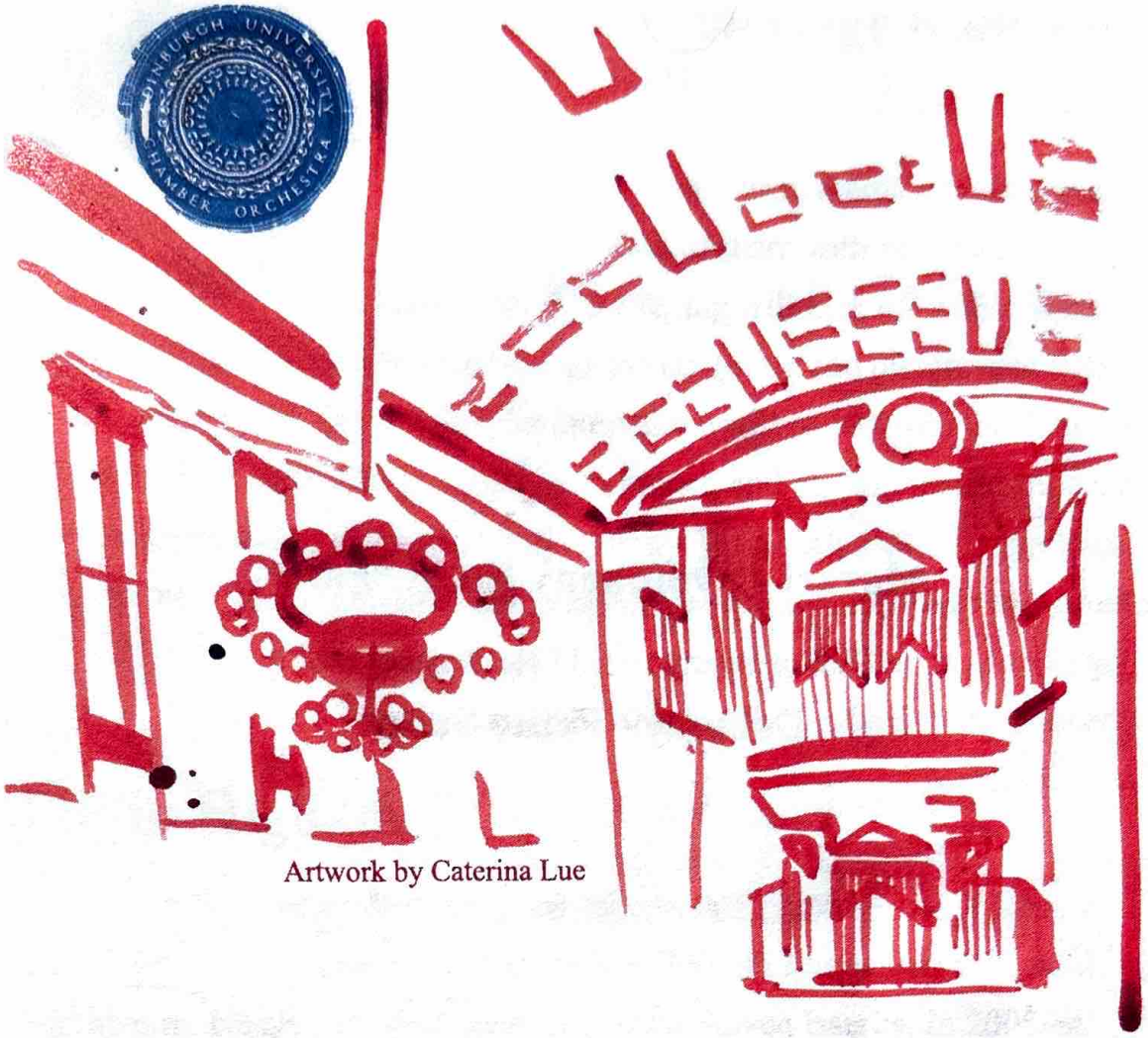


Artwork by Caterina Lue

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

PRESENTS

WINTER CONCERT

2024

Mozart - Symphony No.31 'Paris'

Debussy - Petite Suite



Schubert - Entr'acte No.3 from Rosamunde

Beethoven - Symphony No.2

A welcome message from our President:

Hello, and welcome to our first concert of the year! We are very excited to share with you the results of our hard work. The evening will kick off with Mozart's energetic Paris Symphony, followed by the charming and picturesque Petite Suite by Debussy. After the interval we will restart with the delicate Entr'acte no.3 from Rosamunde by Schubert, and we will be finishing off with Beethoven's timeless 2nd Symphony. With such a varied repertoire, who knows, you might find your next musical obsession (I have lost count of how many times I have listened to the Debussy on loop).

I hope you will be able to relax and enjoy the concert!

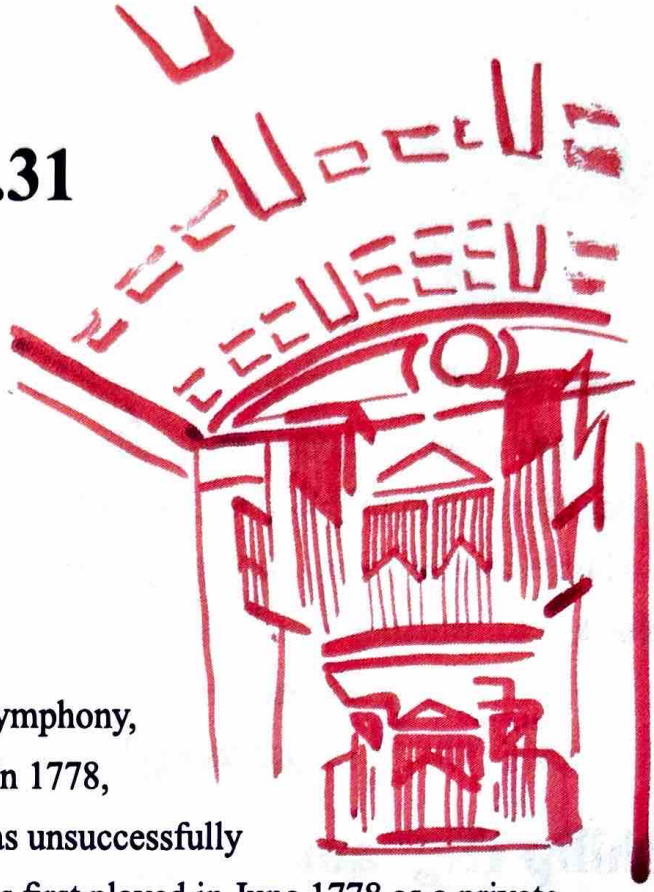
- Marzia Golini

Philip Higham

Born in Edinburgh, Philip studied with Ruth Beauchamp at St Mary's Music School and subsequently at the RNCM with Emma Ferrand and Ralph Kirshbaum. He also enjoyed mentoring from Steven Isserlis. In 2008 he became the first UK cellist to win 1st Prize in the Bach Leipzig competition, and followed it with major prizes in 2009 Lutoslawski Competition, and the 2010 Grand Prix Emmanuel Feuermann in Berlin. He was selected for representation by Young Classical Artist Trust between 2009 and 2014.

He has appeared as soloist with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall, Brighton Festival and Lichfield Festival, and further afield in Germany, Istanbul and Washington DC. In 2014 he performed the complete Bach Suites in Tokyo at the Musashino Cultural Foundation, and again at Wigmore Hall in 2017. Philip was appointed Principal Cello of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in 2016.

Mozart's Symphony No.31 in D Major (The Paris Symphony).



Better known as the Paris Symphony, this symphony was composed in 1778, while a 22- year-old Mozart was unsuccessfully looking for a job in Paris. It was first played in June 1778 as a private performance for Count Karl Heinrich Joseph von Sickingen, and six days later it publicly premiered at the Concert Spirituel.The symphony is composed of three movements: Allegro assai (D major), Andante (G major) and Allegro (D major). It omits the minuet, which was normally found in the classical-era symphonies.

Originally, the second movement was an Andantino in 6/8 (K297), but was changed to the current Andante (K300a) for a second Concert Spirituel held in August later that year, as apparently the original 'had failed to please' (Deutsch, 1965). The Paris Symphony is the first symphony Mozart composed for such a large orchestra, and it is the first time he uses clarinets. It is said that Mozart's father Leopold remarked that, to judge by the Parisian symphonies he had seen, the French must like noisy symphonies (Sadie, 2006).

- Marzia Golini

Debussy's Petite Suite

Debussy's Petite Suite, originally composed in 1889 for piano four-hands, is a charmingly beautiful four-part suite that encapsulates the elegance of the composer's early style. As with many other of his prominent earlier compositions, like Suite Bergamasque, Debussy takes inspiration from poet Paul Verlaine - a prominent poet of the Symbolist movement. The first two movements look at two works (En Bateau and Cortège) from the collection Fêtes Galantes, a series of poems exploring themes of romance, frivolity and musicality within the context of the divine. Debussy evokes a similar sense of whimsy and enchantment in his interpretations, using impressionistic* colouring and nuanced textures. Though not related to specific poems, the final two movements perpetuate the sense of nostalgia and playfulness that is present throughout the piece. Petite Suite was later orchestrated, at Debussy's discretion, by colleague and contemporary Henri Büsser in 1907 for chamber orchestra. This transcription has helped ensure the enduring popularity of this piece, with prominent, weaving, melodic roles in the winds and warm string harmonies, this work's evocative storytelling is embedded in its colourful tonality and delicate textures.

En Bateau captures the swaying sense of tranquil waters. It tells the tale of revellers sailing at dusk and their desire for romance. Opening with a fluid and sighing melody in the flute, the muted strings and the arpeggiated harp accompaniment emulate the rippling of water.

Cortège tells the tale of a monkey, a lady and her pageboy. The bright orchestration and processional element of this movement evokes a sense of buoyancy and festivity, with interplay between melodic fragments mirroring its playful story.

*I am hesitant to describe Debussy's work as impressionistic although it objectively is. He stated that anyone using the term was an imbecile. I do not want Debussy to call me an imbecile.

Menuet is a homage to Baroque dance. The movement contains interlacing melodies in the woodwinds followed by lyrical strings.

Ballet is a vibrant and exciting end to the suite. The rhythmic drive and percussive quality drive the energetic quality of the music. Unexpected accents, syncopations and brief modulations in the mischievous theme maintain the playfulness of the previous movements.

- Huan Xu

Schubert's Entract No.3 from Rosamunde

Franz Schubert is remembered for his piano works, chamber music, and particularly his songs, but he never quite achieved the same success as a composer for the stage, the area he strived for. In 1823, he wrote incidental music for 'Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus', a play by the German journalist, poet and playwright Helmina von Chézy (who would later become good friends with Beethoven). In the play, the heroine, who has been brought up in disguise as a shepherdess, tries to reclaim her throne from the governor against his various attempts to prevent her ascendency, including a marriage proposal and an attempted poisoning. In the end, his schemes fail, and he dies by his own poison, leaving the princess Rosamunde to take her rightful place.

Although the play itself closed after just two performances, and the original script is lost, Schubert's music has remained popular, particularly the Overture and the third Entr'acte, which is among his best-known orchestral works. The main theme of Entr'acte No. 3 was used again in Schubert's Impromptu in Bb, and an almost identical theme can be heard in the second movement of his String Quartet in A minor, aptly nicknamed the "Rosamunde" Quartet.

- Srishti Ramakrishnan

Beethoven's Symphony No.2

Beethoven's second symphony is remarkably cheerful given he was battling the inescapable decline of his hearing whilst composing it between 1801 & 1802. That being said, his inner turmoil seeps into the fabric of the music, in the form of fleeting moments of darkness and brutal sforzandos that intersperse smiling melodies.

The nearly 3-minute-long introduction to the first movement is one of constant extremes – constant dynamic contrast, shifts between major and minor, hinting at the tonal structure of the entire symphony. However, this is followed by a typically jubilant Classical theme, driving the music forward. The gentle larghetto of the second movement is often intimate in its instrumentation. The development section introduces some unexpected harmonies hinting at Beethoven's darkness but delicate chamber music returns. Instead of a gentle minuet and trio, Beethoven opts for a vibrant scherzo brimming with humour and cheeky characters. The trio begins with childish oboe melody – rudely interrupted by strings which ashamedly fade out, embarrassed at their behaviour. The final movement is decidedly jubilant – ending with a defiant coda with the trumpets and timpani. Or as a displeased Viennese critic of the time put it "a crass ogre, a stabbed, unbound writhing dragon that refuses to die, and although bleeding in the Finale, angrily beats about with tail erect." Hopefully you are left with a better impression than this tonight.

Beneath this outwardly joyous symphony is a composer struggling with a silent illness, whose complex emotions drive him to try and find a way to express himself in his music. This music is music of triumph and joy, and most importantly, a refusal to submit to despair.

- Paolo Minhas

Violin 1

Anna Morris

Carola Borriero

Marzia Golini

Srishti Ramakrishnan

Vaiva Jakstaite

Alice Liu

Carys Austen

Violin 2

Rota Shimav

Anna Kenedy

Emily MacFarlane

Ella Allen

Sasha Stolasz

Rio Nakamura

Viola

Kevin Lo

Huan Xu

Yuhan Kao

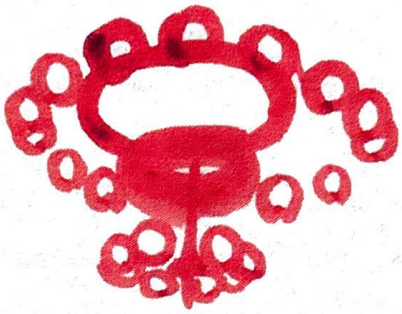
Cello

Malcom Goodare

Lou Stiles

Miriam White

Lara Andrews



Double Bass

Theo Moran

Flute

Paolo Minhas

Naomi Monks

Harp

Tsvetelina Likova

Bassoon

Daniel Cook

Marco Aragó

Oboe

Caterina Lue

Cecilia Barry

Percussion

Valérie Thibault

Finlay Horn

Sarah Willmann

Josephine Akoumianaki

Addison

Horn

Han Khoo

Billy Rooke

Clarinet

Katie Rawson

Imke Rietdijk

Trumpet

Frank Shrimpton

Gavin Lee