

Ilkley Concert Club



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**NORIKO OGAWA
and
PETER DONOHOE
pianos**



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PROGRAMME

Milhaud

Scaramouche, op 165b

Debussy

En blanc et noir

Ravel

La Valse

INTERVAL

Rachmaninov

Suite no. 1 op 5 (nos. 1&2)

Rachmaninov

Symphonic dances, op 45

PROGRAMME NOTES

DARIUS MILHAUD
(1892-1974)

Scaramouche, op 165b

Vif

Modéré

Brazileira: mouvement de samba

This suite for piano duo is, for the most part, a re-working of incidental music which Milhaud had composed for a production by Théâtre Scaramouche of Molière's *Le Médecin volant* (*The Flying Doctor*). It was commissioned by French virtuoso and teacher Marguerite Long in 1937 to play with her students.

The music is infused with the rhythms of Brazil which Milhaud had first encountered whilst working at the French embassy in Rio de Janeiro during the First World War. The first movement (*Vif*) uses polytonality (playing in multiple keys simultaneously) and Brazilian-style syncopation to evoke popular folk songs (including Ten Green Bottles). The *Modéré* cleverly combines canon and ostinato (repetition of musical phrases) whilst the concluding *Brazileira* may be familiar as the theme tune of saxophonist Jess Gillam's *This Classical Life* on BBC Radio 3.

The Jewish Milhaud's music was banned by the Nazis. A performance of the suite was given, uneventfully, in occupied Paris in 1943 after the performers used anagrams to disguise it; the suite was advertised as *Mous Are-chac* by *Hamid-al-Usurid*.

Last performance at ICC 29/09/1954 Duration: approx. 10 minutes

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1810-1849)

En blanc et noir

Avec emportement

Lent. Sombre

Scherzando

Debussy composed *En Blanc et Noir* (*In Black and White*) in just sixteen days in 1915, during a vacation on the Normandy coast. Although he was suffering the initial effects of the cancer which would kill him, Debussy, a passionate French patriot, was buoyed by his confidence that the war would end imminently in defeat for those he called the 'Austro-Boches'. However, Debussy would die in Paris

in March 1918 to the sound of a bombardment which seemed very likely at the time to herald German victory.

The suite is filled with personal, literary and musical allusions, many of which have never been fully deciphered. It opens with a lively waltz in C major headed by a quotation from the libretto of Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette* – 'He who stays in his place and does not dance, quietly admits to a disgrace' – possibly a reference to the composer's own distress at being prevented by his illness from fighting. The second movement, marked *Lent: Sombre*, is dedicated to a friend who had recently been killed in the war. Luther's German hymn *Ein Feste Burg* is used to militaristic and rather sinister effect and is set against the *Marseillaise*, which is almost hidden within chromatic mists. Dedicated to Igor Stravinsky, the final *Scherzando* in D major opens with bright, scurrying figures that lighten the mood a little, although a sense of struggle persists to the very end.

Debussy told a friend that he sought in this music to capture the subtle greys which the great Spanish painter, Velazquez, had achieved in his portraits by shading black and white. The composer's conservative older colleague, Camille Saint-Saëns, had another style of art in mind in his review of the first performance: 'We must at all costs bar the doors ... against a man capable of such atrocities; they should be put next to the cubist pictures.'

Last performance at ICC 07/03/2001 Duration: approx. 16 minutes

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

La Valse

La Valse exists in three versions – including this one for two pianos – all composed between December 1919 and March 1920. Conceived as a ballet, it was rejected by Diaghilev who described the work as 'a masterpiece... but it's not a ballet ... it's a portrait of a ballet.' The two men never worked together again. It has subsequently been choreographed by George Balanchine and Sir Frederick Ashton.

Ravel prefaces the score with a vivid scenario: 'Whirling clouds give glimpses, through rifts, of couples dancing. The clouds scatter, little by little. One sees an immense hall peopled with a twirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth, fortissimo. An imperial court, in or about

1855.’ From murmurings in the bass eventually emerges a waltz rhythm that gradually becomes more frenzied, relentlessly driving the dance towards its dark, dramatic conclusion; the very last bars are the only ones in the score not in waltz time.

Ravel always denied that the work was a musical metaphor for the catastrophe visited on Austrian society and culture by the First World War. However, it is difficult to argue with the composer George Benjamin’s view that the work ‘plots the birth, decay and destruction of a musical genre: the waltz.’

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 12 minutes

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

SERGEI RACHMANINOV
(1873-1943)

Suite no. 1 op 5 (nos. 1&2)

Barcarolle

La nuit... L'amour...

Rachmaninov composed this suite for two pianos (also known as the *Fantaisie Tableaux*) only a year after graduating from the Moscow Conservatory in 1893. He dedicated it to Tchaikovsky and it was premiered by the composer and Ravel Pabst in Moscow later the same year and only a month after Tchaikovsky’s death.

The piece comprises four vivid and magical soundscapes of which we will hear the first two. The published score includes the full texts of the poems which directly inspired the music. The first movement (*Barcarolle*) is an *Allegretto* in G minor. Lermontov’s poem and the music evoke the melancholy of lost love: ‘The gondola glides through the water, and time glides over the surge of love; / The water will grow smooth again and passion will rise no more.’ The pianos combine to capture an almost symphonic depth of colour.

The second movement (*La nuit... L'amour...*) takes us deeper into the nightscape. In the opening bars, we hear a nightingale in the interval of a falling major third. The ecstatic climax captures the essence of Byron’s verse: ‘It is the hour when lovers’ vows / Seem sweet in every whisper’d word / And gentle winds and waters near / Make music to the lonely ear...’

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 12 minutes

SERGEI RACHMANINOV
(1873-1943)

Symphonic dances, op 45

Non Allegro

Andante con moto. Tempo di Valse

Lento assai—Allegro vivace

Rachmaninov's final major work and the only one composed entirely in the USA, the Symphonic Dances combine energetic rhythmic sections, characteristic of the composer's late style and reminiscent of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, with lush, if at times uneasy, harmonies. Self-quotations are scattered throughout the score. The arrangement for two pianos was composed concurrently with the orchestral version and first performed by the composer and Vladimir Horowitz at a private party in Beverly Hills, California in August 1942. Rachmaninov certainly intended the orchestral version as a ballet, but his plans came nothing following the death of choreographer Michel Fokine in 1942. Following Rachmaninov's death, it has been choreographed numerous times.

The three movements were initially given titles ('Noon', 'Twilight' and 'Midnight') intended to signify the stages of life, but these were dropped before publication. The first movement is in traditional sonata form. The pulsating opening rhythms are followed by a more subdued development permeated with nostalgic yearning. The movement ends with quotation from the composer's First Symphony, the disastrous premiere of which affected Rachmaninov's mental health for years. The second movement (titled 'Dusk' in early sketches) is an extended, melancholy waltz even though the typical $\frac{3}{4}$ beat never appears. The percussive character of the piano is to the fore in the final movement, which drives forward with sparkling dance rhythms, several derived from Spanish dances such as the *jota* and the *seguidilla*. Towards the end, the medieval chant, *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath), which had fascinated the composer throughout his career (he used it for the first time in the First Symphony) struggles against a motif from the choral All-night Vigil (1915) which accompanies a text describing the discovery of Christ's empty tomb. At the very moment in the score where this 'Resurrection' theme finally triumphs, Rachmaninov wrote a single word – 'Hallelujah'.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 36 minutes

NORIKO OGAWA

‘Ogawa responds to every fleeting whimsicality with such clarity and refinement that you are just lost in wonder.’ Bryce Morrison (Gramophone) Since her success at the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1987, **Noriko Ogawa** has achieved considerable renown throughout the world for her ‘ravishingly poetic playing’ (Telegraph). Acclaim for her Debussy series with BIS records by Roger Vignoles of BBC Radio 3 Record Review confirms Noriko as a Debussy specialist, with the following memorable recommendation, ‘If you like your Debussy to sound like the musical equivalent of a chilled white wine, Noriko Ogawa is the pianist for you’!

As an exclusive recording artist for BIS Noriko boasts a prolific catalogue of over 30 discs. Her most recent recordings released last year were of music by Xiaogang Ye with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the 5th volume of Eric Satie’s piano music. Her earlier recording of Takemitsu’s *Riverrun* was Editor’s Choice in Gramophone Magazine and her disc of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures from an Exhibition* was the Critic’s Choice of BBC Music Magazine.

In the 2021/22 season Noriko’s performances included concerts with the BBCSO at the Barbican Centre, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and solo and duo recitals in her home town at the Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall, where she is artistic adviser. During the current season highlights include performances at the London Piano Festival at Kings Place, St David’s Hall with saxophonist Huw Wiggins, a Rachmaninov concerto at the Rubinstein Competition and a concert with the English Symphony Orchestra.

Noriko is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Tokyo College of Music and Music Director of the Hamamatsu International Piano Academy. She is a visiting professor at the Royal College of Music, the Purcell School and Chetham’s International Piano Summer School.

Noriko regularly judges at international piano competitions including the Rubinstein, the Cleveland, the Leeds, the Scottish International, the Japan National, the International Edward Grieg Competition and the International Paderewski Competition. In 2018 Noriko was appointed Chairperson of the jury for Japan’s prestigious 10th Hamamatsu International Competition and was also elected to the board of the World Federation of International Music Competitions.

In 1999 the Japanese Ministry of Education awarded Noriko their Art Prize in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the cultural profile of Japan throughout the world. As a writer, Noriko published her first book in Japan and her Japanese translation of Susan Tomes’ book *Out of Silence: a pianist’s yearbook* has been reprinted by popular demand.

After the earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011, Noriko raised over £40,000 for the British Red Cross Japan Tsunami Fund. She also founded Jamie’s Concerts, a series for autistic children and their parents, and is a Cultural Ambassador for the National Autistic Society.

PETER DONOHOE

‘I cannot imagine a living pianist capable of improving upon Donohoe’s outstanding artistry’
Robert Matthew-Walker (Musical Opinion)

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953. He studied at Chetham’s School of Music and graduated from Leeds University. He went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod.

In recent seasons Peter has appeared with many major orchestras across the UK, Europe, Asia and America. Past and future engagements include performances of all three MacMillan piano concertos with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, a ‘marathon’ recital of Scriabin’s complete piano sonatas at Milton Hall, an all-Mozart series at Perth Concert Hall, concertos with the Moscow State Philharmonic and the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra and with the LPO at the Royal Festival Hall as well as a residency at the Buxton International Festival. In October last year he performed all four of the Rachmaninov piano concertos and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the St Cecilia Orchestra at Ripon Cathedral - a heroic tour de force over two consecutive nights!

Peter has appeared at many of the great music festivals including 6 consecutive visits to the Edinburgh festival, La Roque d’Antheron in the South of France and the Ruhr and Schleswig Holstein Festivals in Germany. He gives numerous recitals and continues working with his long standing duo partner, Martin Roscoe, as well as with Raphael Wallfisch, Elizabeth Watts and Noriko Ogawa.

Like Noriko, Peter Donohoe is in high demand as a jury member for international competitions. He has performed that duty at some of the world’s most prestigious events including the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow, the Busoni International Competition in Italy, the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels, the Georges Enescu in Bucharest, the Hong Kong International, the Artur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition, the Concours de Genève and the Alaska International e-Competition!

Peter Donohoe’s most recent discs are 2 volumes of Mozart Piano Sonatas. Other recent recordings include Stravinsky’s Music for Solo Piano and Piano and Orchestra with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, a new recording of Shostakovich’s Piano Concertos and Sonatas with the Orchestra of the Swan, and a disc of Scriabin’s Piano Sonatas, ‘magnificent’ (Sunday Times). Peter’s 3 disc set of Prokofiev Piano Sonatas has also garnered great reviews: the first was described as ‘devastatingly effective’ by Gramophone, the second was given 5 stars by BBC Music Magazine and the third was highly praised by The Times, the Birmingham Post and the author and journalist, Jessica Duchon.

Peter Donohoe is an honorary Doctor of Music at 7 UK Universities and was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the 2010 New Year’s Honours List.

CLUB NOTES

April's unforgettable experience

Last month's concert by Rachel Podger and VOCES8 was one of the most eagerly awaited and most popular concert for single tickets possibly ever. The Club really appreciated all those members who found they were unable to attend and returned their tickets. This enabled us to satisfy all the extra demand. Enormous thanks go to Lindsey Wharmby who for the last nine months managed the steady stream of requests for tickets.

The artists' agent wrote afterwards *'The team were thrilled to have the opportunity of performing the programme for your audience in person, most especially given your support through Covid and the postponement. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.'*

Help Musicians

The tradition at our May concert that the Club holds a collection for Help Musicians continues again. If you wish to donate we are providing two ways. Gift aid envelopes are available in the Hall which can be dropped into collection buckets on the way out. Alternatively you can donate online through JustGiving visiting this donation page.

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/ilkley-concert-club-may-2023-appeal>

The last year has seen live music make a wonderful return, however the cost of living crisis has continued to make life tough for many. Supporting Help Musicians makes a meaningful difference to the lives of musicians across the UK. The charity offers a wide spectrum of support, which includes financial help to student, working and retired musicians, health & welfare services and a mental health helpline.

Chris Skidmore, Chair

Ilkley Concert Club

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- 8 Nov 2023** **Kitty Whately** (mezzo-soprano) and
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featuring German lieder and English songs
- 13 Dec 2023** **Septura** (brass ensemble)
featuring a Christmas theme
- 10 Jan 2024** **Benjamin Grosvenor** (piano)
to include Liszt Piano sonata in B minor
- 14 Feb 2024** **Lumas Winds** (wind quintet)
to include Elizabeth Maconchy Wind Quintet
- 13 Mar 2024** **Hélène Clément** (viola) and
Alasdair Beatson (piano)
to include works by Bridge, Britten and Clarke
- 17 Apr 2024** **Maxwell Quartet** (string quartet)
to include works by Haydn and Beethoven
- 8 May 2024** **Katya Apekisheva** and
Charles Owen (piano duo)
to include works by Ravel, Stravinsky, Fauré, Holst

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