

Saturday Recital – 6 March 2021 - St Mary’s Church, Welwyn
Music for 2 (socially-distanced) pianos
Matthew Woodward and Linden Innes-Hopkins

Matthew and Linden first played as a piano duet team in a performance of Brahms’ Requiem (Brahms’ own arrangement of the accompaniment for piano duet) given by Carillon Chamber Choir in November 2008, at the suggestion of the then Sub-Organist at St Albans Cathedral, Andrew Parnell. Since that time, they have enjoyed exploring the extensive repertoire for piano duet and have given concerts locally and further afield: Ipswich and Poole to name but two. They have also accompanied the Hardyng Choir in Orff’s *Carmina Burana* and the Luton Choral Society in Brahms’ *Liebeslieder Waltzes*. The lockdown from March 2020 clearly put paid to duetting, so the pair have turned their attention to the music written for two pianos, where social distancing of the two keyboards, and therefore the two players, can be more easily arranged. Today sees their first concert showcasing some of the music they have enjoyed during the last year.

Sonata in D major, KV 448

W A Mozart

1. Allegro con spirito 2. Andante 3. Allegro molto

Mozart composed this sonata for 2 pianos in 1781; he gave its first performance with Josepha Auernhammer, who also gave the first performance of Beethoven’s revised 1st piano concerto in 1801. The added sonority of 2 pianos gives plenty of scope for drama and contrast and Mozart explores these possibilities extensively in the sonata. For the players, 2-piano playing is somewhat different from playing duets. In duet playing, the *secondo* player often has an accompanying role, the melodic material often being delivered by the *primo* player. In music composed for two pianos, both players take on both roles, often in a somewhat conversational manner. The Sonata K 448 has an additional claim to fame in that it has been found to have the ‘Mozart effect’: listening to it was found to improve spatial awareness and to reduce seizures in people suffering from epilepsy.

Three movements from ‘Six Etudes en forme de Canon’, Opus 56

R Schumann, arr. for 2 pianos, 4 hands by C Debussy

No 2: Andantino No 3: Espressivo No 4: Pas trop vite

The earliest known piece of music for two keyboards is Giles Farnaby’s piece for two virginals from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. So the birth of 2-piano music was here in England. Schumann’s ‘Six Canons’ were written in 1845 for a piano-pedallier, that is, a piano with pedalboard attached. J S Bach had one for practising on at home, and so did Schumann. As a result, these pieces are usually played by organists but they were

arranged by Debussy for two pianists; there is also a piano duet arrangement. A canon is a musical composition in which a single tune is played or sung at different times – a round, in other words. You will hear the melodies playing follow-my-leader between the 2 keyboards in these pieces. No 2 is essentially lyrical in style; No 3 starts in tranquil mood but has a more disturbed middle section; No 3 is restless and spiky.

Fugue – Final movement from Concerto in C major for 2 keyboards, BWV 1061a

J S Bach

Bach never, in all his compositions, shied away from complexity. He composed several pieces for multiple keyboards, up to four, in fact! Following on from Schumann's Canons, the final piece in today's concert is a Fugue. Here the opening melody is first presented alone and then played in combination with numerous other parts. It can be heard in the bass, at the top and – more difficult to spot – in the middle of the texture. It is allowed to romp through several different keys, both majors other than C and minors, until there is the inevitability of having to bring the whole, delightful party to a close.