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2010 SEASON

INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL

FRANÇOIS-FRÉDÉRIC GUY

MON 8 MAR 7PM

GARRICK OHLSSON

MON 19 JUL 7PM

BERND GLEMSER

MON 20 SEP 7PM

JOYCE YANG

MON 25 OCT 7PM



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PIANO SERVICES

2010 SEASON

**INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS**

City Recital Hall Angel Place

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth

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plays Chopin and Beethoven

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plays Chopin

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plays Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt

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Monday 25 October | 7pm

JOYCE YANG
plays Liebermann, Debussy, Vine, Chopin and Liszt

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This year the program book for International Pianists in Recital contains notes and articles for all four recitals in the series. Copies will be available at every performance, but we invite you to keep your program and bring it with you to each recital. As in the past, please share with your companion.

PRESENTING PARTNER





Dear Music Lovers

You may have noticed that we changed the Theme & Variations logo on the programs this year – something special as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary.

Theme & Variations began as a small piano workshop in Artarmon in 1985. In those days Ara travelled all over New South Wales with the latest gadgets in tow, including tuning tools and a ‘mobile’ phone, which required its own suitcase and had a battery that lasted one hour. How things have changed.

Technology has changed the face of piano building as well, but one thing that hasn’t changed is the art of hand-crafting pianos at Steinway, a tradition that has survived for more than 150 years. To become a representative for the most prestigious pianos in the world was a dream, and in 1998 we were honoured when Steinway & Sons appointed Theme & Variations to look after their pianos in NSW, and shortly after Queensland. We look forward to continuing to do this until we reach the next major milestone in another 25 years.

Of course, this achievement would mean nothing without the support and trust we receive from people like you – the audience and supporters of the Sydney Symphony. In turn, Theme & Variations has been supporting Sydney Symphony concerts since 2003, and preparing the orchestra’s pianos for even longer. It gives us great pleasure to do this and to be involved in such a practical way in helping the orchestra present great music and performances for Sydney music-lovers.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to our showroom in Willoughby to celebrate our 25th birthday with us. We’ll be ready for you with a cup of coffee and sweets from our well-stocked kitchen.

We hope to see you soon.



Sincerely,

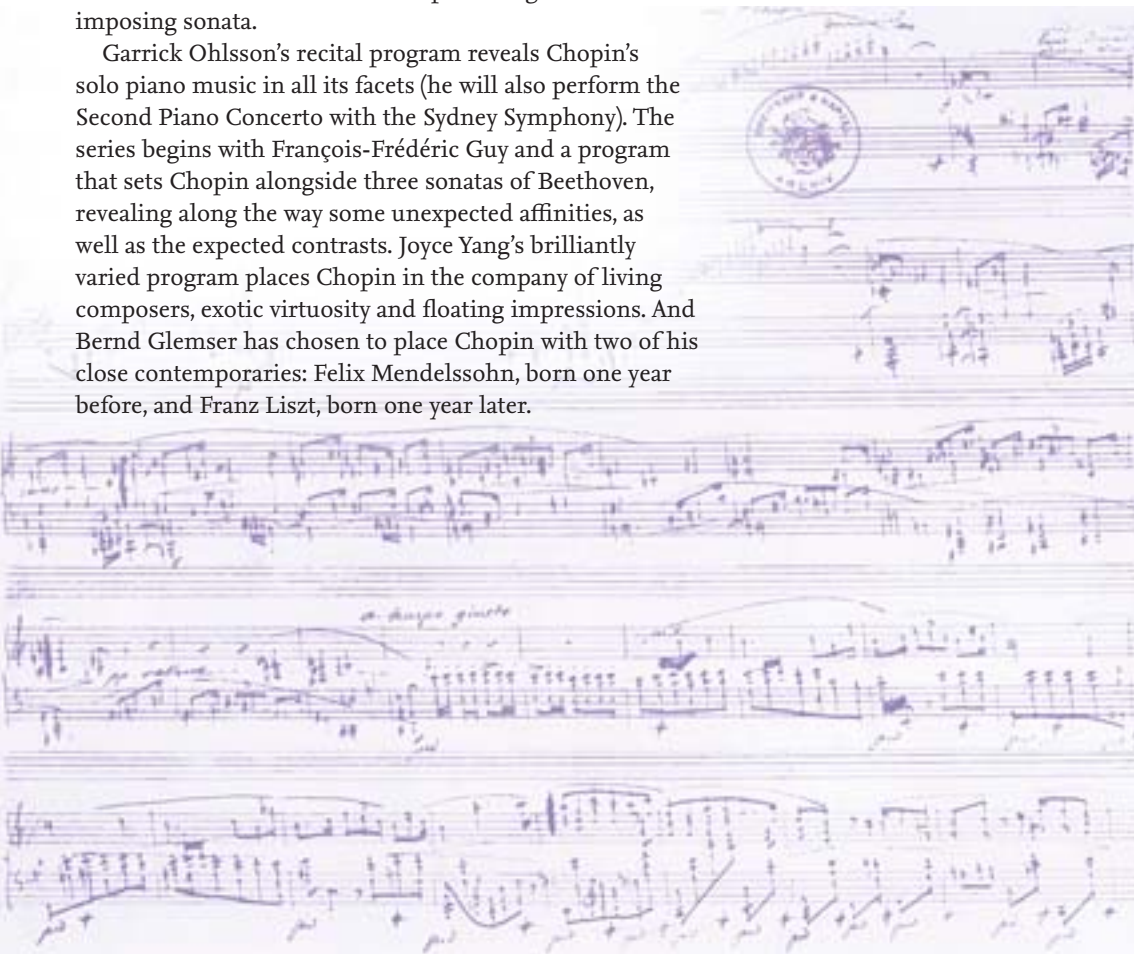
**ARA AND NYREE
VARTOUKIAN**

INTRODUCTION

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frédéric Chopin with four recitals that feature his music – in whole, as in Garrick Ohlsson’s program, or in part, framed by other composers from the piano repertoire.

Chopin is without doubt one of the greatest pianist-composers who ever lived, but he’s especially notable for his almost complete exclusivity. With the exception of six works for piano and orchestra, a handful of chamber works and a set of songs, everything he composed was for solo piano and, for the most part, for himself to play. And although he wrote three piano sonatas, he is most closely associated with miniature forms and wide-ranging ‘improvisatory’ works that seem to owe more to the fantasia than to classical structures. But these small forms are in no way ‘slight’. Such is Chopin’s genius, that he can bring more feeling and more musical imagination to the tiniest mazurka than a lesser composer might instil in an imposing sonata.

Garrick Ohlsson’s recital program reveals Chopin’s solo piano music in all its facets (he will also perform the Second Piano Concerto with the Sydney Symphony). The series begins with François-Frédéric Guy and a program that sets Chopin alongside three sonatas of Beethoven, revealing along the way some unexpected affinities, as well as the expected contrasts. Joyce Yang’s brilliantly varied program places Chopin in the company of living composers, exotic virtuosity and floating impressions. And Bernd Glemser has chosen to place Chopin with two of his close contemporaries: Felix Mendelssohn, born one year before, and Franz Liszt, born one year later.



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

Chopin was not the first great pianist-composer – Beethoven is just one who came before – but he transformed piano music, creating a substantial body of work (more than 160 pieces in all) in which new depths of expression and new structural horizons were opened up for pianists and composers alike.

Frédéric Chopin was born into a prosperous family near Warsaw and apparently showed keen musical intuition even as an infant. At just seven years of age he was already an experienced performer and by eight he was the proud composer of publicly performed works. On his 20th birthday he left Poland for Vienna and then Paris, where he became the darling of the aristocratic salons, performing his own compositions for select audiences and teaching piano to the daughters of the Parisian elite. He was admired by many of the great musicians of his day, including Liszt, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Meyerbeer, Bellini and Berlioz. Indeed it was Liszt who introduced Chopin to the novelist George Sand, thereby prompting one of the most celebrated

Chopin – a portrait by Delacroix



PHOTO: LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

and tempestuous relationships between 19th-century creative artists.

Writing exclusively for the piano, Chopin composed in a vast array of forms, including ballades, études, mazurkas, polonaises, nocturnes, preludes, sonatas and waltzes, as well as concert pieces for piano and orchestra. Early in his career these pieces tended to be written for his own use as a fashionable virtuoso, but as he progressively withdrew from public performance during the 1830s (having given no more than about thirty major public performances in his entire career), he began to write 'teaching pieces' for his students.

Taking advantage of recent developments in piano technology, including quicker actions and the use of felt and soft leather to cover the hammers, Chopin was able to employ far greater subtlety of tone and a more intimate range of dynamics than previous composers. The resulting works were notable for their intimacy of expression and the delicacy of execution which they demanded. A review of Chopin's performances in England in 1848 gives some indication of how it sounded to his contemporaries, even at a point in his career when his health was in decline:

He accomplishes enormous difficulties, but so quietly, so smoothly and with such constant delicacy and refinement that the listener is not sensible of their real magnitude. It is the exquisite delicacy, with the liquid mellowness of his tone, and the pearly roundness of his passages of rapid articulation which are the peculiar features of his execution.

DAILY NEWS, 10 JULY 1848

Chopin's métier was music for the intimate setting of the salon and the invited audience rather than the grander recital room or concert hall (indeed, early in his career 'the piano recital' in the modern sense was still a novelty). With its unerring sense of melodic progression, his music 'refined' all that it found, turning the waltz form, for instance, into a work of exquisite sensibility fit for polite society, rather than the rough-and-ready incarnation of the peasant *Ländler* which had attracted Schubert to the same form. And yet for all the 'nocturne-like' restraint and sophistication of much of his music, the folk influences of his native land remained, most notably in the polonaises and mazurkas, which brought the rhythmic vitality and irresistible charm of Polish dance forms into the mainstream of Parisian salons.

Chopin's technical skill at the keyboard was matched by an unrivalled spontaneity and fluency in composition, resulting in free-flowing works which, even today, challenge



George Sand – portrait by Alfred de Musset (1833). A novelist notorious for her free living, George Sand became Chopin's mistress in 1838, a relationship that lasted for nearly ten years.

the craft and the imagination of the most gifted performers. Such was his facility at the keyboard that it is said that he performed the same works differently every time he played them. His contemporaries attest to the quasi-improvisatory nature of his performances and stress that the only time Chopin felt constrained was when he came to notate his music in a formal score, preserving it in detail for future generations.

But the cult of 'performance' began to hold less and less appeal for Chopin and throughout the late 1830s and 1840s he strove unsuccessfully to achieve enough financial security to allow him to withdraw from concert life. In increasingly ill-health, he performed publicly only when his dire financial situation demanded that he do so, and eventually, at the age of just 39, he succumbed to the effects of tuberculosis, leaving behind a body of piano music which continues to exert its influence on generation after generation of pianists and composers.

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY MARTIN BUZACOTT

Museum of the Society of Frédéric Chopin. Chopin's last piano is on display.



PHOTO: JAN MOREK FORUM / LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

2010 SEASON

**INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS**

Monday 8 March | 7pm
City Recital Hall Angel Place

**FRANÇOIS-FRÉDÉRIC GUY
IN RECITAL**

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

Nocturne in C minor, Op.48 No.1

Nocturne in E, Op.62 No.2

Polonaise-fantaisie, Op.61

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Sonata No.31 in A flat, Op.110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga (Allegro ma non troppo)

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN

Sonata No.17 in D minor, Op.31 No.2 (Tempest)

Largo – Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

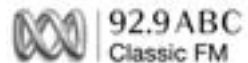
**Sonata, quasi una fantasia in C sharp minor, Op.27 No.2
(Moonlight)**

Adagio sostenuto

Allegretto

Presto agitato

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This concert will be recorded for later broadcast on ABC Classic FM.

Pre-concert talk by David Garrett at 6.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room.

Visit sydneySymphony.com/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Estimated durations:
7 minutes, 6 minutes, 14 minutes, 22 minutes, 20-minute interval, 23 minutes, 16 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9pm.



IN THE GREEN ROOM

François-Frédéric Guy in conversation

PHOTO: GUY VIVIEN



François-Frédéric Guy is a French pianist who realised early on that his personality ‘fit more immediately to German music’. It was Brahms, Wagner and Richard Strauss that attracted him and ‘not so much the French music, strangely enough’. He laughs. ‘But you know, voilà, that’s it.’

He can’t quite characterise the reason for this attraction, but he remembers how he discovered it – with Wagner. ‘It happened to me when I was about 14 or 15: I heard Karl Böhm’s recording of the *Ring* and then I realised that this was the music I’d always wanted to listen to.’ Guy began to study the operas thoroughly. He knows the cycle so well, every note, that now he could even conduct the *Ring* – ‘If I had the technique,’ he’s quick to add. This is the music that sparks his imagination, ‘although I’m only a pianist’.

As a pianist, Guy says his ‘playing field’ is Beethoven; his appreciation of Chopin came later. But it was Chopin’s music he heard most growing up. My father ‘was an accomplished pianist,’ he says, ‘very gifted, and could have been a professional. He would play at home and I could hear Chopin all the time – that was his taste, you know. And also some Beethoven, although he didn’t play this music so often, but he had records – Wilhelm Kempff, Brendel and so on – it was a good start!’

‘Of course,’ he goes on, ‘at the [Paris] Conservatoire I studied both these composers, and my own taste started to emerge. For me, Chopin was maybe the greatest composer

born

1969, in a small village near the border of Normandy

grew up

with the sound of music in his home – both his parents were pianists – and going to concerts in Evreux and Paris

first piano lessons

at the age of seven, in Evreux

advanced study

with Dominique Merlet and Christian Ivaldi at the Paris Conservatoire, where he graduated with a Premier Prix

his big break

may have been the 1993 Leeds International Piano Competition – he didn’t win but was noticed by some influential musicians

has a soft spot for

late-romantic German orchestral repertoire and Wagner’s *Ring* cycle

recordings

include Prokofiev and Brahms sonatas, Brahms Piano Concerto No.2, complete Beethoven concertos, and the complete Beethoven sonatas (in progress)

in Australia

debut Australian tour, with concerts in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth

read more

www.ffguy.com

further listening

See More Music on page 27

ever, but it can be difficult: it's very intimate and has so many characters, and it can be difficult to avoid the clichés, so I thought it was right to wait a little bit.'

With Beethoven he has enjoyed an almost instant affinity, Chopin has grown on him. In Guy's recital we hear the two composers side by side. 'Chopin was very critical of Beethoven,' he says. 'For him Beethoven was too strict, not free enough. That was how Chopin felt, although I don't think he was right; there were only a few sonatas that he liked and played himself.'

This has influenced Guy's programming: 'In the first half we'll get the Polonaise-fantaisie and the 31st Sonata of Beethoven, which are in the same key. I thought it would be interesting to see how great is the tribute Chopin has to pay to Beethoven's sonatas, although he was not so close to him.'

One of the few Beethoven sonatas that had Chopin's approval was the 'Moonlight', and in some ways, this is the closest Beethoven comes to Chopin's sound world. 'The incredible thing with Beethoven,' says Guy, 'is that he prepared the ground for everybody. If you look really closely at the scores – all Chopin, Brahms, all these different composers – he prepared the ground for all of them. That's why I say Beethoven is the Alpha and Omega of music.'

In Guy's Sydney recital we get to hear two sonatas from 1801–02, the period when Beethoven first came to realise that his deafness was increasing and incurable, and the second last sonata (Op.110), completed in 1822. Originally he'd planned to play Beethoven's final sonata, Op.111 and his 'Funeral March' Sonata, which had influenced Chopin. But then, he says, 'the balance of the program for me was a bit on the sad side' and he revised his choices.

Guy's website quotes him as saying '...the fact a piece of music is famous doesn't mean that you absolutely have to play it.' But that doesn't stop him from programming well-known Beethoven, including one of the most famous Beethoven sonatas of all, the 'Moonlight'. He's quick to point out, though, that perhaps we in the audience don't always know pieces like the 'Moonlight' as well as we think we do. 'People know the first movement of the "Moonlight" and the last movement of the "Tempest", but do they really know the other movements? I'm not so sure. So it's always good to bring the audience with you and say, yes, we can listen to that again, because we'll discover new things. And it's such fabulous music!'

YVONNE FRINDLE
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2010

Pedalling the Moonlight

In the 'Moonlight' Sonata Beethoven tells performers 'this whole piece must be played very delicately and without damper' – the dampers are to be kept raised, and the reverberations of the strings undamped, for all of the first movement. That can be a tricky instruction to observe in a modern hall, on a modern piano.

'Normally I try to respect the pedalling of Beethoven, because it's very special,' says Guy. 'He knew exactly what he wanted, but the instruments changed, the halls changed, life changed and our own timing is changing – everything is faster now. So one shouldn't be stiff, you know, with this indication. It should be understood, but not played literally, which is quite different. The important thing is *why* he wanted such an effect, what he wanted to achieve, poetically. Sometimes in this sonata I like to make a little bit more contrast in the quality of the sound. I try to keep the *sordine* [dampers raised] until the end, but also...you will see!'



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ABOUT THE MUSIC

CHOPIN AND BEETHOVEN

Program note by Peter McCallum

Forty years separate the births of Beethoven and Chopin, and the opening and closing works on this program. Chopin's Nocturne in C minor, Op.48 No.1 (1841) and Beethoven's so-called (though not by him) 'Moonlight' Sonata, Op.27 No.2 (1801), both written around the composers' 31st birthdays, illustrate both common threads and differences. For both Chopin and Beethoven, their early thirties were a time of stylistic growth. Just after writing the 'Moonlight' Sonata, and while working on the *Tempest* Sonata, Op.31 No.2, Beethoven announced dissatisfaction with his previous music, stating he would embark on 'new paths'. In this he was as good as his word, going on to produce the major works of the 'heroic' decade before maturing to his luminous late style, represented in this program by the sublimely serene Sonata in A flat, Op.110, which closes the first half. Chopin was also highly self-critical in his early thirties – about his Tarantelle in A flat, Op.43 (1841) he wrote that he hoped it would be a long time before he wrote anything worse. The works of his third decade, the 1840s, are also full of



Chopin in 1849, his face swollen with neuralgia. After a photograph by L. A. Bisson

luminous clarity, which may be heard in the Nocturne in E major, Op.62 No.2, and in the innovative Polonaise-fantaisie in A flat, Op.61. Yet Chopin was not to be granted the option to extend his achievements of his thirties into late maturity and he died ten weeks before the end of the decade, aged 39.

Chopin's attitude to Beethoven was ambivalent. Comparing Beethoven and Mozart he once expressed the view that whereas Beethoven turned his back on eternal principles, Mozart never did. He appears to have favoured works of Beethoven's early and middle period, and not known the late works well, expressing distaste on hearing Liszt play the monumental *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Op.106. One of his favourite sonatas was the Piano Sonata in A flat, Op.26. He reputedly played the Funeral March of this sonata to tremendous effect and his own 'Funeral March' Sonata in B flat, Op.35 – followed, like Beethoven's, with a whirlwind finale – can be seen as part homage to this work, despite the difference in overall spirit. Chopin also liked to perform and teach the 'Moonlight' Sonata, once expressing delight when a pupil showed him a fingering invented by Liszt for the central section of the middle movement, which he said was like a crab returning to the water.

Manuscript for the
Polonaise-fantaisie, Op.61



The texture of the famous first movement of the ‘Moonlight’ Sonata can in fact be seen as laying the groundwork for the characteristic nocturne style that Chopin made his own. The ‘Moonlight’ opens with a gently undulating arpeggiated accompaniment pattern over deep bass notes, given added effect by the continuous use of the sustaining pedal, over which Beethoven superimposes a melody of poignant thoughtfulness. It was a mood that Chopin exploited time and time again. As Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger has noted, the French piano pedagogue, Marmontel, said of Chopin’s playing that ‘no pianist before him employed the pedals alternately or simultaneously with so much tact and skill’. Had Chopin written the piece, he undoubtedly would have spread it more broadly across the keyboard, making use of the more sonorous structure of the pianos of his day, with their stronger soundboards and tighter strings and more responsive key action.

Chopin did not invent the nocturne – that honour is normally given to the Irish composer, John Field. Early in his career Chopin was very pleased to have his playing compared to Field’s and he used Field’s nocturnes as an integral part of his teaching practice. Chopin was a master at exploiting the sweet notes of the piano range against a well-spaced floating accompaniment, and his masterly and individual harmonic vocabulary gives all 19 of his nocturnes great expressive distinctiveness. The characteristic expressive tone is a quiet, expansive mood that is disturbed by an agitated thought and then restored. A key element of Chopin’s nocturne style was the smooth singing style he cultivated at the piano, derived in part from the vocal style of *bel canto* Italian opera, particularly his beloved Bellini. A fine example of his adaptation of *bel canto* line and ornamentation to the piano can be heard tonight in the opening section of the Nocturne in E major, Op.62 No.2.

The **Nocturne in C minor, Op.48 No.1** was written in 1841 and dedicated to one of his favourite pupils, Laura Duperré. According to another pupil, Lenz (quoted in full by Eigeldinger), Chopin was notoriously finicky about how the opening two bars were played insisting the right hand emerge from the texture as a thematic element. The second and third bar should be a question, Lenz says, and the fourth bar, the answer. For Chopin’s fastidious ear, students always played the right hand too soft or too loud. This quiet opening leads to a tumultuous middle section, and some of the activity of this section is synthesised with the principal melody on its return.



Ludwig van Beethoven, 1802

CHOPIN **Nocturne in C minor,** **Op.48 No.1**

The **Nocturne in E major, Op.62, No.2** was the last nocturne that Chopin wrote and was composed in 1846 when his intimate relationship with George Sand (the nom de plume of the novelist Aurore Lucile Dupin) was collapsing. In form it follows a similar outline to the C minor Nocturne, inserting an agitated central section which then becomes integrated on its return, like a troubled memory sublimated beneath an overarching cantilena.

The innovations in genre and form of the **Polonaise-fantaisie in A flat, Op.61** were recognised by Chopin himself when he wrote to his family in December 1845: 'I should like now to finish my violoncello sonata, barcarole and something else I don't know how to name.' Although, like all Polish pianists, Chopin had cut his compositional milk teeth writing brilliant polonaises, in this work he experiments with extending the form by combining several different movements into one, in the manner also explored by Liszt. The work can be seen as extending the standard symmetrical three-part form of the polonaise with its characteristic heel-clicking rhythm, by inserting a premonitory introduction at the beginning, a development after the exposition of the main themes, and a slow quasi-nocturnal section before the final return of the opening idea building to a forceful coda.

Notwithstanding Chopin's view that Beethoven did not adhere to eternal principles, Beethoven's **Sonata in A flat, Op.110** in fact embodies many of the ideals Chopin held dear. The serene singing style of the first movement, the influence of vocal writing in that movement and in the *Arioso* section that introduces the finale, and the exploitation of counterpoint are all values that were dear to Chopin's heart. Even the key, A flat, was one of his favourite keys. In this work, Beethoven exploits the sonorous extremes of the keyboard, anticipating the kinds of timbres explored by Chopin and Liszt: notable examples are the glittering keyboard effect in the first movement, heard just after the opening two melodies (and again at the recapitulation) and in the exciting close of the third movement, which ends the sonata. The work is tightly unified, with the opening melody of the first movement being taken up as a fugue theme in the finale, where it is heard in its original form and then inversion, preceded each time by the increasingly plangent *Arioso*. Between these two towering unified movements is a roughly humorous movement in duple time, in place of a *scherzo*, exploiting abrupt rhythmic surprises that might not have fitted with Chopin's idea of eternal principles.

CHOPIN
Nocturne in E major,
Op.62 No.2

Polonaise-fantaisie in
A flat, Op.61

BEETHOVEN
Sonata in A flat,
Op.110

In his biography of Beethoven, Anton Schindler relates telling Beethoven, in 1823, of the powerful effect made by Carl Czerny performing Beethoven's **Sonata in D minor, Op.31 No.2** and the Sonata in F minor, Op.57 (the 'Appassionata'). When Schindler asked Beethoven for 'the key' to these sonatas, Beethoven's alleged reply was 'Just read Shakespeare's *Tempest*.' Though it could have applied to either sonata, the nickname has stuck with the D minor work.

The 'Tempest' Sonata also exploits new keyboard sonorities, and, like the 'Moonlight' Sonata, contains innovative use of the sustaining pedal. One remarkable feature of the first movement is the manner in which the *Largo* introduction, which begins as nothing more than a quietly arpeggiated chord, becomes embedded in the structure and expressive purpose of the sonata. When it returns at the recapitulation it is expanded by a recitative, a device to be explored again in the introduction to the finale of Opus 110. Beethoven asks that the pedal be held throughout, once describing the effect as 'like a voice from the tomb'. The slow movement in B flat begins with apparently fragmentary ideas, followed by the hint of a distant march, eventually opening out into a song-like melody for the briefly expansive second idea (marked *dolce*) in F major. The return of this theme, underlaid with arpeggios, anticipates the texture in the recapitulation of the first movement of Opus 110. The insistent movement of the finale was said by Czerny to have been inspired by a galloping horse. Based on continuous urgent running semiquavers, it created a powerful model for Chopin in the conclusion of his 'Funeral March' Sonata in B flat minor, Op.35.

The innovative pedal sonorities of the '**Moonlight** Sonata, **Op.27 No. 2**, and their influence on Chopin's nocturne style have already been discussed. The brilliant yet stormy finale of this sonata, however, is also not without parallels in Chopin's music. The sweep of the theme over the whole keyboard in the ending has echoes in Chopin's characteristic stormy manner, as in the Study in C minor, Op.25 No.12, while the virtuosity recalls Chopin's own brilliant style heard to bracing effect in the finale of his Third Sonata in B minor, Op.58. The title 'Moonlight' was not attached to the sonata during Beethoven's lifetime and seems to have been the caprice of a 19th-century publisher or critic, who, with one illicit nickname, linked one of Beethoven's most popular works with Chopin's world.

BEETHOVEN
Sonata in D minor,
Op.31 No.2 (Tempest)

'Moonlight' Sonata,
Op.27 No. 2




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GARRICK OHLSSON PIANO

GARRICK OHLSSON

PERFORMS

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INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
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Monday 19 July | 7pm
City Recital Hall Angel Place

**GARRICK OHLSSON
IN RECITAL**

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

Impromptu No.2 in F sharp, Op.36

Ballade No.3 in A flat, Op.47

Fantasy in F minor, Op.49

Mazurka No.6 in A minor, Op.7 No.2

Mazurka No.7 in F minor, Op.7 No.3

Mazurka No.21 in C sharp minor, Op.30 No.4

Scherzo No.3 in C sharp minor, Op.39

INTERVAL

Barcarolle in F sharp, Op.60

Mazurka No.32 in C sharp minor, Op.50 No.3

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo (Molto vivace)

Largo

Finale (Presto, ma non tanto)



This concert will be recorded for later broadcast on ABC Classic FM.

Pre-concert talk by Dr Robert Curry at 6.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room.

Visit sydneyorchestra.com/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Estimated durations:

7 minutes, 8 minutes, 13 minutes, 10 minutes, 7 minutes, 20-minute interval, 9 minutes, 5 minutes, 28 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9.05pm.

PRESENTING PARTNER



IN THE GREEN ROOM

Garrick Ohlsson in conversation

PHOTO: PHILLIP JONES GRIFFITHS



Garrick Ohlsson says that he and Chopin are a strange pair: 'Chopin never weighed more than 100 pounds, endured fragile health and loathed playing in public. I share none of these qualities.' Yet it was Chopin who captured his teenage imagination and became one of his biggest favourites. When he began studying with the great Rosina Lhévinne at the age of 20, the first thing he played for her was the Chopin Barcarolle. 'My dear,' she told him in her thick Russian accent, 'you are a born Chopinist – Chopin will be your *métier*.'

Two years later she tried to discourage him from entering the Warsaw Chopin competition, thinking that the 'large-scaled, muscular American style' he represented was not what the Francophile Poles would be looking for. But that year, he recalls, he had a choice between entering the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow or the Chopin competition in Warsaw. 'I thought that if I entered Moscow it would be a general piano-playing Olympics with lots of music by lots of composers, including things that I wasn't so crazy about. But if I went to Warsaw it would be all Chopin – and even if I didn't win, I'd have learnt all this great repertoire that I'd want to play for the rest of my life.'

Lhévinne turned out to be right on one count: Chopin was Ohlsson's *métier*. Ohlsson won the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, and he's been playing Chopin ever since, his love and admiration only increasing as the years have passed.

born

1948 in White Plains, New York

first piano lessons

at the age of eight – 'which is a bit late, I don't know if I'll ever catch up!'

advanced study

studied at the Juilliard School from the age of 13, where his teachers were Sascha Gorodnitzki and then Rosina Lhévinne; also studied with Claudio Arrau

his big break

winning the Gold Medal in the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition in Warsaw

but...

not just a 'Chopin guy'; also noted for his performances of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, and a wide-ranging concerto repertoire of some 80 works

recent accolades

include a Grammy for the third volume in his recording of Beethoven sonatas (2008)

this season

finds him performing even more Chopin than usual in recitals celebrating the composer's 200th anniversary, including a birthday recital in Chopin's birth house in Warsaw

in Australia

appeared with the Sydney Symphony in 2007, performing Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto with Vladimir Ashkenazy

read more

www.opus3artists.com/artists/garrick-ohlsson

further listening

See More Music on page 27

Ohlsson has never focused exclusively on Chopin's music – even in the years immediately following his Warsaw win he performed a variety of repertoire, against his agent's recommendation. Even so, he's one of the world's leading Chopin interpreters, and since 2010 is the composer's 200th anniversary, that's meant a lot of all-Chopin recitals.

One-composer programs present their own particular challenges. In the case of an all-Beethoven recital, he explains 'it's really pretty simple. If you pick two good Beethoven sonatas that go well together then you have a terrific half of a concert. With Chopin you don't have as many massive works and you more or less have to weave together a Persian carpet of varied and contrasting material.'

'With Chopin you have every possible emotional variety and length of piece. So I take into account all the principles of good program-making but then I basically decide how I want the dramatic arc to go in each half. Do I want to be in dark minor keys? Do I want to come out and start with a bang? Or start with something more gentle? Do you want to seduce or do you want to impress. As a piano-actor with Chopin you have all possibilities, and if you choose well, it's really fantastic.'

Ohlsson has chosen to begin his Sydney recital with music that's in a gentle, major key, a 'rather more conversational work'. The F sharp Impromptu is beautiful and 'astounding' but 'it doesn't make grand statements'. The Third Ballade takes the mood of lyricism and builds an impassioned climax and then there's an emotional switch into the Fantasy, Op.49, the anchor for the first half. 'Even though it's called a fantasia it's very tautly controlled,' he says. 'It's Chopin at his most "public", tending in the Lisztian direction of heroic, Romantic rhetoric. It shifts the mood from the more pastel-coloured first two pieces into something more intense and dramatic, and then, after this somewhat cathartic, stormy piece, somehow I feel that the audience and I are ready for the mazurkas.'

Chopin's tiny mazurkas are so rich, so emotionally volatile, so quirky and mercurial, he explains, that introducing them before our ears and emotions are quite ready can cause them to go by without even being noticed. For the first half he's chosen three: wistful and melancholic, fast and dancing, and the C sharp minor mazurka (Op.30 No.4), which 'spans an incredible emotional gamut in about three minutes – everything from sad resignation to the absolute height of ecstasy.' This, says Ohlsson, is one of the greatest characteristics of Chopin's style: the emotional

First impressions

Ohlsson remembers hearing, at the age of nine, Arthur Rubinstein play an all-Chopin recital in a sold-out Carnegie Hall. 'That was my first experience of hearing a really great artist in top form in a great place, and Chopin happened to be what he was playing. So I suppose that infected me a bit.' But a really profound love of Chopin's music didn't emerge until he was 16 or 17. 'Before that I preferred Liszt. Noisy Liszt was much preferable, I thought, whereas Chopin seemed a bit refined and even effeminate, and morbid and hyper-emotional. Later I began to feel an emotional identification with the music and it seemed to be more and more wonderful.'

journeys that he can take in such a short space of time. The hair-raising excitement of the Third Scherzo that concludes the first half is as rigorous as the tautest Beethoven piece: 'There's not much dreaming going on.'

The second half of Ohlsson's Sydney recital begins with what he claims is arguably his 'favourite piece of music in the world'. That's a silly thing to say, he admits, given that there are at least 12 other Chopin pieces about which he could say the same thing, but when he plays the Barcarolle (Op.60), he really can't imagine anything he loves more. 'It's saturated with beautiful lyricism and colour and the whole panoply of Chopin's style at its richest. If some catastrophe should befall us and all of Chopin were destroyed except the Barcarolle, we'll at least know what the essence of the man was about.'

Another great mazurka (again in C sharp minor) makes for a transition into the Third Sonata. This, says Ohlsson, 'is also my favourite Chopin piece'. He's not alone in thinking it one of the greatest piano sonatas ever written, in spite of its departures from 19th-century conventions of structure, and enthuses about its 'extended lyric outpourings' with bar after bar (48 bars at one point) of uninterrupted melody. 'We all know that Chopin is one of the greatest of all tune writers,' he says, 'but this one is quite beyond belief in its radiant beauty and the way it evolves. His rhapsody continues as he describes the lightness of the little scherzo and the profound slow movement and the 'take-no-prisoners roof-raising' finale – 'I'm crazy about this piece.'

The Sonata, which is almost symphonic in scope, gives the lie to the 'bad 19th-century idea of Chopin as a salon miniaturist'. Chopin knew his strengths, wisely avoiding large-scale orchestral forms despite the urgings of people such as Robert Schumann, but the consequence of that was a reputation as a composer of piano miniatures. 'The worst Chopin,' says Ohlsson, 'is that horrible Hollywood movie idea of the sickly, neurasthenic young genius who dips his pen in perfume to write nocturnes for lovesick contessas – it's such a bad image. On the other hand, there is just a wee bit of truth in it, because Chopin without that nocturnal magic, Chopin without that dream state, is really a pretty bad Chopin. Among all the piano composers it's Chopin who gets the most magical response from the public, that "aah!", and if your heart doesn't swoon a bit, then the pianist hasn't done a good job.'

YVONNE FRINDLE
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2010

What you don't hear

'Chopin is a great master of form, and his musical logic is ironclad,' says Ohlsson. 'It's just that you don't hear it. His musical logic is as firm as Bach's or Brahms', but on the other hand he shares with Mozart that quality of sounding like the music is just happening right now. It sounds unpremeditated, but it cost him a great effort to make it that way.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Chopin Paradox

*Frédéric Chopin stands at the cusp of several worlds. Born to a Polish mother and a Polonized French father, he was formed artistically and culturally in Warsaw. Setting out to conquer Europe, he then spent most of the second half of his life in Paris. Success came to him at the outset of his career and with it the adulation of everyone from the unsophisticated music lover to the greatest musical and artistic minds of his time – and such it has been ever since. In his music Chopin embodies refinement and elegance, qualities which conceal a passionate, volcanic nature, ‘Cannons buried in flowers’, according to Schumann. He considered himself fundamentally a classicist – his gods were Bach and Mozart, with a little *bel canto* thrown in – yet, from his youth he was a ‘wild child’, pushing harmonic development to its extremes. He drove audiences wild with subtle magic rather than noisy rhetoric, yet he disliked playing in public. He would improvise a bewitching nocturne, and then work tortuously for six weeks to recapture on paper his spontaneous inspiration.*

GARRICK OHLSSON

It is our great good fortune that Chopin, the great lyric poet of the piano, matured early as a composer and that he worked at a time when the piano reigned supreme in Europe and when Paris – where he spent most of his short life – was awash with great pianists such as Liszt, Thalberg, Moscheles and Kalkbrenner, to mention just a few.

Opera was a great love right from the beginning and accounts in part for the quasi-vocal melodic lines which are the stalwart of his piano pieces; he loved Rossini (*The Barber of Seville*), Weber (*Der Freischütz*) and particularly the operas of Bellini. The embellishments to a basic vocal line surely came from listening to the great singers of the day. This kind of singing (*bel canto*, ‘beautiful singing’), encompassing full-blooded but flexible melody, is present in all of Chopin.

As a genre, the impromptu sums up one of the most marvellous things about Chopin: his music, painstakingly conceived and written down, nonetheless sounds to us spontaneous and unpremeditated. That paradox is given shape in the three impromptus and the Fantaisie-Impromptu – improvised and ‘spur of the moment’ as they must seem. The **Impromptu No.2** (1839) begins almost tentatively, taking shape over a loosely repeated idea in the bass, and then emerges as a confident march that will find its echo in the Fantasy in F minor, Op.49. As Garrick Ohlsson describes it, there are ‘passing clouds’ but nothing truly dark in this impromptu, and the conclusion ripples to a brilliant conclusion.



Sketch of Chopin by Charles Henri Lehmann (1874)

PHOTO: LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

‘For any serious pianist, Chopin becomes a touchstone: he teaches you how to play, the use of your hands, sonority, pedalling. You learn such lessons with other great composers, but in no other composer is the spiritual-emotional content so at one with the physical-pianistic. That, in brief, is Chopin’s special genius.’

GARRICK OHLSSON

CHOPIN
Impromptu No.2 in
F sharp, Op.36

Before 1836 there was no such thing as an instrumental ballade. Chopin effectively created ‘ballades without words’ at a time when the old formal conventions such as sonata form were beginning to seem tired. Chopin’s ballades have no plot and are devoid of any kind of specified program or scenario – although many have applied stories to them after the fact or tried to match them to specific ballads by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. Instead the ballades adopt what Carl Dahlhaus calls a ‘narrative posture’. It’s as if we were to listen to a tale in a language we didn’t understand – characters and events would remain a mystery, but tone and style would reveal that a story was being told. Completed and published in 1841, the **Third Ballade** is the most gentle and elegant of Chopin’s four ballades – Schumann was struck by its ‘poetic fragrance’. Some of that refined elegance and subdued passion is captured in the frontispiece that Aubrey Beardsley drew for an early publication: it shows a woman in plumed riding habit on a Lipizzaner stallion – perfectly poised on its hind legs in the classic *levade* of the Spanish riding school.

The **Fantasy in F minor** is a strong, robust work, embodying many moods and key changes. The great Chopin pianist Vladimir de Pachmann reported that Franz Liszt told him the hidden program of this work, according to Chopin. This is, of course, third-hand, and the story that is presented by Pachmann is rather pedestrian: at the close of one day, the composer is at the keyboard at a fairly low ebb. Suddenly there comes a rapping on the door, which can be heard echoed in the opening bars of the music, with the composer’s invitation to enter. The doors open wide to admit a group of friends, including the writer George Sand, Liszt, Camille Pleyel, and others. Then a number of episodes are described, including George Sand falling to her knees in front of the composer, begging forgiveness for a recent quarrel. Eventually they all leave and serenity is restored.

There may well be a grain of truth in this domestic scene; what is far more interesting is the formal cohesion Chopin achieves. A slow chorale-like section divides the work in the middle and the themes and keys follow a symmetrical design. The opening march has its counterpart near the end in another march – reminiscent of Schumann. The second idea of the Fantasy, a quasi-improvisational arpeggiating idea, also reappears near the end, and the thrice-played outburst is one of Chopin’s most memorable inspirations. It is a large-scale canvas that Chopin paints here, and although the work does consist of discrete smaller units, an overall grandeur is accomplished. with no sense of awkwardness



Beardsley’s frontispiece for the Third Ballade.

Ballade No.3 in A flat, Op.47

Allegretto

Fantasy in F minor, Op.49



in the handling of a large form. Although the Fantasy is in F minor, Chopin chose to close it in A flat major, with great poise and gentleness.

Chopin was an ardent Polish patriot, yet partly by choice lived almost all of his adult life away from Poland. The intense nostalgia for his homeland is ever present in his music and perhaps his feeling of being an exile actually fuelled his creativity. He was never a collector of folk tunes and his music always has an individual flavour – even so, the various traits of Polish folk music are everywhere to be found in his music, the infectious rhythms of the **mazurka** and the polonaise being the most obvious. The trademarks of the traditional mazurka can all be heard in Chopin. Rhythmically there is the three-beats-to-a-bar metre, accents that fall off the main beat, and dotted rhythms that give extremely long notes alternating with very short ones. Then there is the frequent use of drone bass and dramatic changes of mood that accommodate melancholy as easily as wild vigour. But Chopin's mazurkas are not for dancing. Infused with nostalgia, these tiny pieces distil the characteristic folk dance gestures into something concentrated and surprisingly intense – the mazurkas are Chopin's diary and his soul.

The 19th-century British music scholar Friedrich Niecks described the main theme of the **Third Scherzo** as 'peevish, fretful, fiercely scornful' – it's an impetuous burst of octaves, later rippling cascades, and seems far from the scherzo heritage that Chopin inherited from Beethoven and even Mendelssohn. Where Beethoven regarded the scherzo as an exhilarating and ultimately humorous extension of the courtly minuet, to be inserted between weighty and more serious movements, Chopin's four scherzos were independent, self-standing works, full of dynamism and tragic struggle. Vestiges of the old symphonic scherzo persist in the contrasting trio section in the middle – in Chopin's hands a chorale-like succession of chords – a foil for the more brilliant piano figurations surrounding it.

The lilting **Barcarolle** was published in 1846 and holds its own with the crowning achievements from Chopin's final period. The 19th-century writer Wilhelm von Lenz tells of his request to the gifted pianist Carl Tausig to play the piece for him. Tausig promised him that he would, adding: 'That is a performance which must not be undertaken before more than two persons...I love the piece, but take it rarely.' Lenz bought the music and his personal reaction to the piece was not favourable – he thought it was an overblown nocturne, with what he termed a Babel of figuration. But

Four mazurkas

Mazurka No.6 in A minor,
Op.7 No.2

Mazurka No.7 in F minor,
Op.7 No.3

Mazurka No.21 in C sharp minor,
Op.30 No.4

Mazurka No.32 in C sharp minor,
Op.50 No.3

Scherzo No.3 in C sharp minor, Op.39

Barcarolle in F sharp, Op.60

after hearing Tausig play it, he admitted that he was wrong, and that the virtuoso had injected into the ‘nine pages of enervating music, of one and same long-breathed rhythm, so much interest, so much motion, so much action’ that he was sorry the piece was not longer!

The first of Chopin’s three piano sonatas is usually dismissed as unworthy of him. The second sonata is famous for its funeral march, which has become hackneyed – not Chopin’s fault, of course. The **Sonata in B minor** (1844), like the other two, is sometimes criticised for the composer’s handling of form. But there is inspiration on every page and the glorious melodies make one forgive everything – witness the beautiful singing line suddenly emerging from the turbulent opening; this kind of sudden sunlight effect is present throughout the work. The first movement alone contains ten different themes, blurring the traditional contrasts between first and second subject normally found in sonata form and giving rise to a kaleidoscopic progression of ideas that emphasises freedom over logic. The tiny second movement lives up to its ‘scherzo’ name with its playful character and contrasting middle section. The third movement begins in the character of a funeral march but turns out to be a barcarolle. The structure of the finale (a sonata-rondo with a galloping recurring theme) would surely have satisfied the purists; its exhilarating brilliance places it among the most technically challenging of all Chopin works.

The great pianist and teacher of the 19th century, Anton Rubinstein, perhaps best summed up the universal view of Chopin: ‘The piano bard, the piano rhapsodist, the piano mind, the piano soul is Chopin... Tragic, romantic, lyric, heroic, dramatic, fantastic, soulful, sweet, dreamy, brilliant, grand, simple: all possible expressions are found in his compositions and all are sung by him upon his instrument.’

ADAPTED IN PART FROM NOTES BY LARRY SITSKY ©2005, 2008
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Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Allegro maestoso
Scherzo (Molto vivace)
Largo
*Finale (Presto, ma non
tanto)*



**Chopin performing in the salon of
Prince Radziwill (October 1829).**

MORE MUSIC

Selected Discography

FRANÇOIS-FRÉDÉRIC GUY

François-Frédéric Guy's 2005 recording of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata is available on a disc with the *Pathétique* Sonata and Sonata No.19 in G minor, Op.49 No.1.
NAÏVE V5023

Guy has also recorded the Beethoven piano concertos with Philippe Jordan and Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra.

NAÏVE 5084 (Nos. 1 and 5, *Emperor*)

NAÏVE 5179 (Nos. 2 and 3)

NAÏVE 5148 (No.4 with the Quintet for piano and winds)

GARRICK OHLSSON

Chopin is generously represented in Garrick Ohlsson's extensive discography, including a series of the complete solo and concertante piano works recorded in the 1990s and re-released by Hyperion this year. In addition to individual discs, the full 16-CD set is available in a presentation edition, or as an MP3 or high-quality FLAC download from the Hyperion website:

HYPERION 44351

www.hyperion-records.co.uk

<http://tinyurl.com/complete-chopin>

BERND GLEMSER

Bernd Glemser plays Chopin chamber music on several Naxos releases, including a 4-CD musical documentary, *Life and Works of Frédéric Chopin*, narrated by Chopin biographer Jeremy Siepmann. He has also recorded Chopin's works for cello and piano with Maria Kliegel.

NAXOS 8553159

Concertgoers who heard Glemser's 2008 recital in Sydney will be interested in his recording of Bach and Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, released last year.

OEHMS 738

JOYCE YANG

Joyce Yang's performances in the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (2005) were recorded for a celebratory release on the Harmonia Mundi label. She plays a Bach Overture (B minor, BWV831), Liszt's Reminiscences on Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Hungarian Rhapsody No.6, a Scarlatti sonata and Carl Vine's Piano Sonata No.1.

HARMONIA MUNDI 907405

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- Op.19 No.1 in E major (Andante con moto)*
- Op.19 No.5 in F sharp minor (Piano agitato)*
- Op.30 No.6 in F sharp minor ('Venetian Gondola Song')*
- Op.38 No.2 in C minor (Allegro non troppo)*
- Op.67 No.4 in C major (Presto. 'Spinning Song')*
- Op.62 No.1 in G major (Andante espressivo)*
- Op.62 No.3 in E minor (Andante maestoso)*
- Op.19 No.3 in A major (Molto allegro e vivace)*

Fantasia in F sharp minor (Sonate écossaise), Op.28

- Con moto agitato*
- Allegro con moto*
- Presto*

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

- Nocturne in C sharp minor, Op.27 No.1**
- Nocturne in D flat, Op.27 No.2**
- Scherzo No.4 in E, Op.54**

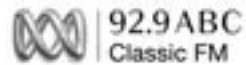
INTERVAL

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

Sonata in B minor

- Lento assai – Allegro energico –*
- Andante sostenuto –*
- Allegro energico – Lento sostenuto – Lento assai*

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Visit sydneySymphony.com/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Estimated durations:
20 minutes, 13 minutes,
12 minutes, 13 minutes,
20-minute interval, 30 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9.05pm.



IN THE GREEN ROOM

Bernd Glemser in conversation



Bernd Glemser made his piano debut in 1973, playing Chopin's Ballade No.3. 'As a student I played a lot of Chopin,' he recalls, adding that his teacher had been a student of Polish pianist Bronislaw von Pozniak, who'd made a Chopin edition. 'Chopin was probably a good composer to play as a young pianist because the music has this youthfulness. But now I am much older – and this is a good thing! To really understand the emotion in Chopin, it is better to be older.'

'Mendelssohn was not a love when I was a student,' he admits. 'I thought Mendelssohn was boring. But then it was like – how do you say? – love at "second sight".' Nowadays, Glemser has been won over by the 'magic' in Mendelssohn's music. 'It has a lightness, but also a sadness, even when it's "happy". In German we would call it *sehnsucht* – a longing, yearning, suffering – that's always there. (It's present in Chopin too, but in a different way.) Mendelssohn is so "perfect" – a real genius.'

When it came to Liszt, it was the challenge that appealed to the teenage Glemser, solving the technical problems – 'almost *sportif* in a way'. A motivation was the story of Rubinstein: 'He said, unless you can play Liszt's Spanish Rhapsody by the time you are 16 you will never make it as a pianist. So I thought I'd better learn to play the Spanish Rhapsody.' But the real fascination with Liszt was inspired by the composer's experimental streak, his harmonic boldness and his continual seeking for new forms and strong emotions. 'He took music to such extremes of emotions... from the diabolical to the level of religious transfiguration.'

born

1962 in Dürbheim, Germany

growing up

music was 'omnipresent'; his father, a maths professor, played organ

first piano lessons

his older brother took up piano at ten; seven-year-old Bernd insisted on having lessons too

advanced studies

with Russian pianist Vitaly Margulis

breaking a record

in the mid-1980s travelled the world winning 17 major piano competitions and special prizes in a row (culminating in the ARD Music Competition in 1987), thus breaking a record that had been on the books since 1890

student becomes teacher

in 1989 he was appointed a professor at the Saarbrücken Music Academy – becoming Germany's youngest music professor before he'd even finished his own exams

current projects

a recording of Chopin's Ballades and Scherzos

at the movies

plays Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2 on the soundtrack of *Spider-Man 3*

in Australia

played Bach, Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff in this series in 2007; his previous appearance here was in the 1985 Sydney International Piano Competition when he won second prize and the people's choice award

read more

www.musicmasters.ch/main/mainpages/soloists/glemser/en/more.php

further listening

See More Music on page 27

It's tempting to speculate what each of these three great pianist-composers might have been like as a performer. Glemser is quick with the disclaimer: 'Well, no one alive has ever heard these composers play, so it is just speculation, but there were certainly reports and letters from the time.'

Mendelssohn is the surprise, he says, if you take his music as a guide. 'Mendelssohn was in fact famous for being a very powerful player and a virtuoso. Even more powerful than Beethoven, who was famous for his "singing" [*cantabile*] style.'

Liszt knew exactly what the public wanted, he says, 'he was "gambling" with the public, like Paganini. I think, and this is just speculation, that Liszt had more colours on the piano.'

As for Chopin, 'he was not a powerful player, not very loud, and we know he was unhappy about this. The other thing about Chopin that is interesting and which most people don't know is that he was very strict as a composer, even quite conservative, and he followed all the traditional rules. He didn't just sit down at the piano and make some improvisation...it was really very thorough.' And yet Chopin's music is so often admired for its spontaneous, improvisatory character – 'that's the genius!'

The Mendelssohn portion of Glemser's Sydney program began with an approach he adopts quite often, which is to avoid conventional programming formulas. The Songs without Words, which he adores, became his starting point and he constructed a suite from his favourites. These become the frame for something larger in scale, again, not a piece that everybody does but the fascinating 'Scottish Sonata' *Fantasie*.

Glemser is quick to point out that most of the pictorial titles that have become attached to Mendelssohn's Songs without Words were added much later, by other people. His own selection does have a kind of personal narrative to it, but it's more an emotional, psychological arc that he's tried to develop, 'not a story like an opera'. And he can't tell it in words – that's for the music.

Chopin's nocturnes have their own special wordless narratives. 'They're full of fantasy and inspiration,' says Glemser, 'not just nice "night music" but dreams and nightmares.'

Talking about the Liszt Sonata ('the most complete composition you can imagine') leads to another story from a pianistic legend. 'Busoni once said you need to play this sonata 50 times before you can begin to feel free with the piece,' says Glemser. 'And as I've played this sonata at least 200 times, I can probably say – hopefully – I can feel free now.'

Chopin the pianist

Chopin was not a powerful player, and we know that he was unhappy about this...

In a letter to Ferdinand Hiller, for example, he notes that Liszt has been playing some of his works, and adds: 'I wish I could steal from him his manner of playing my etudes.'

Elsewhere: 'I wasn't meant to play in public...Crowds intimidate me, their breath stifles me, their stares petrify me, their strange faces throw me into confusion. But it's different for you: if you can't captivate them, you dominate them.'

ABOUT THE MUSIC

MENDELSSOHN, CHOPIN AND LISZT

Program note by Scott Davie

If it is an interesting fact that three of history's most influential composer-pianists were born within a small span of years – Felix Mendelssohn in 1809, Frédéric Chopin in 1810 and Franz Liszt in 1811 – then it is surely extraordinary that they were also known to each other. Ferdinand Hiller, in his *Letters and Recollections*, recalls an amusing incident on the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris in the early 1830s: the light-hearted trio were seated at a café when, on noticing the approach of the notoriously reserved Friedrich Kalkbrenner, they were unable to resist jumping up and effusively greeting the old pianist, tormenting him mercilessly by creating a scene.

While these future titans of the keyboard shared similar sensibilities in their youth, however, their paths diverged significantly as they cultivated their unique gifts. As a composer, pianist, and conductor of the highest order, Mendelssohn achieved extraordinary success in his short life. Yet his star faded rapidly after his death, his reputation degraded further by anti-Semitic vilification. The music of Chopin has retained its universal appeal, his works displaying an unparalleled affinity for the piano, an instrument for which he composed almost exclusively. The reputation of Liszt, on the other hand, has been mixed. The incredible fame he achieved in his youth as one of the Romantic era's most technically brilliant and enigmatic performers, hindered serious appraisal of his vast talents as a composer both in his later life and since; that he was one of the 19th century's most original thinkers on music was sadly lost to most historians.

In contrast to many of his contemporaries, conservative elements have been noted in Mendelssohn's music, these usually viewed as a reflection of a musical education that traced its pedagogical lineage to JS Bach. A child of wealthy and enlightened parents, he was instructed in music by the director of the Berlin Singakademie, Carl Friedrich Zelter, himself a student of musicians who had associated with CPE Bach. A further connection to the senior Bach was Mendelssohn's revival performances of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829, an event which did not return the great master's music from obscurity (as is often claimed), but which did restore the reputation of his mighty choral works. The venture brought considerable success for the young composer and, along with early masterpieces such



A portrait of Chopin by Franz Liszt.

PHOTO: LEBRECHT MUSIC ARTS



Liszt as a young man

as the Octet and his *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, contributed significantly to his burgeoning international reputation. The quality and overall refinement of his upbringing – Goethe, for example, was a family friend – perhaps bolstered his reaction against the cult of virtuosity that was enflaming audiences across Europe. Accordingly, in his keyboard works the role of the pianist might be characterised more generally as a ‘thinker’, as is keenly apparent in his two solo piano concertos.

Mendelssohn’s first collection of piano miniatures known as *Lieder ohne Worte* (**Songs without Words**) was published in 1832, with five further sets issued before his death. The descriptive titles commonly associated with many of the pieces were invariably not his own, yet the congenial atmosphere they conjure gives a fair indication of the ways publishers sought to capitalise on the broad appeal of these highly marketable works. The **Fantasy in F sharp minor**, Op.28, is a somewhat more serious composition, dating from 1833. Dedicated to his lifelong friend and mentor, Ignaz Moscheles, it is also known as the ‘Scottish Sonata’, although its Scottish-ness is not easily discernible (nor, for that matter, is it much like a sonata!). Following the success of his first visit to London in 1829, time spent in the picturesque Scottish countryside afforded Mendelssohn substantial pleasure, inspiring his *Hebrides Overture* and the later *Scottish Symphony*. Perhaps emulating structural

MENDELSSOHN **Eight Songs without** **Words**

Fantasy in F sharp **minor, Op.28**

Felix Mendelssohn



elements of Mozart's keyboard fantasies, the Fantasy begins in an improvisatory style, before a faster section in the tonic major leads to a dazzling *presto* finale.

If Mendelssohn's keyboard 'songs' helped to establish a more lyrical approach to piano playing, then Chopin's music might be considered to have shown pianists how to sing. It is typically recounted that Chopin took great delight in Italian opera, especially the music of Vincenzo Bellini, yet his own sense of melodic invention, and its adaptation to the keyboard, perhaps eclipses such models. In contrast to pianists of colossal strength, such as Liszt and Sigismund Thalberg, contemporaries acclaimed Chopin's playing for its tonal shading and intimacy; this is often attributed to his slight physique, but might also have been a consequence of the introduction of felt hammers on the composer's favoured Pleyel pianos. After moving from Poland to more cosmopolitan Paris in 1829, he gained immediate recognition through only a small number of public appearances. While he found little difficulty getting his early works published, he nonetheless recognised that giving lessons to aristocratic young ladies might be a lucrative profession. Within a few years he was able to exact exorbitant fees, yielding sufficient income to sustain a lavish lifestyle. The French capital undoubtedly nurtured his sense of refinement, yet it is important to remember that his thoroughly original voice was in place before his relocation, as the first mazurkas, nocturnes, and various of the early études, attest.

Franz Schubert and John Field had both used the title 'nocturne' for their musical works, yet in Chopin's hands the genre was made his own. While classical proportions underpin some of his melodies – Mozart, importantly, was a favourite composer – in others the style is more free. Often, the sense of balance in his phrasing is dislocated by unexpected harmonic movement or prolongations, as with the principal themes of the **Two Nocturnes**, Op.27. In the first work there is an epic quality, augmented by a dramatic central section that moves beyond the boundaries of his earlier forays in the form, while the second is regarded by many as among his most beautiful compositions.

With their genesis in the scherzos of early Classical symphonies, Chopin's four keyboard scherzos are extended works, characterised by tempestuous outer sections and a contrasting middle section of melodic warmth. The composer enjoyed a succession of summers in the peaceful rural surrounds of Nohant from 1839, a setting which

CHOPIN Two Nocturnes, Op.27

engendered the creation of much of his finest music. Indeed, his letters indicate a reevaluation of his method at this time, and show that he invested considerably greater effort in perfecting his works. Among these mature compositions, the Third and Fourth Ballades, the late Nocturnes, and the **Fourth Scherzo** are clearly more finely honed than their forebears. In the E major Scherzo, the fierce rhetoric of the outer sections is toned down, while the central melody rises to a point of near-pained ecstasy in its closing lines.

Unlike Chopin and Mendelssohn, who died in their late 30s, Franz Liszt witnessed the maturing of the Romantic age. His early career was built largely on the successes of his first seasons in Paris, and the extensive European tours that followed the breakdown of his relationship with Marie d'Agoult. When he withdrew from the public stage in 1847, it was primarily to allow more time for composition. Optimistically accepting a position in the historical German city of Weimar (Bach had been Kapellmeister there), he produced much of his finest music in the ensuing 13 years, including the **B minor Sonata**, which was completed by 1853. Sadly, the reception of these mature works was often clouded by his earlier fame, with certain artists, such as Clara Wieck, refusing to countenance them. This was particularly evident in the case of the Sonata, dedicated to her husband, Robert Schumann, which she derided as 'frightful' and 'truly awful'. Such was her spite, she later removed Schumann's dedication to Liszt from the C major Fantasia in her edition of her husband's works.

The successful synthesis of diverse thematic materials and an inspired sense of narrative – all within an almost entirely new structural model – is unmistakable, and perhaps explains the Sonata's lasting popularity. If a literary program was at one time associated with it, Liszt thoughtfully chose to not to divulge it, something of a departure from his usual preference for descriptive titles. As a sonata, the piece cleverly works on two levels: that of the multi-movement sonata, and first-movement sonata form. Fused into its thirty minutes of continuous music are four distinct sections, or seeming 'movements', yet the uninterrupted work simultaneously features an exposition, development and recapitulation. Four of the five themes are presented in the opening pages, Liszt so

CHOPIN Scherzo No.4, Op.54



LISZT Sonata in B minor

Principal themes from Liszt's Sonata in B minor

Theme 1



Theme 2



masterfully transforming one as to disguise it in a subsequent melody of antithetical character.

The fifth theme is revealed in the *Andante sostenuto*, where a gentle modulation of tonalities creates one of the composer's most exquisite moments.

A three-voiced fugato section seems at first to be separate (despite its thematic links), yet ultimately functions as a return to the opening material.

Liszt originally intended to end the Sonata with the thundering *presto* octaves of the final pages, yet rather chose to institute a passage that brings about a transformative apotheosis: the *Andante* melody is heard again in prayer-like simplicity, before the music dissolves into a pianissimo resumption, and final resolution, of the descending scale heard at the outset.

As the three young pianists teased the ageing Kalkbrenner in those youthful Paris days, they could not possibly have realised the enormous impact their music and their individual approaches to the piano would have on later generations.

Nor could they have perceived how their subsequent journeys would evolve in distinct relation to each other. After all, it was a reaction against empty virtuosity that motivated Mendelssohn to confirm his advocacy of the past, this conservatism eventually consolidating in masterworks such as *Elijah*, and the Violin Concerto. And Chopin's sensuous poetry and manifest originality must surely have been pondered by Liszt as he retreated from the stage, dedicating himself to a life of more enduring contemplation.

While the disparate elements of classical restraint, expressive intimacy and breathtaking execution might seem incompatible bedfellows, we now recognise that they form a noble trinity of talents which, when combined, underscore the greatest musicians of our age.

SCOTT DAVIE ©2010

Theme 3



Theme 4



Theme 5



2010 SEASON

**INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL
PRESENTED BY THEME & VARIATIONS**

Monday 25 October | 7pm
City Recital Hall Angel Place

JOYCE YANG IN RECITAL

LOWELL LIEBERMANN (born 1961)
Gargoyles, Op.29

Presto

Adagio semplice, ma con molto rubato

Allegro moderato

Presto feroce

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)
Estampes (Engravings)

Pagodes (Pagodas)

La Soirée dans Grenade (Evening in Granada)

Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the Rain)

CARL VINE (born 1954)
Piano Sonata No.1

INTERVAL

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

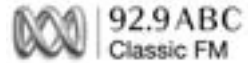
Ballade No.4 in F minor, Op.52

Nocturne in F sharp minor, Op.48 No.2

Introduction and Rondo, Op.16

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

Spanish Rhapsody – Folies d'Espagne et Jota aragonesa



This concert will be recorded for later broadcast on ABC Classic FM.

Pre-concert talk by Ian Munro at 6.15pm in the First Floor Reception Room.

Visit sydneyinsymphony.com/talk-bios for speaker biographies.

Estimated durations:
10 minutes, 15 minutes,
18 minutes, 20-minute interval,
12 minutes, 8 minutes,
11 minutes, 14 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9.10pm.

PRESENTING PARTNER



IN THE GREEN ROOM

Joyce Yang in conversation

PHOTO: OH SEOK HOON



‘When I hear Chopin’s music,’ says Joyce Yang, ‘I almost see nothing.’

This wouldn’t be a remarkable statement for most of us, but Yang belongs to the five per cent who experience synaesthesia. ‘When I hear something,’ she explains, ‘I immediately associate it with colours and lines, mostly abstract.’ But Chopin is different: Yang experiences his music almost solely on the basis of what she actually hears. ‘I don’t have a map in front of my face when I play Chopin,’ she says. ‘When I play Schumann, for example, I have a clear landscape. But Chopin to me is almost like water – I’m not able to tell you what shape it is.’

Yang was introduced to Chopin’s music quite early, and from the outset, she says, ‘I felt that it was very organic, there was absolutely nothing artificial about it, it was almost like breathing.’ It’s those qualities that challenge the performer. ‘I think the hardest thing about Chopin is to make it as effortless as possible – expression without intention. It has to be like you’re not thinking about it at all, and I think that’s the biggest challenge.’

The three Chopin pieces on Yang’s Sydney program haven’t been in her concert repertoire for all that long, but they’re close to her heart nonetheless. ‘They’re what I hear at my leisure,’ she says, ‘what I *want* to hear when I’m not practising; I’m in love with these pieces.’

She’s aiming to show several different dimensions of Chopin that intrigue her. There’s the incredible melodic side: ‘whether you hear the melody for the first time or the

born

1986, in Seoul, Korea

the birthday present
a piano

first piano lessons
at the age of four, from her aunt

advanced study
entered the School of Music, Korea National University of Arts at the age of ten; in 1997 moved to the United States to study at the Juilliard School with Yoheved Kaplinsky, who is still her teacher

her big break
winning the silver medal in the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

highlights since then
New York Philharmonic debut (2006) and touring to Asia with the NYP, including a triumphant return to her hometown; returning to the orchestra to give a ‘knock-out’ performance of Bernstein’s *Age of Anxiety* (2008)

collaborations
include Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the BBC Philharmonic, working with conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Edo de Waart and Leonard Slatkin

in Australia
this is her Australian debut

read more
www.pianistjoyceyang.com

further listening
See More Music on page 27

thousandth time it grabs you.' There's a side of Chopin that's quite dark: 'it wanders into a difficult place in our psyche.' And there's the 'exuberant, joyous, ecstatic side of Chopin' – effortless, virtuosic, colourful and free. Yang puts these together in a musical character study.

Franz Liszt provides a contrast – the extrovert to Chopin's introvert. 'I felt that after the Introduction and Rondo we – me particularly, but also the audience – would need a great escape,' she explains. 'The Chopin works go to such great emotional depth, I felt we'd need something that would lift everything up and push it over the limit. And the *Spanish Rhapsody* explodes into a fantastic area that only Liszt can go, with that extreme virtuosity.'

It's exciting when a visiting pianist arrives with Australian music in her luggage, and Yang brings Carl Vine's Piano Sonata No.1, a spectacular piece that has been in her repertoire ever since her teacher came up to her one day and said, 'Boy, do I have a piece for you!' She was blown away by it and has played it many times since then. 'It's one of the very, very few pieces,' she says, 'where I walk on the stage and I can give absolutely everything that I've got, nothing holding back, and it's ok.'

Yang describes the sonata as a 20-minute journey that goes from the softest notes in the darkest place in the piano into an absolute frenzy. 'It's so easy for me to see so many different images while playing it, fantastic colours and creatures.' She sounds excited, and slightly awed, to learn that it was commissioned by the Sydney Dance Company, but her instincts have already told her that this music is like a soundtrack, for which you 'must envision your own story'.

Some concert programs draw on intellectual connections to give shape and sense to the musical choices. Yang looks for other connections – energy, colours – bringing together composers who might not appear to have much in common. Parts of Liebermann's *Gargoyles*, she says, are ethereal, mysterious and reminiscent of Debussy, a composer from another era and another continent. Yang points to the way both composers create colour through series of parallel chords that never seem to resolve. And there's a chiaroscuro effect: 'I see great shadows with extreme light when I play Liebermann and Debussy.' This in turn creates a link to the Vine, which has 'a "swamp area", where everything's wet and dark and it's very ambiguous – I'm referring to the end of the first movement or the middle section of the second. It also has this extreme shadowing, ambiguous but also very profound. So that ties the first half together, so it resonates.'

YVONNE FRINDLE
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2010

Synæsthesia

Synæsthesia is a crossing or mixing of sensations. Neurologically based, it occurs when the stimulation of one sensory pathway (say, the aural pathway when listening to music) results in an automatic and quite involuntary experience in an unrelated sensory pathway (say, vision or smell). Many musicians have reported seeing colours when they hear music – Rimsky-Korsakov, for example, always 'heard' the key of E major as dark blue – but it's a very personal experience and there's rarely much agreement between individuals as to how they 'see' the music they hear.

Famous musical synæsthetes include Rimsky-Korsakov, Duke Ellington, Franz Liszt, Olivier Messiaen and, among pianists, Hélène Grimaud. Alexander Scriabin was also thought to have experienced synæsthesia.



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ABOUT THE MUSIC

LIEBERMANN, DEBUSSY, VINE, CHOPIN AND LISZT

This program ends with music by Franz Liszt, credited as the ‘inventor’ of the piano recital as we know it, and is a striking tribute to the recital heritage. Here, in the one concert, is an infinite variety of styles and moods with, on the one hand, astonishing examples of pianistic colour and, on the other, dazzling virtuosity. Music by Chopin and Liszt celebrates the Romantic age in the second half; the first half unashamedly revels in the world of living composers. Liszt would have approved.

It’s common to lament the passing of the Romantic pianist-composers, but American composer Lowell Liebermann is a reminder that the breed lives on. He was born in New York City in 1961 and began his piano studies at the age of 8. He continues to appear in public as a pianist, and music for solo piano is an important part of his compositional output. In the case of **Gargoyles** (1989), the work has entered the concert repertoire, with frequent performances in recitals all over the world and more than 15 recordings.

The name ‘Gargoyles’ stems from Liebermann’s long-standing fascination for those strange figurative carvings high on the walls of old churches and universities that, despite their own grotesqueness, were thought to ward off evil spirits. With more than a nod to Prokofiev, the music occupies a fantastical and sometimes macabre world – often eerie and mysterious – although it can also be regarded as a set of pianistic studies, each with its own distinct character. If there are demons in this music, they are to be heard in its technical challenges.

LIEBERMANN **Gargoyles, Op.29**

Presto

*Adagio semplice, ma con
molto rubato*

Allegro moderato

Presto feroce

Lowell Liebermann



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN STEINER

The outer movements are dazzlingly fast: the first is a disorienting study in double notes; the fourth is frenzied and brittle, with a nod to the tarantella dance. In the middle the pace relaxes slightly. The second movement can be heard as an exercise in playing melodies in smooth, *legato* octaves – sustained over the hypnotic effect of a quirky repeated bass line. The third movement, a little faster, again seeks out that prize of the piano, perfect *legato* playing, but with swirling notes, passed between the hands, accompanying a simple melody sustained high on the keyboard. It might be marked ‘placid and delicately’ but it is diabolical in its own way.

Debussy’s **Estampes** (1903) for piano was the first of his picturesque piano suites and confirms his reputation as an ‘impressionist’ and a composer of evocative music that emerges from the world of its titles. ‘Estampes’ are engravings or prints, a title that suggests not just postcard images and Debussy’s mania for Japanese prints, but the idea of impressing or stamping on the memory. Each of the three pieces is vividly characterised, placing the listener in the shoes of the travelling tourist, and yet there is a pervasive sense of nostalgia and fantasy. More than conveying simple images, these pieces somehow conjure mood, sensation, even scent.

Debussy was fascinated by the Javanese gamelan orchestras that were brought to the Paris Exposition in 1889 and 1890 – he loved the tuneful percussion sound, the intricate textures and the gapped scales the orchestras used. This is the soundworld of *Pagodes* – floating and sensuous, with the outlines of its arabesques thought to evoke the outlines of a pagoda roof.

Debussy had never visited Spain when he composed *Estampes*. Nonetheless he brilliantly captures the intoxicating colours and rhythms of Spanish dance. His *Evening in Granada* brings the effect together with a nocturnal mood, all underpinned by compelling repeated rhythms taken from the habañera. Spanish composer Manuel de Falla gave Debussy the finest compliment when he described it as ‘characteristically Spanish in every detail’, conjuring ‘the effect of images mirrored by moonlight upon the limpid waters of the large albercas adjoining the Alhambra’.

The final movement, *Gardens in the Rain*, brings the music home to France and suggests the world of childhood, both signalled by the two French nursery songs that Debussy weaves into the rippling, toccata texture, ‘Nous n’irons plus au bois’ and ‘Do, do, l’enfant do’. For one writer it brings to

DEBUSSY

Estampes

Pagodes

La Soirée dans Grenade

Jardins sous la pluie



Portrait of Debussy by Ivan Thiele (1927)

mind the picture of a child looking out the window at the rain, which sometimes patters, sometimes dashes furiously against the glass. Or perhaps the plaintive character of the nursery tunes will convey a very grownup nostalgia and regret.

Carl Vine's Piano Sonata No.1 is irrepressibly forward-moving and engaging at first hearing. Its origins in dance are immediately obvious (it was commissioned by the Sydney Dance Company). In the form and nucleus of the work one can trace the legacy of Elliott Carter's Sonata (1946): both are two-movement sonatas featuring complex layer-building and a propelling groove.

The Vine work was entirely developed on a computer, yet it feels remarkably amicable 'under the fingers'. Shifts of tempo punctuate the piece throughout – in the first movement, the sombre beginning is prolonged, creating unease. An episode of computer-like semiquavers produces a startling effect and extends the tension. Finally the theme is announced as the texture undergoes a technicolour expansion – the first of many 'sound mushrooms' throughout the whole sonata. This is followed by two short contrasting sections: one arid, with brusque staccato chords at the bottom of the keyboard; the other meditative and leading into a languidly modal *Meno mosso* ('less movement') that projects a wistful, improvisatory character, although it is actually fastidiously notated.

VINE Piano Sonata No.1

I *[slow]*

II *Leggiero e legato*

Carl Vine



PHOTO: KAREN STEAINS

The second movement is marked 'Lightly and legato' and is played without pedal. It is a *Moto perpetuo* with both hands churning semiquavers, three octaves apart from one another. There is a meandering character to this movement, but the mood is expectant rather than mysterious. It weaves a trance-like cavern of refuge for the audience before bursting out into jubilant delirium.

A more subdued *Lento* ('very slow') follows, with perfumes of harmonic overtones coexisting with a lyrical solo melody in the left hand, gradually unravelling until the original *Perpetuo* is reached. This time it is a hectic *fortissimo*, gradually expanding in range and dynamic level as parallel fifths – a feature of both movements – are revisited. This music sweats off the page! The *Presto* begins with prickly bass semiquavers building to torrential layers of sound, until the final pensive murmurings from the distant first movement are again stated.

TAC

In 1842, Robert Schumann pointed out that although Chopin was the first to use the word 'ballade' for instrumental music, 'only the word...seems new to us; the thing can already be found in Beethoven and Schubert'. Chopin's ballades crystallised a genre and made a huge impression. He may have written only four, but these inspired a multitude of other composers.

The **Ballade No.4 in F minor** was composed in 1842 and published the following year; it did not enjoy much popularity in Chopin's lifetime, although it has since been recognised as a masterpiece. The main theme unfurls from 'almost nothing', easing into the narrative mood. The rhythmic framework is a waltz but the character is introverted and sophisticated, with long, intricately built phrases and richly developed harmonic ideas.

Chopin composed more than twenty nocturnes over the course of his life – not only do they represent one of his most significant contributions to the piano literature, but they also trace the development of his style as a composer. Chopin had inherited the genre from the Irish composer John Field, and in his hands it took on a more profound character, becoming more intensely dramatic – often dark and introverted – than its innocent models. The idea of the nocturne (the 'night piece') may have come from Field, but the musical style reveals the influence of the *bel canto* approach of early 19th-century opera, the elegantly embellished melodies that were heard in Rossini and Bellini.

CHOPIN

Ballade No.4 in F minor, Op.52



Frédéric Chopin

The **Nocturne in F sharp minor, Op.48 No.2** (1841) often languishes in the shadow of No.1 from the same opus, which is perhaps the grandest of all Chopin's nocturnes. No.2, by contrast, charms its listeners with gentle melancholy and flowing ideas. It is relatively short and simply structured in three sections. Chopin told his pupil Gutmann that the slower middle section should be played like a recitative, like sung speech: 'a tyrant commands' (the first two chords), 'and the other asks for mercy'.

The rondo genre enjoyed great popularity in the 19th century. Its simple, easily grasped structure with a recurring main theme – not unlike verse-chorus structure – lent itself to virtuoso display and the introduction of a huge variety of ideas. But after Chopin had composed four rondos, relatively early on in his career, he abandoned the genre with its overt virtuosity and 'public' character. The last of his rondos was the **Introduction and Rondo**, completed in 1833, and it represents a style that Chopin was abandoning: the popular, crowd-pleasing *style brillant*, exuberant and showy. It's organised in two main sections, the imposing introduction, in a haunting and melancholy minor key (C minor), and the rondo itself, which shifts to E flat major and pursues a thrilling, even terrifying, virtuosity.

Liszt's **Spanish Rhapsody** (c.1863) has two titles; the subtitle, *Folies d'Espagne et Jota aragonesa*, gives the key to the music. The 'Folies d'Espagne' or 'La Folia' is an ancient dance form, characterised by a distinctive repeated pattern of chords that creates an irresistible, even maddening, foundation for an exhilarating dance. The effect will be familiar from countless sets of virtuoso variations, including Corelli and Vivaldi in the 18th century and later composers such as Paganini and Rachmaninoff. The 'Jota aragonesa' refers to a Spanish folk dance.

The Spanish Rhapsody has become one of Liszt's most popular works, perhaps because of the elegance of its dance character, perhaps because of the satisfying brilliance of the writing. It begins with a flourishing cadenza, before the left hand marks out the characteristic *folia* bass line that is to underpin the following set of variations. The last of these shifts from the home key of C sharp minor into D major and the *jota* is introduced, delicately, as if in the distance. This then forms the basis for a spectacular coda, ending with one last appearance of *La folia*.

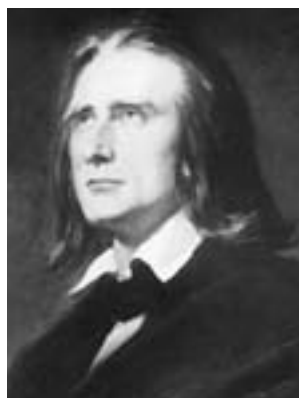
NOTE ON VINE BY TAMARA ANNA CISLOWSKA ©1999
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CHOPIN Nocturne in F sharp minor, Op.48 No.2

Introduction and Rondo, Op.16

*Introduction (Andante) –
Rondo (Allegro vivace)*

LISZT Spanish Rhapsody – Folies d'Espagne et Jota aragonesa



Franz Liszt

GLOSSARY

ARIOSO – like a song.

ARPEGGIATED – an arpeggio is a musical gesture in which the notes of a chord are ‘spread’, or played one after the other instead of simultaneously. Many arpeggios in succession create an ‘arpeggiated’ texture.

BARCAROLLE – a song or instrumental work evoking the songs of Venetian gondoliers, and characterised by a distinctive lilting rhythm. The best-known barcarolle begins Act III of Offenbach’s *Tales of Hoffmann*.

BEL CANTO – Italian for ‘beautiful singing’, generally used to refer to the agile but smooth style of singing required for the operas of Donizetti, Bellini and other Italians of the first part of the 19th century.

CANTABILE – in a singing style.

CANTILENA – a song-like melody.

COUNTERPOINT – a musical technique in which two or more different musical lines or melodies are played at the same time. Imitative counterpoint is when the various parts begin playing similar or identical melodies one after the other – childhood rounds are the simplest form of imitative counterpoint.

DOLCE – sweetly.

DOTTED RHYTHMS – a dotted rhythm is a pattern of alternating long and short notes where the long note is three times as long as the short one – the effect is majestic or sprightly, depending on the tempo.

DUPLE TIME – two beats to the bar.

FUGA – a fugue is a musical form in which a short melody, the subject, is first sounded by one part or instrument alone, and is then taken up in imitation by other parts or instruments one after the other. The Latin *fuga* is related to the idea of both ‘fleeing’ and ‘chasing’.

GAPPED SCALE – common in Asian music and in many folk cultures; the most familiar gapped scale is the pentatonic (five-note) scale achieved by playing just the black keys on a piano keyboard.

KEY – in Western music there are two main categories of scale or key: **MAJOR** and **MINOR**. Aurally, a major scale will sound ‘brighter’ or more cheerful (‘Happy Birthday’), while a minor scale will sound sombre or mournful (funeral marches).

LEGATO – (literally ‘bound together’) a direction for notes to be played or sung in a smooth and connected manner; the opposite of staccato.

NOCTURNE – literally a ‘night piece’, at first used for Classical serenades (played outdoors in the evening) and later adopted for lyrical piano works (e.g. those by Chopin) and other evocative instrumental works. The invention of the piano nocturne genre is usually attributed to the Irish composer John Field.

OCTAVES – a technique in piano writing where the melody is doubled (played simultaneously) in different octaves or registers. This emphasises the melodic line at the expense of filling in the harmony.

RECITATIVE – in vocal music a recitative is a kind of ‘sung speech’; transferred to instrumental music, it refers to passages in which the melody and rhythms mimic the inflections of speech.

SCHERZO – literally, a joke; the term generally refers to a movement in a fast, light triple time (three beats to the bar), which may involve whimsical, startling or playful elements. The symphonic scherzo, as established by Beethoven, usually includes a contrasting central section called a **TRIO**, giving a symmetrical three-part structure. Chopin’s four scherzos for piano represent a more extended, stand-alone form, but retain the characteristic three-part structure, lively tempo and triple time.

SEMIQUAVER – a rhythmic unit that divides the crotchet beat into four quick notes (although in a slow tempo, these notes may not be especially fast).

SONATA – this term can refer to both a musical genre and a musical form.

The classical sonata is a three- or four-movement work for solo instrument, in which the first movement, and sometimes the last movement, is in *sonata form*.

The term **SONATA FORM** was conceived in the 19th century to describe the harmonically based structure most classical composers had adopted for the first movements of their sonatas and symphonies. It involves the **EXPOSITION**, or presentation of themes and subjects: the first in the tonic or home key, the second in a contrasting key. The tension between the two keys is intensified in the **DEVELOPMENT**, where the themes are manipulated and varied as the music moves further and further away from the ultimate goal of the home key. Tension is resolved in the **RECAPITULATION**, where both subjects are restated in the tonic. Sometimes a **CODA** ('tail') is added to enhance the sense of finality.

SONATA-RONDO – a structure almost exclusively in finale movements. It fuses the underlying harmonic plan of *sonata form* with the surface thematic plan of the **RONDO** (in which a main idea, or refrain, alternates with a series of musical episodes).

STACCATO – a style of musical articulation in which notes are played shorter than their notated duration and are detached from each other.

TARANTELLA – an Italian folk dance from Taranto, characterised by driving, even frenzied, rhythms. It is popularly but misleadingly associated with the tarantula, reputed to be a kind of cure for the spider's bite.

TOCCATA – a fast and brilliant solo instrumental piece displaying 'touch' (in the case of keyboardists) and technique

TONIC – in the system of major and minor keys that dominates in Western tonal music, the main note of a key (the note after which it is named) is the tonic.

In much of the classical repertoire, movement titles are taken from the Italian words that indicate the tempo and mood. A selection of terms from this program is included here.

Adagio – slow

Adagio ma non troppo – slow but not too much

Adagio semplice, ma con molto rubato – slow, simply but with much rubato (freedom of rhythm)

Adagio sostenuto – slow, sustained

Allegretto – lively, not as fast as *Allegro*

Allegro – fast

Allegro con moto – fast, with motion

Allegro energico – fast, energetically

Allegro ma non troppo – fast but not too much

Allegro maestoso – fast, majestically

Allegro moderato – moderately fast

Allegro molto – very fast

Allegro non troppo – not too fast

Allegro vivace – fast, lively

Andante – at an easy walking pace

Andante con moto – ...with motion

Andante espressivo – ...expressively

Andante maestoso – ...majestically

Andante sostenuto – ...sustained

Con moto agitato – with agitated motion

Largo – broadly

Lento assai – very slow

Lento sostenuto – slow, sustained

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo – moderately, in a singing style, very expressively

Molto allegro e vivace – very fast and lively

Molto vivace – very lively

Piano agitato – soft, agitated

Presto – as fast as possible

Presto agitato – ...agitated

Presto feroce – ...fiercely

Presto, ma non tanto – ...but not too much

This glossary is intended only as a quick and easy guide, not as a set of comprehensive and absolute definitions. Most of these terms have many subtle shades of meaning which cannot be included for reasons of space.

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The Sydney Symphony's award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people. The Sydney Symphony promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Liza Lim, Lee Bracegirdle and Georges Lentz, and the orchestra's recording of works by Brett Dean was released on both the BIS and Sydney Symphony Live labels.

Other releases on the Sydney Symphony Live label, established in 2006, include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Sir Charles Mackerras and Vladimir Ashkenazy. The Sydney Symphony has also released recordings with Ashkenazy of Rachmaninoff and Elgar orchestral works on the Exton label, and numerous recordings on the ABC Classics label.

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