

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Randall Goosby in Recital

Friday 13 October 2023, 7.30pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Classical music is an incredible, centuries-long story. As we at the Southbank Centre – alongside our Resident Orchestras and Resident Artists – share that story with the world today, we're creating as many ways for as many different people as possible to experience this wonderful art form.

Whether this is your first encounter with classical music or one of many, I'm absolutely thrilled that you're joining us for more powerful human experiences. Welcome to Classical Music: Autumn/Winter 2023/24.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

Repertoire

Coleridge-Taylor Suite for violin and piano, Op.3	11'
Dvořák Sonatina in G, Op.100	20'
Still Suite for violin and piano	15'
<i>Interval</i>	
Price Fantasie No.1 in G minor	5'
Price Fantasie No.2 in F sharp minor	5'
Strauss Violin Sonata in E flat, Op.18	28'

Performers

Randall Goosby *violin*
Zhu Wang *piano*

This performance lasts approximately 2 hours with one 20-minute interval.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912)

Suite for violin and piano, Op.3 (1893)

- i. *Pastorale. Larghetto*
- ii. *Cavatina. Andante*
- iii. *Barcarolle. Allegretto con moto*
- iv. *Contemplation. Allegro moderato*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor studied violin at the Royal College of Music and composition under Charles Villiers Stanford. His first piece was published when he was 16, and he went on to become Professor of Composition at the Guildhall School and Trinity College of Music. After meeting poet P.L. Dunbar, Coleridge-Taylor became increasingly interested in promoting the cause and dignity of people of African descent.

Coleridge-Taylor's Suite for violin and piano, Op.3 reflects his skill as a violinist. The Pastorale is full of melodic charm; when the main theme is taken up by the piano the violin decorates it with a lyrical descant. In the Cavatina, the violin unfolds a long-breathed melody that rises to moments of ardour. A 'barcarolle' is a lullaby that evokes the rocking motion of a boat: in Coleridge-Taylor's there are fleeting moments of choppiness that threaten to disturb the prevailing calm, but they are shortlived; peace reigns. The Suite ends with Contemplation

– not the meditation one might expect, but a conundrum that finally arrives at a harmonious solution.

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Sonatina in G, Op.100 (1893)

- i. *Allegro risoluto*
- ii. *Larghetto*
- iii. *Scherzo. Molto vivace – Trio*
- iv. *Finale. Allegro*

Coleridge-Taylor felt a strong affinity with the music of Dvořák, whose Sonatina in G, Op.100 dates from the same year as Coleridge-Taylor's Suite. As a Czech man living in the US, Dvořák knew what it was to be an immigrant experiencing a new culture, and while there he absorbed and paid tribute to the music of marginalised people including African and Native Americans.

The Violin Sonatina is the last chamber work Dvořák wrote in the US, composed in the winter of 1893 in New York City. Dvořák had in mind the burgeoning musical abilities of his children, especially Ottilie, aged 15, and Toník, aged 10, and tailored the work to them, writing to his publisher, Simrock: 'It is intended for youths (dedicated to my two children), but even grown-ups, adults, should be able to converse with it'.

In common with works such as the *New World Symphony*, the Sonatina's melodic contours and syncopated rhythms owe much to African American and Indigenous American music, without directly quoting original folk tunes. As the composer wrote of his *Symphony*, it was 'only the spirit of Negro and Indian music which I have endeavoured to reproduce... I have simply written characteristic themes'. The Sonatina opens with a breezy *Allegro risoluto*, while the second movement has been dubbed the 'Indian Lament' – though not by Dvořák himself.

He wrote one of its motifs on his shirtsleeve while visiting Minnehaha Falls, a place immortalised in Longfellow's poem 'The Song of Hiawatha' – a text that also inspired the Largo of Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, and which Coleridge-Taylor used as the basis for a trilogy of cantatas. Folk-like themes abound in the third and last movements, although wistful moments in the finale and in the second movement reveal a composer longing for home.

William Grant Still (1895–1978) **Suite for violin and piano** (1943)

- i. *African Dancer*
- ii. *Mother and Child*
- iii. *Gamin*

William Grant Still was educated in Arkansas alongside Florence Price, and was particularly influenced by Coleridge-Taylor. In 1931 the Rochester Philharmonic performed Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, the first symphony by a Black American composer to be played publicly by a major orchestra. When it came to selecting vernacular elements for his music, Still preferred the blues to spirituals, arguing that the blues, 'unlike many spirituals, do not exhibit the influence of Caucasian music'. Blues characteristics such as modal inflections, descending melodic shapes and irregular phrases permeate Still's music, including his *Suite for violin and piano*, inspired by three works by Harlem Renaissance artists, which opens with 'African Dancer'. An imposing piano introduction is followed by an apparently unstoppable violin melody punctuated by momentum-filled piano writing. There is a slower, bluesy interlude, after which comes a tussle between the initial freneticism and more relaxed material. 'Mother and Child' continues the perfectly-balanced relationship between violin and piano in music of honeyed tenderness, the violin singing a melody of moving sincerity. The finale is called 'Gamin', meaning streetwise child; in 1929, Harlem-based artist Augusta Savage created a sculpture of the same title that is now in the Smithsonian. Still responded to the subject with a bluesy finale of vivacious playfulness.

Florence Price (1887–1953)

Fantasia No.1 in G minor (1933)

Fantasia No.2 in F sharp minor (1940)

Florence Price was the first African American woman to gain recognition as a composer, but many of her scores were lost until their rediscovery in 2009. Price taught at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy and at Shorter College before becoming a faculty member at Clark College, Atlanta. Her *Symphony in E minor* won first prize in the Wanamaker competition in 1932 and was premiered in 1933 by the Chicago Symphony, making her the first Black woman to have an orchestral piece played by a major American orchestra.

It was at around this time that Price composed her *Fantasia No.1 in G minor* for violin and piano, a characteristic fusion of late-Romantic lyricism and African American folk song. The work opens with a passionate violin cadenza, so dramatic it could almost be a wry parody. The music mellows into African American folk idioms – chord-picking piano textures and broad violin melodies – before tension builds again with virtuosic passages surging towards a dazzlingly quick coda.

By the time Price composed her *Fantasia No.2 in F sharp minor* in 1940, she had become a prominent figure: active in the National Association of Negro Musicians since the mid-1930s; the first Black member of the Chicago Club of Women Organists and the Musicians Club of Women in Chicago; and the first Black woman in the Illinois Federation of Music Clubs.

Fantasy No.2 is based on a folk melody, thought to be the spiritual 'I'm Workin' on My Buildin'', as sung to Fannie Carter Wood of Chicago by her grandmother Malinda Carter, a former slave of Memphis Tennessee. Intriguingly, Price's version of the tune differs from other recorded versions, resembling 'Talkin' 'bout a Child That Do Love Jesus' as arranged by William Levi Dawson. The slave roots of this music imbue Price's *Fantasia* with a mournful tone, intensified by chromaticism and rich, ambiguous harmonies. Throughout, Price integrates the thematic ideas threaded through the work while navigating tensions between folk and art music with great subtlety.

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Violin Sonata in E flat, Op.18 (1888)

- i. *Allegro, ma non troppo*
- ii. *Improvisation: Andante cantabile*
- iii. *Finale: Andante – Allegro*

There is something of the fantasy about the 'Improvisation' at the centre of Richard Strauss' *Violin Sonata, Op.18* (1888), not to mention the composer's liberal use of time signatures in the first movement. This early work was composed as Strauss fell in love with the soprano Pauline de Ahna, whom he would marry and who would inspire many of his most significant works. The tone poems *Macbeth* and *Don Juan* date from the same year, and show the composer seeking new ways of organising his music. The *Violin Sonata* is more conventional in its structure; Strauss, who was 23 when he composed the work, already considered sonata form to be a 'hollow shell', but in this context found ways to fill it with riches, creating a cornucopia of lyricism, dramatic twists and turns, and unfettered emotion.

The choice of the key of E flat for the outer movements is significant, anticipating the key of Strauss' autobiographical tone poem *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life) – and there is something heroic in the nobly striving nature of these movements. Behind the opening movement's apparently traditional structure, innovations abound: Strauss freely shifts between time signatures for different themes, and at one point even has the violin and piano playing in different meters simultaneously.

The 'Improvisation' follows, marked *cantabile* (singing – a nod to Pauline's gifts, perhaps), and its rapturous mood and expansive lines also seem to hint at Strauss' feelings for his future wife. This movement proved so successful that Strauss allowed it to be published as an independent piece. The finale opens with a rapt piano introduction before the main theme is unleashed, its shape closely related to that of the first movement's opening and closing passages. There is another shift in meter during a triple-time interlude, but both harmony and meter are relatively stable, creating a firm framework for music of virtuosity and passion.

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