

Ilkley Concert Club



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MISHKA RUSHDIE MOMEN piano



Wednesday 9th October 2024
King's Hall

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PROGRAMME

Schubert

Sonata in A minor, D784

Byrd

Prelude and Fantasia in A minor

Mendelssohn

Variations sérieuses, op 54

INTERVAL

Janáček

On an Overgrown Path, Book 1 (selection)

Schubert

Fantasie in C major, D760

PROGRAMME NOTES

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

Sonata in A minor, D784
Allegro giusto
Andante
Allegro vivace

The A minor sonata was composed in February 1823 at a bleak, intensely unhappy time in Schubert's life when he had been diagnosed with the syphilis that would eventually kill him. While the sonata is not consciously programmatic, its overall tone frequently gives the impression that Schubert is angrily fighting the inevitable and it is certainly true to say that, more than almost any other composer, his state of mind is reflected in his music.

The sonata's austere first movement employs a sparse, angular texture. The sombre mood is accentuated by a tremolo motif and a reiterated bass rhythm, reminiscent of a tolling bell. The calmer and more approachable *Andante* second movement is increasingly unsettled by a series of modulations which lead to a precipitous *Allegro vivace* third movement with groups of triplets alternating with a dance-like second subject. The movement reaches a ferocious conclusion in a flurry of double octaves.

The A minor sonata was written three months after the 'Wanderer' Fantasy and while the two works are very different they have one important feature in common; neither seems to take any account of the technical limitations of the piano, leading some critics to posit that both works were, in fact, conceived in orchestral rather than pianistic terms. Whatever the reason, publishers showed little interest in the sonata until 1839 when Anton Diabelli published it, together with Schubert's final three sonatas, dedicating it to Mendelssohn.

Last performance at ICC 04/12/1974

Duration: approx. 23 minutes

WILLIAM BYRD
(ca 1540–1623)

Prelude and Fantasia in A minor
from The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book
Praeludium to the Fancie FVB100 : BK12
Fantasia in A minor FVB52 : BK13

William Byrd is regarded as one of England's greatest composers. He came to prominence during the reign of Elizabeth I and James I

when he established himself as the foremost composer of the day, excelling in every known genre and leaving an astonishing corpus of vocal, instrumental and keyboard works.

Byrd's influential output for keyboard was radically new in both spirit and technique. Much of it was composed for two collections, *My Ladye Nevell's Booke* (1591) and the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, compiled between 1562 and 1612. This manuscript is our primary source of early English keyboard music. It comprises 298 pieces composed for keyboard (virginals, clavichord or small harpsichord) by the leading composers of the time. Byrd contributed about sixty pieces, including the *Praeludium* and *Fantasia*.

The strings on early keyboard instruments are plucked, rather than struck (as on a piano) and there is no sustaining capability or pedals. Stylistic variety is achieved through florid writing, ornamentation and structural and rhythmic diversity, all of which Byrd uses to great effect in the *Fantasia*.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 9 minutes

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Variations sérieuses, op 54

After writing sets of piano variations in the 1820s, Mendelssohn eschewed the genre until 1841 when he was asked by the Viennese publisher Mechetti to contribute to an 'Album-Beethoven', intended to raise money towards erecting a statue of Beethoven in Bonn. After learning that other leading musicians, including Chopin and Liszt, were contributing to the album, Mendelssohn agreed and began a set of variations that he called *Variations sérieuses*. These variations are the only work in a strict Classical form in the collection and also the most substantial, contrasting with the impromptus, nocturnes and other Romantic styles that dominate. In a letter of July 1841, Mendelssohn explains the work's title; his aim was to forego the light, showy variation style then popular in favour of thematic invention and development in the styles of Bach and Beethoven. The result is Mendelssohn's most important contribution to the nineteenth-century piano repertoire and to the variation repertoire in general.

The work comprises the D minor theme followed by seventeen variations and a coda. The solemn character of the theme and its structure and chromatic harmony remains more or less constant throughout, with notable

exceptions providing brilliant colour and dramatic effects. The variations are often linked together by elisions (e.g. variations 1-4) or by motifs and textures (e.g. variations 8-9) and, as the work progresses, considerable demands are made on the performer's technique. Each of the final three variations flow into the next in an increasingly virtuosic style before the brilliant final Presto.

The *Variations sérieuses* won high praise from Mendelssohn's contemporaries. Schumann and Moscheles greatly admired the work and Brahms, Franck and Bartók all acknowledged its influence.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 11 minutes

INTERVAL

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

LÉOS JANÁČEK **On an Overgrown Path, Book I (selection)**
(1865–1928)

I. Our evenings

IX. In tears

X. The barn owl has not flown away!

Janáček's reputation as a composer rests chiefly on his operas, several of which, such as *Jenůfa* and *The cunning little vixen* have entered the mainstream repertoire, together with the *Glagolitic Mass* and the orchestral *Sinfonietta*. His relatively small output of works for piano was chiefly written between the 1880s and the beginning of the 1914-18 war.

The first five pieces of Book 1 of *On an overgrown path*, were originally written for harmonium and date from 1901. The cycle was completed in 1908 as ten piano pieces and published in 1911 (when Janáček probably composed the five pieces that comprise Book 2). The overall title refers to a wedding song from Moravian folk poetry suggesting times gone by. Janáček gave the individual pieces their present titles, saying that the 'little pieces... contain reminiscences [that] are so dear to me that I do not think they will ever vanish.'

The programmatic titles express a wide range of emotions. Of the three pieces being performed tonight, the structure of *Our evenings* is

said to represent a domestic evening that begins peacefully but develops into a fierce marital argument! *In tears* has the most specifically programmatic title of the cycle written, as it was, following the death of Janáček's daughter Olga at the age of twenty-one. The final piece *The Barn Owl...* continues the theme of the fleeting existence of life, with the owl (a harbinger of death in Moravian folk-lore) represented by a minor third, an interval used in Italian opera to signify death.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 9 minutes

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Fantasia in C major, D760

The *Fantasia in C major*, popularly known as the 'Wanderer', dates from the autumn of 1822. Of all Schubert's piano works, the 'Wanderer' Fantasy makes the heaviest demands on the pianist's virtuoso technique and stamina. Schubert himself could never get through it; a biographer records that, at a certain point, he would rise from the piano and 'furiously invoke infernal aid'. Presumably its dedicatee, Carl Emanuel Liebenberg von Zsittin, was a brilliant pianist as the work is a technically formidable challenge to any performer.

The structure of the Fantasy is unusual. It is designed as a single movement combining sonata form with theme-and-variations, but containing within it the contrasts normally found within a four-movement sonata. The four sections, *Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo*, *Adagio*, *Presto* and *Allegro* lead into each other without a break and are based on a motif derived from the opening phrase of Schubert's 1816 song *Der Wanderer*, D489. This is most clearly heard in the *Adagio* where the phrase is quoted almost exactly. As the work progresses, the motif is constantly transformed: in the first movement it is used as the subject of a sonata form; in the second as the basis for a set of brilliant variations; as part of a magnificent scherzo-like third movement and in the fourth as the basis of a fugue that opens with the dactylic rhythm of the work's opening bars. This device of thematic transformation was later exploited by Liszt. He was fascinated by the 'Wanderer' Fantasy which exerted a strong influence on his single-movement *Sonata in B minor*, S178.

First performance at ICC

Duration: approx. 22 minutes

MISHKA RUSHDIE MOMEN

piano

For the opening recital of the 2024-2025 season we have the great pleasure of welcoming Mishka Rushdie Momen to Ilkley for her debut recital in the King's Hall. No less a critic than Richard Morrison in *The Times* wrote that she is 'One of the most thoughtful and sensitive of British pianists...'. Furthermore Miranda Heggie, in an article from theartsdesk.com, wrote that Mishka has 'an innate musical sensibility combined with true technical brilliance', so it looks as if we're in for a stimulating and enjoyable evening tonight. Mishka's wide repertoire focuses on Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, while reaching back to Gibbons and Rameau. Committed to performing new music Mishka Rushdie Momen has commissioned works by Nico Muhly and Vijay Iyer, and premiered *An inviting object* by Heloise Werner at the Lucerne Summer Festival in 2022.

Her current recital season takes her to the Portland Piano International Series, Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Music in the Round, SJE Arts in Oxford and a return visit to The Maestro Foundation in Santa Monica along with her appearance here tonight. Previous seasons have included performances at the Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Lucerne Festival, Zurich Tonhalle, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Antwerp deSingel, Leeds International Piano Series, Oxford Piano Festival, the Phillips Collection in Washington DC and New York's 92Y.

Mishka studied with Joan Havill and Imogen Cooper at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She also studied periodically with Richard Goode, and at the Kronberg Academy with Sir Andras Schiff, who has presented her in recital and orchestral dates across the USA and Europe. From October 2018 until summer 2021 Mishka Rushdie Momen's studies on the Sir Andras Schiff Performance Programme for young pianists at the Kronberg Academy were generously funded by the Henle Scholarship of Stichting Horizon.

Equally at home as a chamber musician, Mishka's chamber partners include Guy Johnston, Zlatomir Fung, Joshua Bell, Midori, Angela Hewitt, Stephen Waarts, Timothy Ridout and Anthony Marwood,

with Festival performances including Rheingau Festival, Hindsgavl, Chipping Campden, Trasimeno Festival, the new Casals Forum at Kronberg and IMS Prussia Cove. 2023/24 further saw collaborations with Steven Isserlis as well as new partnerships with musicians including Alasdair Beatson, Mark Padmore and Heloise Werner, with concerts at Wigmore Hall, Kings Place and Bozar in Brussels. Further highlights of the 2023/24 season included debuts with London Philharmonic Orchestra performing Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto, Turku Philharmonic Orchestra with Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 23, and Mannheim Chamber Orchestra performing Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 9 and Haydn's Piano Concerto no. 4. Notable orchestral engagements to date include playing with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss, Orchestre National d'Île de France, Britten Sinfonia and directing Mozart K271 from the piano with Luzerner Sinfonieorchester.

Mishka's debut solo recording, *Variations*, was released in October 2019 by SOMM Recordings, and featured works by Robert and Clara Schumann, Brahms and Mendelssohn. She was *The Times* Arts critics' chosen nominee in the field of classical music for their 2021 Breakthrough award, given by Sky Arts and The South Bank Show, who profiled her for an episode of the programme broadcast in July 2021. Her latest recording, released this July, *Reformation*, which features music by William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, John Bull and Jan Sweelinck, became Hyperion's Record of the month, and reached number one in July this year in the UK Specialist Classical Chart. Reviews are glowing, illustrated by this comment in *The Spectator*: 'Mishka Rushdie Momen (is) one of this country's most gifted and intellectually curious young concert pianists'.

Finally, one quotation that caught my attention, by Steve Draper, on bachtrack.com, who noted that 'her ability to swap from gripping muscular power to graceful tenderness showed why she has won such acclaim in the last two years'. With that in mind we can surely enjoy this evening's programme with relish.

Compiled by Paul Hurst

CLUB NOTES

Welcome

A warm welcome to all members and friends to the first concert of our 78th season. We are not fully subscribed for the season so if you know of any friends who thought they would not get in or are new to the area and are keen to experience the world class chamber music we attract to Ilkley please ask them to contact Pam Harris our membership secretary at admin@ilkleyconcertclub.org.uk.

Returned Seats

Although we have a few more seats available to sell at each concert please continue to let us know if you can not attend as members returned seats enable us extend the opportunity to enjoy our wonderful artists to as wide an audience as possible and give the artists that 'Full House' experience.

CD Stall

You may have noticed the significant lack of a CD Stall in the Winter Garden as you arrived today, or during the interval. Back in 2004 Tony Hudson started the CD Stall and ran it until 2022 when Julian and Alison Roberts took over. Thanks to their efforts, members (mainly) donations and concert goers purchases the Stall raised £17,051 which has been added to the Club's Piano Fund. Unfortunately due to both the lack of a volunteer to take on the job and the diminishing desire for CDs we have had to take the decision not to continue with the stall.

However we still have a stock of CDs—watch this space for an announcement in due course about how we propose to deal with the stock.

AGM Reminder—before the December Concert

This year, in response to an observation at our 2023 AGM, we have moved our AGM from before the November concert to before the December concert to accommodate a number of the committee members who are unable to attend in November.

Chris Skidmore, Chair

NEXT CONCERT

WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024

Concert 7:30pm

CHLOË HANSLIP violin

DANNY DRIVER piano



Bach

Violin sonata in E major,
BWV 1016

Beethoven

Sonata for violin and piano no.
7 in C minor, op 30 no. 2

Lili Boulanger

*Nocturne and D'un matin de
printemps*

Franck

Sonata in A major for violin
and piano

Ticket Sales

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Members

Please let Lindsey know in good time if you can't come.

Ilkley Concert Club

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