

STEINWAY LAUNCH WEEKEND: Imogen Cooper

Solo Piano Recital

Saturday 13 November 2021, 7.30pm, Firth Hall

Sonata in A minor, D845, Op. 42, (1825)	Schubert
1. <i>Moderato (A minor)</i>	(12')
2. <i>Andante poco mosso (C major)</i>	(13')
3. <i>Scherzo. Allegro vivace – Trio. Un poco più lento (A minor)</i>	(7')
4. <i>Rondo. Allegro vivace (A minor)</i>	(6')

Interval

Sonatine, (c.1905)	Ravel
1. <i>Modéré</i>	(4')
2. <i>Mouvement de Menuet</i>	(3')
3. <i>Animé</i>	(4')

Les jeux d'eaux a la villa d'Este, S.163, (1877)	Liszt
	(8')

Jeux d'eau, Op.29, (1901)	Ravel
	(5')

Valses nobles et sentimentales, M.61, (1911)	Ravel
1. <i>Modéré, très franc (G major)</i>	(1')
2. <i>Assez lent, avec une expression intense (G minor)</i>	(3')
3. <i>Modéré (E minor)</i>	(1')
4. <i>Assez animé (A b major)</i>	(1')
5. <i>Presque lent, dans un sentiment intime (E major)</i>	(1'30")
6. <i>Vif (C major)</i>	(30")
7. <i>Moins vif (C major/A major)</i>	(3')
8. <i>Épilogue. Lent (G major)</i>	(5')

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13 in A minor, S.244/13, (1847)	Liszt
	(9')



Steinway Launch Weekend

We are delighted to be celebrating the arrival of a fleet of Steinway pianos, and the awarding of 'All-Steinway School Status' to the institution. This concert is a celebration of our commitment to musical excellence here at The University of Sheffield. Join us tomorrow for our second day of celebrations with Peter Hill & Benjamin Frith.

Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata in A minor, D845, Op. 42

Composed in May 1825 and entitled *Premiere Grande Sonata*, it is the first of three sonatas published during the composer's lifetime, the others being D.850 and D.894. Conceived as a set, these works were composed during what was reportedly a period of relatively good health and spirits for Schubert, and are praised for their quality and ambition. This first sonata in particular marks a significant step toward the composer's mature piano sonata style; the format and several characteristic stylistic elements continue through the last.

The sonata has been described as a 'mammoth work that evokes every human emotion from the heights of joy to the depths of despair' - mirroring perhaps the tumultuous life of its composer. The scale of the first movement was significantly broader than Schubert's previous sonatas, pointing the way towards his late sonatas. The second, *Andante poco mosso*, takes the form of a theme and set of variations - never diverging too far from the melodic, harmonic or rhythmic shape to undermine the movement's purpose. The third movement consists of a scherzo and trio. The scherzo (*allegro vivace*) is full of energy and more intense and dramatic than the previous scherzos explored in some of Schubert's earlier sonatas. In a complete contrast however the trio (*un poco piu lento*) is a graceful and delicate dance. The fourth (*Rondo, Allegro vivace*), is a monothematic movement with constant flowing quavers and a dramatic ending.

Ravel (1875-1937)

Sonatine, (c.1905)

Ravel wrote the first movement of the *Sonatine* for a competition sponsored by the *Weekly Critical Review* magazine after being encouraged by a close friend who was a contributor to that publication. The competition requirement was the composition of the first movement of a piano sonatina no longer than 75 bars, with the prize being 100 francs.

Ravel was known to value the work and performed it frequently - it has been praised as one of his defining works in its conciseness and radiance. *Sonatine* is easier than some of his other pieces, such as *Gaspard de la nuit*, and Ravel (who was anxious about his skills as a pianist) probably performed it because of this. He did not, however, perform the third movement, as it was technically challenging for him.

Jeux d'eau, Op.29, (1901)

Maurice Ravel was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire when he composed *Jeux d'eau* in 1901, which he dedicated to his friend and teacher Gabriel Fauré. Ravel's student days at the Conservatoire were less than ideal. Despite his talent and skill at composition, he failed to win any of the school's prizes, including five attempts at the prestigious *Prix de Rome*, the last of which resulted in Ravel leaving the school and engulfing it in a scandal that led to Fauré replacing Théodore Dubois as its director. Amid these struggles, however, Ravel produced the finest of his early compositions. The *String Quartet in F*—a modern staple of the repertoire and instigator of Ravel's departure—the *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, the song cycle *Shéhérazade*, and this particular work for piano.

Meaning "Play of Water" or "Fountains," *Jeux d'eau* became not only a spring of inspiration for Ravel's later music but one for other composers as well. Channeling the florid style of Franz Liszt, quite possibly that seen in his similarly named *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*, Ravel unveiled a degree of tone-painting that so clearly evoked the sound and flow of water itself that even Claude Debussy was inspired by the brilliancy of Ravel's writing, and was quick to incorporate it into his own music.

Ravel himself described *Jeux d'eau* in this manner: "It is at the origin of the pianistic novelties which one would notice in my work. This piece, inspired by the noise of water and by the musical sounds which make one hear the sprays water, the cascades, and the brooks, is based on two motives in the manner of the movement of a sonata—without, however, subjecting itself to the classical tonal plan." Indeed, among the rippling and shimmering tones, one can discern the presence of two distinct themes and there is perhaps a semblance of sonata form in its structure. Yet, the form is too fluid to ever be reduced into the Classical formula, but instead rests upon nothing but the dichotomous principle of the sonata.

(Joseph DuBose - Classical Connect)

Valses nobles et sentimentales, M.61, (1911)

The *Valses nobles et sentimentales* is a suite of waltzes. The piano version was published in 1911, and an orchestral version was published in 1912. The title was chosen in homage to Franz Schubert, who had released collections of waltzes in 1823 entitled *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales* - while Schubert's Waltzes are independent, separated pieces, the eight waltzes of Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* flow together in an uninterrupted dreamscape. The piano edition is published with a quotation of Henri de Régnier: "...le plaisir délicieux et toujours nouveau d'une occupation inutile" (the delicious and forever-new pleasure of a useless occupation).

In the piano version of this piece, the work's adventurous harmony becomes particularly striking - perhaps passages like this led to the "chorus of boos and cat calls" which met the work's premiere by pianist Louis Aubert on May 9, 1911. At the concert, organized by the Société Musicale Indépendante, the composers names were withheld and the audience was invited to guess each work's authorship - Debussy correctly identified Ravel as the composer.

(Notes drawn from Timothy Judd, The Listeners Club)

Liszt (1811-1886)

Les jeux d'eaux a la villa d'Este, S.163, (1877)

This piece is part of the final suite of Liszt's '*Years of Pilgrimage*' series.

The genesis of the *Troisième Année de pèlerinage* is very different from that of its two predecessors. The first (*Suisse*), and the second (*Italie*) were brought into their published shape in the mid-1850s during Liszt's time in Weimar, although most of the pieces actually originated during the period of his young wanderings in the company of Marie d'Agoult in the 1830s. They are both volumes of intensely passionate, essentially young man's music, whatever refinements accrued to them. The third volume, is the product of a fundamentally solitary person, written during the later years of his life, when he made an almost annual triangular trip through Rome, Weimar and Budapest.

A path-breaking experiment in the musical depiction of water and light that proved to be an important source for the keyboard and harmonic techniques of the Impressionists. Liszt, however, also intended that its opalescent strains have a religious symbolism, which he indicated by appending to the score a quotation from Chapter 4 of the Gospel of St. John: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

(Notes taken from Hyperion & Dr. Richard E. Rodda, Cal Performances)

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13 in A minor, S.244/13, (1847)

The Hungarian Rhapsodies, is a set of 19 piano pieces based on Hungarian folk themes, composed by Franz Liszt during 1846–1853, and later in 1882 and 1885. Liszt also arranged versions for orchestra, piano duet and piano trio.

In their original piano form, the Hungarian Rhapsodies are noted for their difficulty (Liszt was a virtuoso pianist as well as a composer).

The Rhapsody No. 13 in A minor presents trademark features of the style: the so-called “Hungarian cadence” rhythm and the exotically flavourful, Hungarian minor scale, comprised almost entirely of semitones and augmented 2nds, heard unmistakably in the work’s opening recitative.

Liszt’s achievement, here as in the other Hungarian rhapsodies, lies in how authentically he captures on the keyboard what his biographer Alan Walker calls the “sonic surface” of the Gypsy band. In these works you hear the “will-o’-the-wisp” ornamentation style of the gypsy violin, the contralto richness of the low clarinet—when Liszt places the tune in the mid-register, played by the thumbs—and the heartbeat-racing thrum of the cimbalom (Hungarian dulcimer) in textures bristling with repeated notes.

While the 13th Hungarian Rhapsody is not nowadays among the most frequently performed of the set of 19, it did have its admirers in the 19th century. Pablo de Sarasate used a tune from the 13th Rhapsody’s friss section in his famous Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs) for violin and orchestra.

(Notes taken from Vancouver Recital Society)

Imogen Cooper (Piano)

Regarded as one of the finest interpreters of Classical and Romantic repertoire, Dame Imogen Cooper DBE is internationally renowned for her virtuosity and lyricism. Recent and future concerto performances include the Berliner Philharmoniker with Sir Simon Rattle, Sydney Symphony with Simone Young, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra with Ryan Wigglesworth and the Aurora Orchestra with Nicholas Collon, the latter including performances in London and at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Her solo recitals this season include performances in the UK, Austria, Spain and the Netherlands.

Imogen has a widespread international career and has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival, NHK and London Symphony Orchestras. She has played at the BBC Proms and with all the major British orchestras, including particularly close relationships with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia.

She was the recipient of the Queen's Medal for Music in 2019.

Tonight’s performance features many works from her latest Chandos Records album ‘Le Temps perdu’

COMING UP NEXT...

Peter Hill & Benjamin Frith

Sunday 14 November, 7.30pm

Firth Hall

Tickets: £16 Full / £13 Concessions / £8.50 Student and Under 30

Classics Uncovered

Benjamin Frith is one of the leading British pianists of his generation. He was first prize winner in the Rubinstein Piano Masters Competition, where he was also awarded the special prize for chamber music, and won top prize in the Busoni International Piano Competition.

Peter Hill’s career as a pianist was launched when he won the performance prize at Darmstadt for his playing of Cage and Stockhausen. He records for Delphian, with a Bach cycle in progress that has so far seen the release of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *French Suites* and the *Goldberg Variations*. He gives recitals, lectures and masterclasses around the world, and holds honorary professorships at the Royal Northern College of Music and at the University of Sheffield where he worked in the Music Department from 1976 to 2009.

Programme

Schubert: Fantasie in F minor, D 940
Rachmaninov: Six Morceaux, Op 11
Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring

Rakhi Singh

Thursday 18 November, 7.30pm
Firth Hall
Tickets: £15 Full / £12.50 Concessions / £6.50 Student & Under 30
Classics Uncovered/Sound Lab

One of the leading lights in the UK's contemporary instrumental scene, Singh is known for taking audiences on a journey through the incredible breadth and range of emotions summoned by a single, solo violin.

Programme:

Fantasia – Matteis
O Mirium – Ruta Vitkauskaite
Tinge – Michael Gordon
Fugue in G Minor – J.S. Bach
Caprice no 2 – Sciarrino
Dark Sky Community – Oliver Coates
In Beautiful May – Andrew Hamilton

Fournier Trio

Thursday 2 December, 7.30pm
Firth Hall
Tickets: £16 Full / £13 Concessions / £8.50 Student & Under 30
Classics Uncovered

Formed in 2009, the internationally award-winning Fournier Trio has rapidly established itself as one of the leading young chamber ensembles in the UK.

Programme

Haydn Piano Trio in G major 'Gypsy Rondo', Hob.XV:25
Mendelssohn Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49
Brahms Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8 (revised version)

This concert has been very kindly supported by Steinway & Sons, University of Sheffield Alumni and the Department of Music.

