

17 October
City Recital Hall

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET IN RECITAL



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WELCOME

This year we celebrate two major anniversaries for 37 years of Theme & Variations Piano Services provides quality piano services to Sydney and beyond, and we also celebrate 20 years of partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Throughout the many years we have worked with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra providing our expertise and knowledge from working across Australian's concert stages. It's an honour to have prepared the magnificent Steinway Concert Grand you will hear in tonight's recital by the magnificent French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, acclaimed and celebrated in everything he performs, but never moreso than when playing the repertoire of his compatriots.

We are extremely proud to present International Pianists in Recital for 2022. This three-concert series features a variety of composers and illustrates each pianist's individual style and interpretation of these classical masterpieces. We're thrilled that the pianos being used are in themselves masterpieces of craft and ingenuity and are delighted that their acoustic beauty will support performances of such brilliance.

Our Willoughby showroom boasts a beautiful range of upright and grand pianos to suit all means and abilities. We have a team of experienced technicians who are dedicated to bringing out the best in every piano – great and small – across our musical community. Our long history with Steinway & Sons has allowed us to work with many notable pianists whose photographs grace our showroom's wall of fame. We invite our Sydney Symphony friends to visit us.

This year's recitals will be truly unforgettable, and we hope you will be thrilled by the pianistic brilliance in this year's program. We look forward to sharing this experience with you and congratulate the Sydney Symphony Orchestra once again for bringing these fine, inspirational artists to our city.



Ara Vartoukian OAM

Director, Theme & Variations Piano Services

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET IN RECITAL

FRENCH IMPRESSIONS

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET piano

GABRIEL PIERNÉ (1863–1937)

Nocturne en forme de valse, Op.40 No.2

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Nocturne in D flat, Op.63

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Estampes, L.100

i. *Pagodes*

ii. *La Soirée dans Grenade*

iii. *Jardins sous la Pluie*

PIERRE BOULEZ (1925–2016)

Douze Notations

i. *Fantasque - Modéré*

ii. *Très vif*

iii. *Assez lent*

iv. *Rythmique*

v. *Doux et improvisé*

vi. *Rapide*

vii. *Hiératique*

viii. *Modéré jusqu' à très vif*

ix. *Lointain - Calme*

x. *Mécanique et très sec*

xi. *Scintillant*

xii. *Lent - Puissant et âpre*

DEBUSSY

Préludes, Book 1

i. *Danseuses de Delphes*

ii. *Voiles*

iii. *Le vent dans la plaine*

iv. *'Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir'*

v. *Les collines d'Anacapri*

vi. *Des pas sur la neige*

vii. *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*

viii. *La fille aux cheveux de lin*

ix. *La sérénade interrompue*

x. *La Cathédrale engloutie*

xi. *La danse de Puck*

xii. *Minstrels*

Pre-concert talk by
Andrew Howes in the
Function Room on
Level 1 at 6.15.

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

7 minutes, 8 minutes,
16 minutes, 11 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
42 minutes

The concert will conclude
at approximately 9pm

COVER IMAGE

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet
Photo credit Ben Ealovega

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET piano

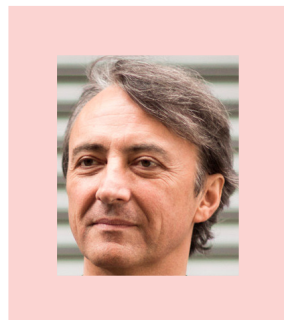
Award-winning pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet enjoys a prolific recording and international concert career. He regularly works with orchestras such as The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic orchestras, and collaborates with conductors including Vladimir Jurowski, Gianandrea Noseda, François-Xavier Roth, Vasily Petrenko, Ludovic Morlot, Edward Gardner, Louis Langrée, and Sir Andrew Davis among others.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season include Sydney Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Prague Radio orchestras, Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, Budapest Festival Orchestra, and Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra. He returns to Seattle Symphony Orchestra for a play-direct program of Hadyn, Beethoven and Mozart, and performs with Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg at the Bishwiller Festival. He continues his relationship with Manchester Camerata and Gabor Takács-Nagy which will include a tour of the Baltics. With Takács-Nagy, Bavouzet also performs Mozart concertos with Orchestre de Chambre de Geneva and the Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra.

In recital, Bavouzet continues his three-year residency at the Wigmore Hall, titled 'Autour de Debussy', which includes solo recitals and a chamber concert with the Orsino Ensemble. Bavouzet and the Orsino Ensemble also perform at the Helsinki Seriös chamber music series. Other recitals include two Debussy programs at the Ferrara Musica Festival, City Recital Hall, Sydney, and Sala São Paulo to name a few.

Bavouzet records exclusively for Chandos. His most recent release is the final instalment in the highly successful complete Haydn's Piano Sonatas series and his *The Beethoven Connection* received numerous accolades from *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *Choc-Classica*, and *The New York Times*. Ongoing cycles include the complete Mozart Piano Concertos with the Manchester Camerata and Gábor Takács-Nagy; their fourth volume was nominated for a *Gramophone Award* in 2020. In September 2020, the complete Beethoven Concertos were released with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra play/directed by Bavouzet.

Bavouzet has worked closely with Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Kurtág, Maurice Ohana, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Bruno Mantovani and Jörg Widmann and is also a champion of lesser-known French music, notably that of Gabriel Pierné and Albéric Magnard. He is the International Chair in Piano at the Royal Northern College of Music and an Advisory Board member of the Pianofest in the Hamptons. In 2012 he was ICMA Artist of the Year and in 2008 he was awarded Beijing's first ever Elite Prize for his Beethoven complete sonata series.



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet,
photo by Benjamin Ealovega

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In *The Art of French Piano Music*, pianist and scholar Roy Howat notes how pervasive was the influence of Chopin on French music in the later 19th and 20th centuries, infusing it with ‘a blend of Italian *bel canto* and the pianism of an Irishman based in Russia.’ The Irishman was John Field, who invented the nocturne a dreamy piano miniature, with its song-like melody over gentle accompaniment. Chopin, of course, would make the nocturne a favourite form, and established it as a popular one among subsequent French composers.

In his **Nocturne en forme de valse**, Gabriel Pierné blends the nocturne with another of Chopin’s favourite dance forms. Pierné divided his time between composing and conducting – in the latter role he premiered numerous new works, including Debussy’s *Ibéria* and Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*. He was a prolific composer, working in all major genres but known these days mainly for numbers from his sixth ballet, *Cydalise and the Satyr*, once a stalwart of classical music broadcasting.

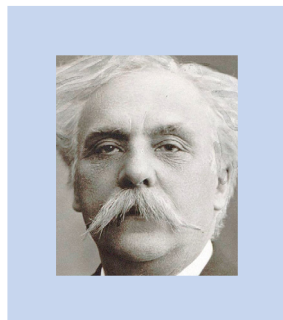
Debussy praised Pierné’s musicianship for its ‘charm and precision’, and this is on display in the Nocturne, which is the central movement of a Concert Suite dating from 1903, flanked by a crisp Prelude and Fughetta, and a substantive Symphonic Etude. The nocturne is in a kind of rondo form. The C sharp minor ‘A’ section falls into the conventional four-bar phrases, but Pierné’s harmony is full of unexpected side-steps. This section is stated three times, each time varied in texture. Between the first two statements is a section in D flat major in 5/8 time, not waltzable, but showing the rhythmic subtlety of which the composer was capable (and which served him well in composing and conducting ballet). This returns at the piece’s end; a central section, in 3/4 time and in C sharp minor (the key, incidentally, of Beethoven’s ‘Moonlight’ Sonata) ripples with scale-passages.



Gabriel Pierné photographed in 1898 by Franz Benque

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Gabriel Fauré's pianism was arguably influenced by Liszt (via his friend Saint-Saëns) as much as by Chopin, yet he produced a large number of works in forms that Chopin had made his own, notably impromptus, barcarolles and nocturnes. Fauré composed 13 of the latter, with the **Sixth Nocturne** appearing in 1894. We should be wary of reading biographical detail into music, but as this is no quiet nocturnal reverie we might note that in 1892 Fauré began a passionate affair with the singer Emma Bardac who would later marry Claude Debussy. Emma had just borne a daughter, known as Dolly, and Fauré wrote his *Dolly Suite* over several years as a kind of album of Dolly's childhood; the nocturne, by contrast, seems to deal with more adult passions. Like Pierné's, Fauré's Nocturne consists of a sequence of contrasting sections, but Fauré tends to develop his material (as he might in a sonata) rather than merely varying it. There is a gentle roll to the opening D-flat-major *Adagio* with its slow moving bass, lyrical melody and mid-register triplet accompaniment, a texture that reminds us that Fauré's preferred piano was an Erard instrument that had distinctly different colours in each register. That contrasts with the faster minor-key section in 3/4 with simple melodic motifs and syncopated rhythm that soon explores some distant chromatic harmony. A reminiscence of the opening links to a new section of upward surging figures that support a sweet theme in the treble. A mercurial section using fragments of what we've heard settles briefly on material from the 3/4 section, before the surge continues, leading to a massive climax and retreat to a coda that develops the opening material.



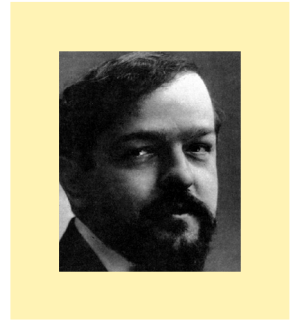
Gabriel Fauré photographed by Pierre Petit in 1905

ABOUT THE MUSIC

By 1903 Fauré's romance with Emma Bardac was long over, and that year Debussy gave her a signed copy of his newly composed set of ***Estampes*** (Prints) for piano. Despite once saying that he'd have liked to be a painter (he said much the same thing about a career as a sailor...) Debussy hated hearing his music described as 'what imbeciles call impressionism, just about the least appropriate term possible'. Those painters with whom Debussy associated, and from whom he absorbed much that was useful to his own art, were of a much younger generation than that of Monet, and of a different aesthetic orientation. Debussy preferred his work to be compared with literature rather than visual arts, especially Symbolist poetry. Significantly, Debussy put the titles of his piano preludes at the end of each piece, in brackets, as if to forestall too 'visual' an interpretation.

Nevertheless, like the roughly contemporary first set of *Images* and *La Mer*, *Estampes* consists of three stand-alone movements, each with an evocative title. We have moved some distance from the purely 'musical' forms bequeathed by Chopin towards the more illustrative miniatures of Robert Schumann or Franz Liszt.

Like Ravel, Debussy was often inspired by places he had yet to visit, and each of the *Estampes* cultivates a different 'ethnic' atmosphere: *Pagodes* suggests Chinese music in its use of black-note pentatonic writing, though Debussy also makes use of the gong-like bass such as he heard in Javanese gamelan music at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889. Despite being in a kind of ternary form, the piece is harmonically quite static, with contrast and tension generated by the varying speeds at which the five notes of the scale circulate. (Howat argues that the melodic contours of the phrases resemble the shapes of pagoda-roofs.)



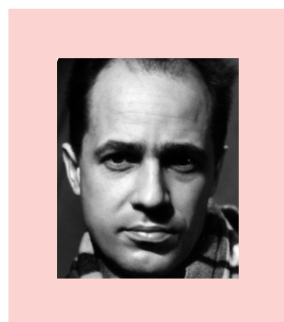
Claude Debussy in the 1900s

ABOUT THE MUSIC

By contrast *La Soirée dans Grenade* (Evening in Grenada) gains its Spanish flavour from an almost obsessive habanera rhythm (long-short-long-long), stated or implied in just about every bar (but for a couple of triple time-bars near the end that evoke the strumming of guitars). Debussy returns home for *Jardin sous la Pluie* (Gardens in the rain); painter Jacques-Émile Blanche remembered a summer rainstorm at Debussy's home where everyone but the composer went indoors. The piece uses snatches of two French children's songs, it: 'Do, do, l'enfant do,' and 'Nous n'irons plus au bois.'

Like Pierné, Pierre Boulez divided his time between composition and conducting, though it is unlikely that in 1945 the 20-year-old envisaged his future career as a storied composer and one of the most important conductors of the century. He sought out the tutelage of Olivier Messiaen and then of the leading French Schoenberg disciple, René Leibowitz; he fell out with both teachers, booed at concerts of Stravinsky, called for Europe's opera houses to be blown up, and wrote an acerbic account of Schoenberg on the latter's death in 1951. Having made a splash with his First Piano Sonata and Sonatine for Flute and Piano, he forged ahead with a musical language in which all aspects – pitch, duration, dynamics and attack – were arranged in a predetermined series or order. This method – integral serialism – was intended to create a music that made no reference to the music of the past.

The ***Douze Notations*** were composed in 1945, just before the 'breakthrough' works, but not published until 40 years later. In that time some of the material had been used as the basis for orchestral versions, and some had found its way into other larger works. They represent a precocious young composer's first encounter with the twelve-note method. The twelve-note rows, or series, are not used strictly, and the other parameters are freely composed, but each of the twelve pieces is twelve-bars long and uses one such series. And each has its own distinct character.



Pierre Boulez, photographed in 1957 by Anny Breer

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In interviews about the work made late in life, Boulez dismisses the avant-garde idea of each piece being a tabula rasa devoid of historical resonance. These pieces, he maintains, should be considered in a context that includes such works as Schoenberg's Six Little Pieces, Op.19, Bartók's Mikrokosmos and 'the music of Ravel and Debussy', to which we might add that of Stravinsky. The sounds and manners of all these appear at various junctures in the *Notations* – the richly Schoenbergian harmony of the opening, the emphatic Bartókian ostinatos, the Debussyan calm of the seventh and ninth piece. There is one further influence: the eighth piece, driven by a simple two-note ostinato, was suggested to the composer by the sound of an African marimba, whose wooden keys are amplified by water.



Debussy at the piano 1893

Debussy's first book of **Preludes** is also a set of twelve, and while some were sketched in 1907 and 1908, the bulk of the work was done in eight weeks in the winter of 1909-10. Debussy doesn't explore each key, like many composers did. Indeed there is nothing to suggest that Debussy intended the Preludes to be played only and ever as a set. Howat notes that the timbre and colour of the different pieces often suit different pianos.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

As in Boulez's set, each of Debussy's pieces has a strong character, often contrasting with its neighbours, but linked by less obvious elements. The first three Preludes, for instance, couldn't be less alike: *Danseuses de Delphes* (depicting the female ritual dancers at the temple of Apollo, as represented by a sculpture in the Louvre) is icily classical, with regular phrases, clear (if richly inflected) tonality and a simple ternary form. *Voiles* ('sails or 'veils') by contrast is almost entirely based on the ambiguous whole-tone scale except for six pentatonic bars, recalling *Pagodes*, at its centre. Yet is in the same basic tempo as the first prelude, and both are anchored to the note B flat, which is sounded as a repeated gong-stroke in the second. And B flat is the centre of tonal gravity in the third prelude, *Le vent dans la plaine* (The wind on the plain) despite that piece's completely different character.

Eric Jensen has pointed out that many of the Preludes have literary connections: the title of *Le vent dans la plaine* is borrowed from an 18th-century drama by Charles-Simon Favart. The fourth, *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* (Sounds and scents swirl in the evening air) shows Debussy using the unusual 5/4 metre. Its title is a quotation from Baudelaire's *Harmonies du Soir* and the eighth *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* (The girl with the flaxen hair) appears in Leconte de Lisle's *Chansons écossaises* (Scottish Songs), both of which Debussy set to music. Jensen suggests also that the seventh *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* (What the west wind saw) 'may have been inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Garden of paradise*,' and that the eleventh, *La danse de Puck*, might refer to Shakespeare or Kipling. With its skipping dotted notes, the latter piece, as Simon Tresize has demonstrated, has some of the most complex cross-rhythms in the whole set.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Some evoke a less specific place or event: the fifth, *Les collines d'Anacapri* (The hills of Anacapri) uses a series of discrete gestures that coalesce into Debussy's idea of popular song and dance from that part of the Italian coast; the ninth, *La sérénade interrompue* (The interrupted serenade) is initially marked 'quasi guitarra', and uses Spanish dance rhythms and 'Moorish' Phrygian-mode melodies to evoke Spain as he does in *La Soirée dans Grenade*. *Minstrels* represents an early European appropriation of African-American music, introduced to Paris at the turn of the century. Like ragtime, it features duple rhythm with accented offbeats in the left hand.

The tenth prelude is the mostly immediately striking piece: *La Cathédrale engloutie* (The submerged cathedral) graphically depicts the Breton legend of the city of Ys, drowned beneath the ocean waves, whose cathedral bells and chants can be heard sounding in the deep. At the heart of the set, though, is what appears to be the simplest. The sixth prelude, *Des pas sur la neige* (Footsteps in the snow) is tiny, and dominated by the simple trudging ostinato (figure D-E, E-F) in nearly every bar. Around this, so slowly and quietly that we barely notice, Debussy weaves a texture using all twelve notes of the scale. Here is, as Howat notes, 'characteristic irony in his having done that in the most static, ostinato-ridden of all his preludes'.

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