



Saturday, Juli 15, 2023, at 20:00

Steven Isserlis & Friends

Irene Duval, violin / Miriam Àlien, violin / Sào Soulez Larivière, viola
Steven Isserlis, cello / Mishka Momen, piano



UPDATED ORDER

Claude DEBUSSY (1862 – 1918)

Cello Sonata in D minor, L. 135 (1915), 12'

- I. Prologue: *Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto*
- II. Sérénade: *Modérément animé*
- III. Finale: *Animé, léger et nerveux*

Maurice RAVEL (1875 – 1937)

Sonata for violin and cello, M. 73 (1922), 20'

- IV. I. *Allegro*
- V. II. *Très vif*
- VI. III. *Lent*
- VII. IIII. *Vif, avec entrain*

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906 – 1975)

String Quartet No. 3 in F major, op. 73 (1946), 34'

- I. *Allegretto*
- II. *Moderato con moto*
- III. *Allegro non troppo*
- IV. *Adagio*
- V. *Moderato*

Gabriel FAURÉ (1845 – 1924)

Piano Trio, op. 120 (1923), 22'

- I. *Allegro, ma non troppo*
- II. *Andantino*
- III. *Allegro vivo*
- IV. *Allegro quasi presto*

--- Intermission ---

Enjoy the concert!

Please do not record or photograph during the concert. Only during applause.

Also, kindly ensure that any devices that can produce sound (such as clocks or mobile phones) are in silent mode. Please note that vibration mode might still be audible.

10:00 Artist talk

15:30 Goldberg Variations for Saxophone, Cello and Accordion

20:00 Steven Isserlis & Friends



Om kunstnerne

For the third time Stephen Isserlis will be playing at Hindsgavl Festival. Back in 2017 he gave two concerts, one with the pianist Alexander Melnikov and one where he was playing with Hindsgavl Nordic Chamber Orchestra, and in 2019 a Russian programme which he shared with his close friend, the Finnish pianist Olli Mustonen.

Stephen Isserlis is a musician of many interests: soloist, chamber musician, teacher, author and radio presenter plus much more. Born into a musical family in London (his mother a piano teacher, his father a keen amateur musician, his two sisters playing violin and viola) he has described how "playing music, playing together" was an important part of his childhood. His grandfather Julius Isserlis was a Russian Jew, one of a group of 12 musicians who were allowed to leave Russia in the 1920s in order to further Russian culture.

One of Stephen Isserlis's great passions, apart from his career as a soloist, is writing and playing for children. So far he has written three musical stories for children: *Little Red Violin*,

Goldiepegs and the Three Cellos and *Cinderella* with music by the Oscar-winning composer Anne Dudley, a number of children's books about the life of great composers, translated into several languages plus arranging a recurrent number of concerts for children at 92nd Street Y in New York.

Tonight's programme consists of three French works before the interval: Claude Debussy's Cello Sonata with the British pianist Mishka Momen, Ravel's Duo for Violin and Cello and finally Fauré's Piano Trio with the two violinist Irène Duval and Miriam Alien from Norway. After the interval the French-Dutch Violist Soulez Larivière joins the others to perform Shostakovich's String Quartet No 3 in F Major.

After the concert Isserlis travels to Verbier in Switzerland where he will play concerts and give master classes.

Dina Bodé

Revised and translated by Susanne Lange

About the Music ...

Claude Debussy (1862–1918): Cello Sonata in D minor, L. 135 (1915)

1915 was a tough year for Debussy. World War 1 raged around his ears, and he had been diagnosed with the cancer that cost him his life a few years later. Nor does the sonata for cello and piano sound as airy and carefree as Debussy's earlier works. Impressionism has got wrinkles in its forehead.

The first movement is a resignatory lament. Music in minor and downward melodies is followed by frustrated outbursts of rage. The second movement, entitled *Serenade*, is anything but a lyrical evening song. Debussy himself described it as: "*Pierrot is mad at the moon*". It continues directly into a devilish virtuoso finale that constantly changes pace and expression. The sonata lasts just 12 minutes. 12 minutes of musical death throes.

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Maurice Ravel (1875–1937): Sonate for violin og cello (1922)

Debussy's fiendish attitude was in stark contrast to Ravel's introverted personality. Nevertheless, Ravel had great musical respect for his compatriot 13 years older. So when Debussy died, Ravel decided to contribute to a memorial concert in 1920 with a duo movement for violin and cello. Subsequently, Ravel expanded the work so that in 1922 it became a regular sonata in four movements.

Motifs are reused in transformed variants across the movements, and the recurring musical play between major and minor gives the sonata a strong overall feel, which is only broken in the feisty second movement with snapping pizzicato and inspiration from Hungarian folk music. Ravel himself said: "*The music is cut to the bone. I have sought harmonious charm and a return to the good melody. The sonata is a turning point in my career.*" It's true. After Debussy's death, French music lacked a new figurehead. Ravel had proved that he was the natural heir.

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924): Piano Trio, Op. 120 (1923)

As longtime director of the Paris Conservatory, Fauré had been a teacher of the far-sighted Ravel. Fauré's own music, however, is more traditional in its forms and tonal language. By 1920, Fauré was so physically weakened that he retired, settled in the south of France and composed his last works in a mood of melancholic serenity and a sense of the imminent arrival of death.

His *Piano Trio* exudes sonorous beauty. The quivering impressionism of the first movement is darkened by the cello's minor melody. In the slow second movement, time stands still as the atmospheric eternity melody opens the door to paradise ajar. But Fauré cocks himself

up in the finale and insists on play and *joie de vivre* until the last sentence.

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–1975): String Quartet No. 3 in F major, Op. 73 (1946)

The cultural-political climate was fatal in the Soviet Union in the years following WW2. The end of World War II. By 1945, Shostakovich had found himself on slippery ice with his *Symphony No. 9*, which had been regarded as a musical provocation by the party leadership. Shostakovich knew that his next work would go down well with those in power. Therefore, he gave the five movements of his *String Quartet No. 3* descriptive titles: '*Lack of awareness of catastrophe*', '*Rumbling turmoil*', '*The forces of war are set free*', '*Tribute to death*' and '*The eternal question: For what purpose?*'

The string quartet is thus obviously intended as a work of war, and the music is accordingly. Aggressive rhythms are like artillery attacks, painful melodies are like soul-shaking depictions of the human cost of war. And finally, the music dies out with a lone violin melody that turns its back on the world on its walk towards the comforting heavenly light.

But Shostakovich's music is often shrouded in mystery and is rarely unambiguous in its message. Subsequently, he also withdrew the movement titles. In a time of misunderstandings and false accusations, they were intended as an attempt to make the abstract more concrete. But Shostakovich regretted and suggested that the titles contributed to a dilution of a more profound universe.

Mathias Hammer
(machine translation from Danish)

10:00 Artist talk
15:30 Goldberg Variations for Saxophone, Cello and Accordion
20:00 Steven Isserlis & Friends



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