Programme Notes

TIANHAO LUO | FRENCH HORN JUNIOR RECITAL

Hermann Neuling (1897–1967)

Bagatelle für tiefes Horn und Klavier

Hermann Neuling was a German horn player and composer whose works reflect his deep understanding of the instrument's technical and expressive capabilities. His Bagatelle für tiefes Horn und Klavier (Bagatelle for Low Horn and Piano) is particularly well known for its exploration of the horn's lower register, highlighting its rich, warm, and resonant tone.

The piece combines lyrical melodic passages with energetic rhythmic figures and technically demanding sections, creating a contrast between expressive musicality and virtuosic display. Throughout the composition, Neuling explores a wide range of dynamics, articulations, and tonal colours, allowing the horn to demonstrate both its lyrical qualities and its powerful character. The piano provides harmonic support while also engaging in musical dialogue with the solo instrument.

Although relatively concise in structure, the Bagatelle presents considerable challenges in breath control, articulation, flexibility, and tonal consistency, particularly in the lower register. It remains an important work in the horn repertoire, offering performers an opportunity to demonstrate technical proficiency while exploring the instrument's distinctive expressive qualities.

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Horn Concerto No. 2 in E-flat Major, TrV 283

Richard Strauss composed his Horn Concerto No. 2 in E-flat Major in 1942, during the later years of his career. The concerto reflects his mature compositional style, combining classical elegance with the expressive richness of Romantic music. Strauss's close connection to the horn, influenced by his father, Franz Strauss, a distinguished horn player, is evident in the work's lyrical writing and sophisticated treatment of the instrument.

The concerto consists of three movements. The first, Allegro, introduces lively themes and flowing melodic lines, highlighting the horn's agility and expressive range. The second movement, Andante con moto, offers a contrasting atmosphere of warmth and lyricism, allowing the soloist to explore the instrument's singing qualities through delicate phrasing and expressive melodies. The final movement, Rondo: Allegro molto, brings the concerto to an energetic conclusion with playful rhythms, brilliant technical passages, and a spirited musical character.

Throughout the work, Strauss balances technical brilliance with lyrical expression, creating a

concerto that celebrates the horn's versatility while reflecting the clarity and refinement of his late compositional style.