



ROHAN DE SARAM *cello*

BENJAMIN FRITH *piano*

IVOR KEYS

Sonata for Cello & Piano

SIBELIUS

Malinconia, Op. 20

BRAHMS

Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 78

(arr. cello & piano)



KEYS: Sonata for Cello and Piano • SIBELIUS: Malinconia, Op. 20
BRAHMS: Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1, Op. 78 (arr. for cello and piano by Paul Klengel)

The three works on this disc comprise a distinctive cross-section of pieces for cello and piano written some eight decades apart. One is by a composer for whom chamber music was at the centre of his output, one by a composer who largely abandoned the genre in his maturity, and one by a composer who became better known for his academic standing than his own music.

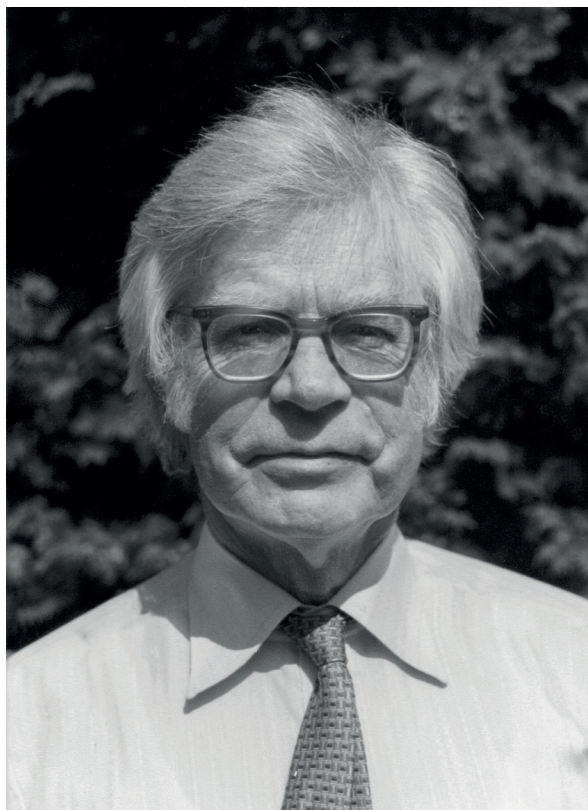
This latter figure is Ivor Keys. Born in Littlehampton on 8 March 1919, he was educated at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, where he played the solo part in Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto*, then became the youngest ever Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. Study at the Royal College of Music was followed by his appointment as assistant organist at Christ Church, Oxford. After war service he returned to Christ Church, and in 1947 was appointed lecturer in music at Queen's University, Belfast. In 1951 his *Clarinet Concerto* was awarded the Festival of Britain prize in Northern Ireland. A new BMus degree was established, and the university authorities also created the Hamilton Harty Chair of Music with him in mind.

In 1954, however, Keys left to take up the chair at Nottingham University – his 14 years there witnessed a similar pattern

of departmental expansion and civic involvement, not least the directorship of the Nottingham Bach Society. In 1968 he moved to Birmingham to succeed Anthony Lewis as Peyton and Barber Professor of Music at the university, where he continued Lewis' pioneering work in the revival of Handel's operas, while also widening its scope to include rarities from Lully to Bizet. He remained at Birmingham until retirement in 1986. In addition to his academic commitments he served on numerous committees, notably that of the Royal College of Organists and the National Federation of Musical Societies. He was also in demand as a performer, examiner, adjudicator and broadcaster, both in the UK and overseas. He also wrote widely on music, and found time for occasional composition. Awarded the CBE for services to music in 1976, he died in Birmingham on 7 July 1995.

Keys wrote relatively few major works in his later years, but chief among them is the *Cello Sonata* that he completed in 1960 and which was dedicated to Maurice Eisenberg (cellist of the Menuhin Trio). Its three movements outline a distinctive take on the fast-slow-fast format.

The first movement opens with a forceful theme for the cello



Ivor Keys

(Photo taken by Ivor Keys' wife, Anne Keys
and used courtesy of his daughter, Victoria Canner)

over an equally demonstrative piano accompaniment, though this presently subsides into a pensive transition for piano that is taken up by cello in a restrained if not a little capricious central section. This soon builds to a powerful climax on the initial theme, then comes a passage of speculative dialogue that culminates in a brief cadenza for the cello and a terse final

exchange.

The second movement commences with eloquent piano writing which the cello joins for a ruminative interplay that builds gradually in intensity to a brief climax, after which the dialogue is continued through to a recall of the opening theme,



Jean Sibelius in 1900, the year he
composed *Malinconia, Op. 20*

whose searching inwardness holds good despite the piano's tonally ambivalent chords near the close.

The third movement is launched with a nonchalant theme for cello over an equally lively piano accompaniment, the instruments engaging in increasingly animated variations whose energy is curtailed by more quizzical music where the cello has recourse to pizzicato and sul ponticello playing. At length this winds down to an expectant pause before the theme resumes – though this time its progress is cut short by a headlong passage which results in a cadenza-like flourish from the cello (with piano in support) then a brief recall of the main theme before the peremptory final exchange.

Sibelius' younger brother Christian was a cellist, and the cello features in numerous chamber works written during the composer's formative years. The success of his choral symphony *Kullervo* in 1892 saw Sibelius largely abandon the genre and the only original piece for cello and piano of his maturity is the fantasia *Malinconia*. Written in 1900, its continually sombre tone was likely occasioned by the recent death of his daughter Kirsti – though the composer was also familiar with the painting of that name by Magnus Enckell. The work received its first performance later that year by Georg Schnéevoigt, with his wife Sigrid as pianist, at a concert to raise funds for a tour by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

Malinconia opens with a yearning preamble for cello. The piano duly responds with cascading passagework that gradually opens into a limpid theme, to which the cello brings greater emotional intensity; not least in a passage such as evokes the sounds of traditional Nordic music. This is complemented by one of flowing figuration for the piano, after which both instruments take up the main theme in a supplicatory mood that becomes more subdued as the cello gradually winds down to conclude the piece in sombre resignation.

Always among the most self-critical of composers, Brahms is thought to have written and subsequently destroyed several violin sonatas prior to that published as his first such piece. The *Violin Sonata in G major* was completed in 1879, while on a summer holiday at Pörtschach am Wörthersee. As with the *Violin Concerto* that immediately preceded it, the rôle of Joseph Joachim was crucial to the shaping of the violin part and he duly gave the première in Bonn on 8 November that year.

This transcription for cello was undertaken by Paul Klengel (1854-1935) – a 'house arranger' for Brahms' publisher Simrock whose brother Julius was a cellist of repute – and was published in 1897 (the year of the composer's death).

The first movement opens with an easeful melody that soon



**Johannes Brahms c.1879, the time he completed his
*Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1, Op. 78***

gains expressive intensity in dialogue with the piano, its more impulsive continuation (hardly a second theme as such) heading into a recall of the main theme's initial phrase. A brief transition leads to varied recollections of this theme for piano then cello, the instruments engaging in a sustained discussion of its primary motifs from which the cello emerges with the theme much as at the start. This modified reprise results in a lengthy coda of touching deftness and poise that builds to an unexpectedly decisive ending.

The second movement centres on a hymn-like theme for piano, the cello entering almost hesitantly as the mood becomes more restive via a rhythmically more trenchant idea shared between both instruments. An increasingly inward transition signals the return of the initial theme, gaining in emotional ardour as it unfolds towards the raptly eloquent close.

The third movement begins with a rhapsodic theme whose tonal equivocations are allayed by the flowing nature of the piano's accompaniment, and which finds contrast in a relatively clear-cut episode (quoting from the song *Regenlied*, Op. 59/3) with its wistful rapport between instruments. The initial theme is then resumed, only to lead into an even more equable episode (quoting from the song *Nachtklang*, Op. 59/4) whose unalloyed warmth makes the anxious resumption of the main theme the more telling. This

presently heads into a coda which not only alludes to the secondary themes of the finale, but to the opening theme of the first movement as the work gradually regains its initial calm and contentment prior to the tranquil closing bars.

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Ivor Keys was the main pianist at my début recital at the Wigmore Hall, London in 1958, the other being Edmund Rubbra who accompanied me in his own *Cello Sonata*, Op. 60. I gave many other recitals with Ivor as my pianist throughout my early years in the UK (late 1950s-60s), including many performances of his *Cello Sonata*. I often stayed at Ivor's home both in Nottingham and Birmingham and knew his wife Anne and their four children very well. I valued Ivor's particular pianistic style very much and consider his *Cello Sonata* among the best of its genre.

Rohan de Saram, 2014

Rohan de Saram is among the world's most distinguished cellists. Born in Sheffield in 1939 of Sinhalese parents, he began studying with Martin Hohermann in Sri Lanka then with Gaspar Cassadó at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. In 1955, he was honoured with the Suggia Award which enabled him to study with Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico and Sir John Barbirolli

in London. Casals said of him, ‘There are few of his generation that have such gifts.’

As a soloist, he has played throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and the former Soviet Union with major orchestras; as well as with leading conductors such as Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Colin Davis, Zubin Mehta, Seiji Ozawa and Sir Malcolm Sargent. He made his US début with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall at the invitation of Dmitri Mitropoulos. Among the composers he has worked with are Kodály, Shostakovich, Poulenc, Rubbra and Walton. After a recital in America, Gregor Piatigorsky presented him with a special bow which he still uses for concerts.

de Saram is an outstanding interpreter of contemporary music, and has worked with many leading figures. He gave the UK première of Xenakis’ *Kottos*, while his performances of *Nomos Alpha* led to the composer inviting him to play it at the Xenakis Festival in Bonn. He also gave the world première of Ligeti’s *Sonata for Solo Cello* and Pousseur’s *Racine 19*, and the UK première of Berio’s *Ritorno degli Snovidenia* – as a result of which, the composer wrote *Sequenza XIV* specifically for him: this piece incorporates the rhythms of the Kandyan drum, which Rohan has played since his childhood in Sri Lanka.

For many years de Saram was cellist of the Arditti Quartet, for

whom hundreds of new works were written. The ensemble was awarded the Siemens Prize for its services to music and a GRAMMY® Award for its recording of music by Elliott Carter, including his *Cello Sonata* and also *Figment* for solo cello. In November 2005, de Saram left the Arditti Quartet in order to work with other artists and composers from around the world, while bringing together music from a range of periods – both Eastern and Western, classical and contemporary, composed and improvised.

In December 2004, Rohan was awarded an honorary DLitt from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and in December 2005 the Deshamaniya – the national honour of Sri Lanka. His recently published book *Conversations**, with Joachim Steinheuer from Heidelberg University, has been described as ‘a treasure trove of musical jewels’.

Further biographical details, reviews, discography and repertoire can be found at the website www.rohandesaram.co.uk.

*Available from the German Publisher wolk@wolke-verlag.de and also Amazon





Gold Medal winner at the Arthur Rubinstein Piano Masters International Piano Competition – where he was also awarded the Chamber Music prize – and top prize winner in the Busoni International Piano Competition, pianist **Benjamin Frith** enjoys a worldwide career.

As concerto soloist and recitalist, Frith has performed with many leading orchestras, such as the Israel Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the London Mozart Players, amongst others. Conductors with whom he has worked include Zubin Mehta, Gianandrea Noseda, John Wilson, Sir Mark Elder, Moshe Atzmon, Matthias Bamert, Tamás Vásáry and Stanisław Skrowaczewski. He has performed in many of the world's most prestigious Halls.

With many of his recordings winning the highest accolades, he has had the good fortune to record much of the early romantic solo piano music (Naxos) and the late classical and romantic trio literature. His recording of Field's *Piano Concerti Nos. 5 and 6* reached the top of the classical charts and many of his discs are represented in the *Gramophone Best CD Guide*. His recording of Schumann's *Davidsbündler, Op. 6* was chosen as top recommendation by Radio 3 and recent releases include the *Second Piano Concerto* of Stanford with the BBC NOW and

Moeran's *Rhapsody No. 3* with the Ulster Orchestra, which reached No. 1 in the classical charts.

Frith frequently broadcasts for Radio 3 and is a regular on the drive time show In Tune. He has featured in many Festivals such as Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Harrogate, Sheffield Chamber, Kings Lynn, Savannah, Kuhmo, Kfar Blum, Bordeaux and Three Spires. During the 2014 season, he will be performing Chopin recitals at Valldemossa, Mallorca.

2014 will see the completion of his popular John Field Piano Concerti and Sonata cycle – with a new recording of Field's Irish Concerto (Royal Scottish National Orchestra) which will be coupled with the Seventh Piano Concerto and the Fourth Piano Sonata. Frith's enjoyment of chamber music has been fulfilled through the formation of his own Piano Quartet and as pianist in the Gould Piano Trio, who tour worldwide and produce many acclaimed recordings.

Benjamin Frith has been a life long pupil of Dame Fanny Waterman.



Ivor KEYS (1919-1995)

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1960) 21:30

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. I. Allegro ben moderato ma appassionato | 7:09 |
| 2. II. Lento cantabile | 6:46 |
| 3. III. Theme and Variations | 7:35 |

Jean SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Malinconia for Cello and Piano, Op. 20 12:18

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 4. Malinconia for Cello and Piano, Op. 20 | 12:18 |
|---|-------|

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G major, Op. 78

(arr. for cello and piano by Paul Klengel) 29:58

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| 5. I. Vivace, ma non troppo | 12:19 |
| 6. II. Adagio | 7:47 |

Rohan de Saram *cello*

Benjamin Frith *piano*

Recorded at the Recital Hall, Tonbridge School, Tonbridge, Kent, UK, 1-2 April, 2014

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taken by David Bragg at Tonbridge School, Tonbridge, Kent, UK, 2 April, 2014

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Ben Frith, Rosie & Rohan de Saram, John Taylor & Richard Whitehouse

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Rohan de Saram CD releases on First Hand Records:

Harmonic Labyrinth
FHR11 (2011)

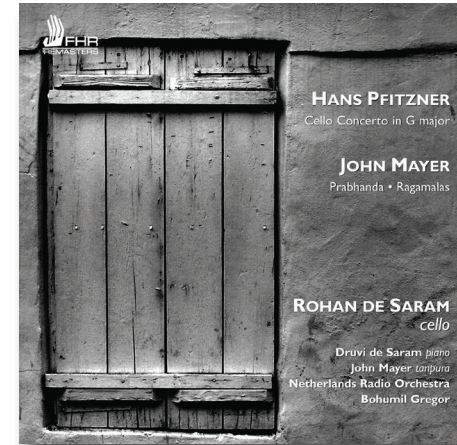


Rohan de Saram *cello*
Preethi de Silva *harpsichord*

‘...his masterful performance of the Hindemith *Sonata for Solo Cello* immediately impresses by its freshness...’
(Gramophone)

‘...de Saram handles the music with absolute certainty and assurance... de Saram has done a wonderful job in transcribing the music [Locatelli], and performs it with a flourish... The two artists are clearly talented musicians...’
(All Music Guide **)**

Pfitzner Cello Concerto in G major
Mayer Prabhandha • Ragamalas
FHR14 (2012)



Rohan de Saram *cello*
Druvi de Saram *piano*
Netherlands Radio Orchestra / Bohumil Gregor

‘Rohan de Saram is on inspired form throughout, especially during the freer, quasi-improvised sections of the *Ragamalas*.’
(Gramophone)

‘Powerful, fascinating music [Mayer]; impressive, even mighty performances; and stunning recorded sound!... this disc ventures into two distinct, unusual musical worlds, and comes up a winner in both. You do not have to be musically adventurous to enjoy it.’ **(Fanfare)**

‘The overall performance is extremely well thought out, but passionate...’
(Musicweb-International)