****

**ELISSA CASSINI** (violin) and **ALASDAIR BEATSON** (piano)

**2-4 May 2019**

**Wellhayes Vineyard (Wiveliscombe), Bridport Arts Centre (Dorset)**

**Ilminster Arts Centre (Somerset), Centre for Young Musicians Taunton,**

**The Dance House, Crewkerne**

Probably most professional violin and piano duets will present performances of the Fauré Opus 13 and Brahms Opus 108 violin sonata that are note-accurate and have well-considered musical thinking. There are some performers who add a full physical and powerful dimension to their playing that transport the works to higher level. Elissa Cassini (violin) and Alasdair Beatson (piano) came with distinguishing features with a palpable impact on the music during their recent tour sponsored by *Concerts in the West*. With the addition of Schubert’s G minor Violin Sonata, Cassini and Beatson drew their listeners into the various, often contrasting, moods and musical statements with a magnetism stemming from the players conviction in their musical decisions and performing skills to realise their intentions.

The Schubert sonata is often referred to as a sonatina on account of its scale, but like much of his music, size is no impediment to Schubert on the impact of his ideas. The first movement opens with a serious martial fanfare-like statement but within 20-bars Schubert has taken us to a sunny song-like melody in a major key. Thence forward, the sonata develops into a tussle of musical ideas often lying somewhere between a quarrel and an uneasy friendship. Cassini and Beatson’s dynamic input energised the intensity of this dualism.

Fauré’s two violin sonatas gave a serious boost to the efforts of the Société Nationale de Musique founded in 1871 to establish a distinctive French style in this genre. In the first sonata, Fauré follows the conventional four-movement structure. However the musical content is classic Fauré with long, broad sweeps of colourful harmonies often rushing forward with the violin flourishing on the crest of chromatic tidal-waves during the opening movement and gossamer–like melodic tenderness in the following *Andante.* The *Allegro vivo* demands enormous alacrity, humour and verve and Cassini and Beatson had those attributes in plenty.

Brahms’s final violin sonata written between 1886-1888 when the composer was at the height of his powers is a *tour de force* of musical coherence and compositional ‘know-how’. Often rhythmically complex and pianistically challenging, the work always feels logical but never predictable. As a twenty-minute piece it requires enormous concentration from the musicians. They have to negotiate four very distinctive musical climates from the rather disorientating cross-rhythms of the opening *Allegro* to the stunning lyricism of the *Andante,* the fast playful-duo of the *Un poco presto* and the *appassionato* of the finale. *Concerts in the West* asks its visitors to give four concerts in three days. With such a physically and mentally demanding programme and a well-executed workshop for sixty young musicians on Saturday morning, the schedule was a tall challenge. Cassini – excellent violin intonation - and Beatson’s performing abilities, focus and stamina were more than a match and they added a George Enescu encore for good measure!

[www.alasdairbeatson.com](http://www.alasdairbeatson.com) [www.elissacassini.com](http://www.elissacassini.com)

Andrew Maddocks 2019