

Programme

WILSON OSBORNE

Rhapsody for Bassoon

CHRISTOPH SCHAFFRATH

Duetto in f-moll a Cembalo obligato e Fagotto, CSWV F:18

I. Adagio

II. Allegro

III. Allegro

-Intermission (15 mins)-

GUSTAV SCHRECK

Sonate für Fagott und Klavier, Op 9

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Largo

III. Allegro

WILLIAM HURLSTONE

Sonata in F major

I. Vivace

II. Ballade

III. Allegretto

IV. Moderato

About the performer

Rachel was born in Singapore in March 2002. She started playing the clarinet and the bass clarinet in Maha Bodhi School symphonic band in 2010-2014. Rachel began learning the bassoon when she was thirteen years old under the tutelage of Mr Christoph Wichert during her time in the Singapore National Youth Orchestra from 2015-2019. She has participated in various chamber music and orchestra, and went Geneva, Switzerland for student exchange and studied under Prof. Afonso Venturieri from September 2024-February 2025. Rachel is currently a fourth-year student of Prof. Zhang Jin Min.

Programme Notes

Willson Osborne (1906 - 1979)

Rhapsody for Bassoon (1958)

Rachel Ng, Bassoon

6 mins

Willson Osborne was an American composer. After completing the undergraduate program in composition and music theory at the University of Michigan (studying with Ross Lee Finney), Osborne was a student of Paul Hindemith at Yale University. Osborne was, like his mentor, a neoclassical composer. He taught music theory and composition at Philadelphia's New School of Music (now part of the Boyer College of Music at Temple University). Osborne's work remains little-known except for his Rhapsody, which is the most frequently-performed work in the literature for unaccompanied bassoon, and in an adapted version is also popular as a recital piece for the clarinet.

The Rhapsody, originally written in 1952 as "Study for Bassoon", came into the public notice after being recorded by noted Philadelphia Orchestra bassoonist Sol Schoenbach and broadcast on WNYC during a special contemporary American music feature. Despite the success of this piece, little has been written about Osborne or his work.

Currently, Willson Osborne's 'Rhapsody' for solo bassoon is one of the most popular of all solo works for the instrument. Composed in 1952, Osborne describes the work as, "abstract music" using "the Oriental technique of variation, in which short song-like fragments are in turn developed".

Christoph Schaffrath (1709 - 1763)

Duetto in f-moll a Cembalo obligato e Fagotto, CSWV F:18 (I. Adagio II. Allegro III. Allegro) (1760 or before)

Rachel Ng, Bassoon

Liu Jia, harpsichord

10 mins

Christoph Schaffrath was one of a group of composers who played an important role in the musical life of Berlin, at and around the court of Frederick the Great. Not much is known about Schaffrath before the 1730s. He was born in Hohenstein, but whether he came from a musical family or who his first teacher was is not known. In 1733 he applied for the position of organist at the Sophienkirche in Dresden, but was rejected – Wilhelm Friedemann Bach secured the post instead. The next year he entered the service of Frederick the Great, who was still Crown-Prince at that time. Frederick started his own chapel in Ruppín, which moved to Rheinsberg in 1736. With his accession to the throne in 1740 Schaffrath became harpsichordist in his chapel. But in 1741 he entered the service of Frederick's sister Anna Amalia. It seems this resulted in Schaffrath leaving the court, as his name does not appear in a list of musicians of the chapel from 1754.

Anna Amalia's taste in music was rather conservative. She preferred the traditional German contrapuntal style over the modern fashion of her days which gave prominence to melody. Whether Schaffrath adapted his style of composing to her taste or is an expression of his own preferences is difficult to say. This duet for bassoon and harpsichord in particular is composed in the Baroque style.

~Intermission 15 mins~

Gustav Schreck (1849 - 1918)

Sonate für Fagott und Klavier, Op 9 (I. Allegro ma non troppo II. Largo III. Allegro)
(1887)

Rachel Ng, bassoon

Liu Jia, piano

15 mins

Gustav Schreck was born in Zeulenroda on September 9, 1849. He studied at the Lyceum in Greiz, from 1863-67, where he gained some musical experience singing in the choir. After short stays in Gommela and Remptendorf, Schreck entered the Leipzig Conservatory in 1868, where his primary teachers were Ernst Friedrich Richter (1808-79), Robert Papperitz (1826-f. 1903), and Salomon Jadassohn (1831-1902). After graduation in 1870, he taught at a private high school (in Viborg (now in Denmark) until 1874. It was during his time in Viborg, that he met his wife, who would later write several of the texts to his vocal works. Schreck moved back to Leipzig in 1874 and in 1887 began teaching at the Leipzig Conservatory as a theory instructor. In 1892 he was appointed as Kantor of the Thomas School (where J. S. Bach [1685-1750] had previously taught). In 1898 he began teaching at the University of Leipzig, and was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from the university in 1909. He started to become ill in the Fall of 1917 and passed away on January 22, 1918.

Gustav Schreck only wrote a few works for instrumentalists. These include the Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, a Sonata of Oboe and Piano, and the Nonett for winds. His music falls into many of the traditional forms and structures of Romantic instrumental compositions.

Gustav Schreck's Sonata for Bassoon and Piano is now considered a standard work in the bassoon repertory, and one of the few sonatas from the Romantic period of music for the bassoon. Little, however, is known about the composer. In addition to the bassoon sonata, Schreck also composed a Nonett for two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons.

Schreck's Sonata for Bassoon and Piano op. 9 is in three movements with the melody given equally to both instruments. The piano part, however, is quite thick at times, which may require the bassoonist to play slightly louder than the marked dynamics. There are many opportunities to use rubato throughout the work. It is not

known for whom Schreck composed this work. However, a very prominent bassoonist in Leipzig up until 1888, was Julius Weissenborn (1837- 88), so perhaps it was written with him in mind.

William Hurlstone (1876 - 1906)

Sonata in F major (I. Vivace II. Ballade III. Allegretto IV. Moderato) (1904)

Rachel Ng, bassoon

Liu Jia, piano

15 mins

William Yeates Hurlstone (7 January 1876 – 30 May 1906) was an English composer. Showing brilliant musical talent from an early age, he died young, before his full potential could be realized. Nevertheless, he left behind an exquisite, albeit small, body of work. His teacher Sir Charles Villiers Stanford considered him the most talented of his pupils, above Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst.

The greater part of Hurlstone's body of work consists of works for chamber ensembles. Although they are of consistently high quality, none achieved any great fame, but the Bassoon Sonata has become particularly popular along with the Characteristic Pieces for Clarinet and Piano.

The Sonata in F major is a bassoon sonata with piano accompaniment written by William Hurlstone in 1904, two years before his death. It was first published by Avison in 1907, and was later re-issued by Emerson in 1976.

The first movement is divided into six sections. It opens in 6/8 with a forte statement of the theme on the bassoon. The second movement (ballade) is in G minor. It remains in 4/4 throughout. The piano opens with the melody, a very legato one with many dotted notes. The third movement is a clumsy waltz. Although marked Allegretto, there is much give and take with the tempo. It has many runs that are cut short by sharp staccatos. The final movement opens with an ad lib statement of the theme from the second movement. Soon, however, the sprightly Vivace in F is reached. The melody uses many syncopated rhythms, along with many sixteenth notes.