16 October City Recital Hall

# LILYA ZILBERSTEIN IN RECITAL

THEME & VARIATIONS

#SYDNEY" #SYMPHONY" #ORCHESTRA නු මා Emirates

# **WELCOME**

Welcome to the final concert in the *International Pianists in Recital* series for 2023, Lilya Zilberstein in Recital.

In this intimate recital, we will experience the essence of Rachmaninov and Schubert in the expert hands of Lilya Zilberstein, born and educated in Russia.

Lilya has been resident in Germany for many years and in 2014 she became the first woman to chair the classical piano department at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

Rachmaninov's Thirteen Preludes gives us the opportunity to revel in her outstanding interpretive and expressive abilities, distilled from the robust Russian tradition that is at the heart of this entire program.

All of us at Theme and Variations are very proud to be the Presenting Partner of the 2023 *International Pianists in Recital* series, a year in which we also celebrate 21 years of partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

The Orchestra brings the world's most charismatic pianists to the concert stages of our city, and it is an honour for us to provide specialised piano tuning and preparation of the magnificent instruments on which they perform.

Together, the Sydney Symphony and Theme & Variations offer unsurpassed musical excellence to musicians and audiences alike.

We thank you for your company over the course of the *International Pianists in Recital* series this year, and please enjoy this wonderful recital.



**Ara Vartoukian oam**Director, Theme & Variations Piano Services





Ara Vartoukian

# LILYA ZILBERSTEIN IN RECITAL

**GRAND EXPRESSIONS** 

# FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

## Moments musicaux, D780 (1828)

i. Moderato

ii. Andantino

iii. Allegro moderato

iv. Moderato

v. Allegro vivace

vi. Allegretto

## FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886) 12 Songs by Franz Schubert, S558 (1838/1876)

xi. Der Wanderer, D493

ix. Ständchen von Shakespeare, D889

viii. Gretchen am Spinnrade, D118

ii. Auf dem Wasser zu singen, D774

**INTERVAL** 

## SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873-1943) Preludes, Op.32 (1910)

No.1 in C (Allegro vivace)

No.2 in B-flat minor (Allegretto)

No.3 in E (Allegro vivace)

No.4 in E minor (Allegro con brio)

No.5 in G (Moderato)

No.6 in F minor (Allegro appassionato)

No.7 in F (Moderato)

No.8 in A minor (Vivo)

No.9 in A (Allegro moderato)

No.10 in B minor (Lento)

No.11 in B (Allegretto)

No.12 in G-sharp minor (Allegro)

No.13 in D-flat major (Grave – Allegro)

#### PRE-CONCERT TALK

By Andrew Howes in the Function Room on Level 1 at 6:15pm.

#### **ESTIMATED DURATION**

Schubert – 28 minutes Liszt – 17 minutes Interval – 20 minutes Rachmaninov – 31 minutes

The concert will conclude at approximately 9pm.

#### **COVER IMAGE**

Lilya Zilberstein Photo by Andrej Grilc

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# **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

#### LILYA ZILBERSTEIN piano

Lilya Zilberstein got her first taste of international success in 1987 when she won the Busoni Competition in Bolzano. Her victory was a sensation – it took five years until the first prize was even awarded again. By 1988, the Moscow-born pianist was able to perform at big tours abroad in the West. Travelling for her concerts took her to almost all of the European countries, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Canada and Brazil.

Lilya Zilberstein started playing the piano at five years old. After twelve years of lessons with Ada Traub at the Gnessin Special Music School in Moscow, she continued studying at the Gnessin Institute under Alexander Satz until she graduated in 1988. In 1985, she won first prize in the Competition of the Russian Federation, and was also one of the prize-winners at the All Union's Competition in Riga. She emigrated to Germany in 1990. In 1991, Lilya Zilberstein debuted with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Claudio Abbado, which formed the basis of a long-term cooperation. She performed concerts with many famous international orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra in Moscow, the London Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra della Scala in Milan, the Staatskapelle Dresden, and many others. Alongside Claudio Abbado, she has worked with conductors such as Paavo Berglund, Semyon Bychkov, Gustavo Dudamel, Christoph Eschenbach, James Levine, Vassily Sinaisky, Michael Tilson Thomas, Jean-Pascal Tortelier and Antoni Wit. In August 1998, she was awarded the Accademia Musicale Chigiana prize in Siena. This accolade has been awarded to, among others, Gidon Kremer, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Krystian Zimerman.

Lilya Zilberstein has recorded eight CDs for Deutsche Grammophon, including recital programs, the Grieg Piano Concerto (Järvi, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra) and the Second and Third Piano Concertos by Rachmaninov (Abbado, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra). She also contributed to the first complete CD recording of the Frédéric Chopin oeuvre, which was released by Deutsche Grammophon in 1999. Recently, several more CDs have been released, including a recording of the Brahms sonata for two pianos with Martha Argerich, released by EMI, and Clementi, Mussorgsky and Rachmaninoff, released by Hänssler Classic.

Lilya Zilberstein is jury member of important international piano competitions. She devotes a substantial part of her time to the education of young musicians. She gives masterclasses at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena (since 2011) and during her concert travels in universities and conservatories all over the world. From 2009 till 2013, she was Guest Professor at the University of Music and Theatre Hamburg. Since 2014, she is Professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, succeeding Paul Badura-Skoda and Oleg Maisenberg.



Lilya Zilberstein Photo by Andrej Grilc

# **ABOUT THE MUSIC**

Advances in piano-building technology in the very early 19th century were rapid and far-reaching. In Viennese piano-building, innovations included a change from dampers operated by the player's knee to the now-standard soft pedal, for instance. As instruments became more resonant, composers, such as Beethoven in his middle-period works, naturally exploited that for both monumental and delicate effects that went far beyond the limited capabilities of the fortepiano.



Fortepiano built by Anton Walter in Vienna in 1810

A few decades on and the instrument would ripe for use as a vehicle for the short, suggestive fragment or miniature that Romantic composers such as John Field, Robert Schumann and Chopin would cultivate. Such works, taking their cue from literary Romanticism's love of mood, feeling and immediacy, rather than structure, argument and elaboration sat perfectly on instruments that could be percussive or lyrical with extremes of tone and volume at the player's touch. The early-Romantic miniature would enliven genres of piano music that extended well into the 20th century; works with allusive titles such as many of Schumann's short pieces and would inspire the illustrative works of Liszt, for instance, while those with generic names (dances, études, preludes) also had a long after life. It would fall to Chopin to transform the Prelude into a freestanding piece (rather than the introduction to, say, a fugue) ushering in the voque for sets of such short, strongly characterised works that was cultivated by the likes of Debussy, Scriabin and Rachmaninov.

# SCHUBERT'S MOMENTS MUSICAUX

Naturally pre-Romantic composers also wrote miniatures: Beethoven's numerous Bagatelles are a case in point, and of course we have Schubert's Moments musicaux (or Momens musicals, to give them the linguistically bizarre title of their first publication - not, of course, sanctioned by the composer). The implied fleetingness of the 'moment' looks very much towards Romanticism, though as Charles Rosen drily notes, these pieces 'are comparatively long-winded'. Just as Schubert's Impromptus sound like anything but short, tossed-off improvisations, of the six 'Moments' that constitute this set, only one plays for around two minutes, and mostly they clock in between five and seven.

And indeed, they were not originally conceived as a set, despite appearing in print as two books of three pieces in 1828, the year of Schubert's death. At least two date from four or five years earlier. The third piece had appeared under the title (not Schubert's) Air russe (Russian song) in a miscellaneous album of sheet music (designed by its publisher to exploit the Christmas market). The sixth piece endured a similar indignity the following year, appearing as Plaints d'un troubadour (A troubadour's complaint). Neither title, mercifully, made it into the 1828 publication.

Each piece crystallises a particular pianistic mood in a simple musical structure.

The first, a *Moderato* in C major is in simple ternary (ABA) form. Its unharmonized opening theme is songful, but soon enough Schubert adds in his characteristically chromatic harmony, which dominates the much longer G section of the piece before a shortened return to the opening material.



Schubert, by Stengel and Co.

# SCHUBERT'S MOMENTS MUSICAUX

The Andantino, in A flat major, is an extended rondo, in five sections (ABABA), whose main material is a lilting 9/8 song with a distinctive siciliana rhythm. This is varied subtly on its three appearances, as is that of the B section, in F sharp minor, whose theme is a much slowed-down and pared-back version of the opening. Its second appearance is notably more passionate.

The third, in F minor, is less Russian than Hungarian in flavour with a hint of the polka to its *Allegretto moderato* rhythm. (Dvořák credited Schubert, who briefly worked for the Esterházy family, with bringing the ambiguities of major and minor tonality common in Hungarian music into that of Viennese classicism.) Here the music falls into a series of repeated eight-bar strains, with a more elaborate coda.

The fourth piece, marked *Moderato*, evokes a Hungarian rhythm (short-short-long-long) in its B section, with the outer ones characterised by a Baroque-style semiquavers over a 'walking' bass.

An Allegro vivace forms the fifth piece, which works its way with much energy from F minor via various harmonic excursions to F major (which is further than one might think).

Finally, the piece formerly known as 'A troubadour's complaint' is an *Allegretto* in A flat major, whose speed of harmonic change is quite gentle even when moving to distant keys like E major, and whose first theme is dominated by a sighing motif. The D-flat trio section is based on a melody distantly related to the rising and falling of the second movement's *siciliana*.

# SCHUBERT'S SONGS AND LISZT'S TRANSCRIPTIONS

Piano technology - along with innate genius - helped Schubert to transfigure the Lied, or German art song, until then a domestic form of entertainment. (Compare and contrast the perfectly solid setting of Erlkönig by Schubert's contemporary Carl Friedrich Zelter and the one by Schubert himself.) Schubert set poetry to which he could respond in music, regardless of its literary 'quality', so the poets he chose range from great figures like Goethe and Shakespeare to some of the more disreputable members of his social set in Vienna. But the acuity of his response to a text and its psychology was always illuminated by the piano writing in the accompaniment. At first glance, then - and in an age that values 'authentic' performance practice - Liszt's transcriptions of some 150 Schubert songs can seem, at the very least, to gild the lily. In fact, though, Liszt's intentions were by no means cynical; he was genuinely trying to bring this neglected music to a wider audience. His musical elaborations are usually in the service of illustrating the imagery of the text. and in fact he prints the text in his own scores to encourage the performer to do likewise.

The four pieces we hear today are from the transcriptions of 12 Lieder S558, that Liszt made in 1837 and 1838, and published them in the latter year.

Schubert's Der Wanderer was composed in 1816 and sets a lyric by Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck that charts the familiar story of alienation. The Wanderer is exiled from his mountain homeland, and find himself on a cold and joyless shore. Schubert's music is fairly spare, gaining momentum in the central section before returning to the hopelessness of the opening. Liszt ups the ante somewhat, introducina a pianistic cadenza before the melody is introduced, and adding some frankly picturesque touches: the roaring of the sea in the poem becomes a rolling figure deep in the piano's bass; the spectres who mock the wanderer are represented by spooky tremolos; the joy he will never regain is ironically accompanied by a rippling arpeggio. For dramatic effect, Liszt also exaggerates the progressively faster tempo markings in Schubert's original.



A portrait of Liszt in 1839, by Henri Lehmann (1814–1882)

# SCHUBERT'S SONGS AND LISZT'S TRANSCRIPTIONS

The Ständchen von Shakespeare is in fact a morning song (not a Ständchen or serenade) from the play Cymbeline. Schubert set a simple translation of Shakespeare's short verse with its imagery of the sun-god arising and the earth winking with dew; after his death a publisher commissioned two extra verses from poet Friedrich Reil, whose imagery licensed Liszt to extend his transcription. At first Liszt contents himself with octave displacements of chirping motifs to evoke the morning lark, but things get rather more florid in the second verse as the stars of heaven watch over the maid that that poet is trying to wake.

Gretchen am Spinnrade is a setting from Goethe's Faust that portrays Gretchen's yearning for Faust and her fear of heartbreak. The rippling piano figurations in the right hand represent the motion of Gretchen's spinning wheel, while the left hand gives out a constant heartbeat over a simple bass line. The vocal line is supported by these inexorably repetitive figures, until the moment where Gretchen imagines Faust's kiss. At this point, the music stops, but this is a false climax: later in the sona, where Gretchen sings 'If I could die kissing him' the vocal line reaches its top note, but just as Gretchen's love is unrequited. the music sinks back to the original phrase. Liszt shows considerable restraint in his transcription. keeping the vocal line mostly on top (in other songs it migrates through the texture), and merely adding extra harmonic weight at the moments representing extremes of Gretchen's distress.

Count Leopold zu Stolberg-Stolberg was a Danishborn diplomat and minor poet. He wrote *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (To be sung on the water) for his second wife in 1782; in the first stanza, a boat drifts in the fading evening light; the second evokes the surround grove at sunset; the third sets the poet thinking of his own soul taking wing and vanishing. Liszt begins with the vocal line in the tenor, moving to the alto register in the second verse and the top line in the third, where he also adds in to extra high notes to depict the soul's final flight. Liszt then adds a fourth stanza, in which his bravura pianism is unrestrained, and which serves as a reminder of how the instrument had developed even in the comparatively short time since Schubert's death.

# **RACHMANINOV AND HIS PRELUDES**

Western music since the late 18th century has been built on a system of tuning known as equal temperament, which makes each major or minor scale sound just like any other. JS Bach was an early adopter of something like modern temperament, and in his two books of *The Well-tempered Clavier*, showed that Preludes and Fugues could be written in all twelve major and minor keys. A century or more later, Chopin would do something similar with his 24 Preludes, each in its unique key.

Sergei Rachmaninov wrote his first published Prelude in the early 1890s as part of his Op.3 and soon wished he hadn't, as the C-sharp minor piece soon became the one and only piece that audiences wanted to hear him play. Nevertheless, he persisted, writing a set of 10 preludes in different keys between 1901 and 1903 which he published as Op.23, and then, in 1910, completing the 'set' of 24 with the 13 Preludes Op.32.

Around this time, the composer noted that:

A prelude, in its very nature, is absolute music, and cannot with propriety be twisted into a tone-poem or a piece of musical impressionism...Absolute music can suggest or induce a mood in the listener; but its primal function is to give intellectual pleasure by the beauty and variety of its form.

Thus each of the 13 Preludes is a self-contained work, though in several we hear a version of a rhythmic motif (long-short-long) that sounds like a canter at speed, but played slower evokes the *siciliana* that we have met in Schubert.

The pieces vary in form and substance, each exploring particular sound worlds. The first four are fast, beginning with an *Allegro vivace* that begins and ends in C major but immediately become feverishly turbulent and chromatic. A cantering *Allegretto* follows, issuing in a faster section with much florid right hand writing. An E major *Allegro vivace* evokes a sunny Baroque atmosphere, with running semiquavers occasionally interrupted by chords, while the



Rachmaninov in 1921 Photo by Kubey-Rembrandt Studios

# **RACHMANINOV AND HIS PRELUDES**

Allegro con brio is full of dramatic contrasts, sudden changes of metre, finally breaking into something like a wild 9/8 tarantella.

A G-major *Moderato* lowers the temperature with a simple Chopinesque melody unfolding over rippling left hand arpeggios, before an F minor *Allegro appassionato* full of terse motifs and a powerful ebb and flow.

Another *Moderato*, in F major and driven by syncopated rhythms and rising patterns of rapid notes, contrasts with a A-minor *Vivo* where a constant band of sound from the right hand supports motifs sounded at the extremes of the piano's range.

The Allegro moderato in A major has a long, lyrical bass-line harmonised in the upper parts over rippling figures in the middle register; this activity moves to the top of the range in the second half of the piece.

A *Lento* in B minor and *Allegretto* in B major both stem from the dotted rhythm motif. The B-minor piece unfolds gradually but builds to moments of great emphasis before a flourish and reprise, while the B-major piece cultivates an antique air of simple lyricism.

The set comes to a close with a delicate, shimmering *Allegro* in G sharp minor that sets the scene for the substantial D flat piece. This begins *Grave* (very slowly) but consists of several contrasting sections in different keys that each build up and release great tension before an unequivocal *Grave* ending.

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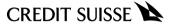




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