electrifying', whether she is playing repertoire from the Classical era or more obscure corners of the later centuries. With her regular performing partner Cédric Tiberghien, who shares her compellingly edge-of-the-seat style, anything they play sounds as fresh as the day it was composed. They are particularly suited to the repertoire in this programme – a mix of familiar and less so – all of which features true partnerships between violin and piano.

In **Janáček's** Violin Sonata (1914) the piano part is substantial throughout, with the violin at times functioning more as commentator than soloist. At the start, however, the violin takes the melodic lead with the piano providing an oscillating figure underneath resembling the sound of a cimbalom (a dulcimer-like string instrument). This oscillation is a recurring figure across the whole movement, generating a slightly uneasy, trembling atmosphere even during the purely melodic passages. The second movement is lyrical, with the piano evocatively decorating the violin's solo lines, while the occasionally turbulent third movement begins as if a work for solo piano, its marching figures punctuated by abrupt flourishes from the violin. The two instruments merge as the movement progresses into a more languid passage, characterised by a mournful falling melody in the piano. The finale has an imaginative, montage-like character, with conventionally tuneful passages passing through the disjointed, contemplative style of the rest of the sonata. A more urgent, dramatic section leads towards the final bars in which the cimbalom-like figures of the start return. The piece ends quietly, and somewhat enigmatically.

The Romanian **Enescu** is perhaps not the best-known eastern European composer compared to, say, Bartók or Janáček. But he was hugely respected as both a violinist and a composer as well as a musician with a famously prodigious memory (one anecdote relates that he played Ravel's violin sonata from memory after only one read-through). His third violin sonata has, however, found its way into the violin repertoire and has been championed by many including Enescu's one-time pupil, Yehudi Menuhin.

It is carefully subtitled 'in Romanian style', for while it does not contain any actual folk melodies (they are all composed by Enescu) it channels its essential quality with slides, quarter tones, and melodies layered on top of each other. The first movement is dreamy and languid, with a free-wheeling violin line over (as with the Janáček) a cimbalom-like piano part. The second movement has an air of great mystery, with insistent high-pitched repeated notes in the piano. As pianist Alfred Cortot poetically put it, this passage is 'an evocation in sound of the mysterious feeling of summer nights in Romania: below, the silent, endless, deserted plain; above, constellations leading off into infinity'. The extrovert third movement is more folk-like, hinting at earthy dance rhythms and with more than a touch of Ravel's popular *Tzigane*, composed only two years before Enescu's Sonata.

In a *Guardian* article in 2013 Tom Service described the humour, jagged edges, occasional violence and often wild surrealism of **Gerald Barry's** music. From his eclectic range of operas, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* to visceral large-scale orchestral pieces, to a chamber work simply called '\_\_\_\_', Barry seems on a permanent mission to shake things up. He also has a taste for arranging the same piece for multiple instruments: his *Triorchic Blues* began life as a study for the opera *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, then manifests in versions for both solo violin and piano. 'Triorchic', for those who are wondering, means 'possessing three testicles'. The piano version has a more obviously bluesy quality, with its walking bass and strong associations with blues music. The violin version is spikier, but still with a renegade, improvisatory style. Ibramigova and Tiberghien, very much in the spirit of Barry (and particularly his piece  $\emptyset$  in which two pianos play the same music at the same time), are going to play both piano and violin versions simultaneously.

Enescu once remarked 'if I do not imagine myself to be **Beethoven** when I tackle the Kreutzer Sonata, it seems to me as if I am unable to perform [it] well'. It may be hard to tell whether Ibramigova is attempting the same, but given her reputation for full immersion into the musical world she may well share Enescu's approach. The 'Kreutzer' might need less explanation, musically speaking, than the rest of the works in this programme but shares their sense of an equal partnership. When the work was published in 1805 an article in a Leipzig music paper remarked of the score 'one finds here not just a random murmuring with notes; rather, one believes that one perceives a penetrating dialogue...'. This most conversational – occasionally combative – sonata was composed for George Bridgewater, a British violinist of African descent who at the time was a great friend of Beethoven (the composer duetted with him at the Sonata's premiere). The two fell out shortly afterwards, however, and Beethoven instead dedicated the work to violinist Joseph Kreutzer who unfortunately found the piece 'unintelligible' and never performed it.

The first movement is exploratory and intense, opening with a slow-moving chromatic passage. The 'Presto' that forms the bulk of the movement alternates from a stormy A minor to passages in a major key. It is highly virtuosic in both modes, other than a few passages of gentle repose. The lengthy, discursive second movement, in 'theme and variation' form, could not be more different. For the most part it is lightly elegant with an unassuming lyricism, although the third and fifth variations veer towards a darker sensibility. The finale, a tarantella in a jaunty A major, dashes along, more conventionally structured than the previous two (and in fact written a few years earlier). Beethoven interposes some brief, teasing bars at a slow tempo in the final few moments, which only serve to highlight the exuberance of the rest. Both players gallop cheerfully to the finish line.