

WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 13 January 2022 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Dmitry Shishkin piano

CLASSIC *f*M Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



Supported by CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

2 Pictures Op. 10 (1910) *transcribed by Zoltán Kocsis*
In Full Flower • Village Dance

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Concerto pathétique S258 (pub. 1866)
Allegro energico - Grandioso - Andante sostenuto - Allegro agitato assai - Andante, quasi marcia funebre - Allegro trionfante

Interval

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Nocturnes (1897-9) *transcribed by Maurice Ravel*
Nuages • Fêtes • Sirènes transcribed by Zoltán Kocsis

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

La valse (1919-20)

Welcome back to Wigmore Hall

We are grateful to our Friends and donors for their generosity as we rebuild a full series of concerts in 2021/22 and reinforce our efforts to reach audiences everywhere through our broadcasts. To help us present inspirational concerts and support our community of artists, please make a donation by visiting our website:

Wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate. Every gift is making a difference. Thank you.

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG

Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Béla Bartók composed his *2 Pictures* Op. 10 in 1910, just before writing *Bluebeard's Castle*. This was a period in his musical development when he was under the spell of Debussy, and influenced by other contemporary composers including Delius. Bartók had met him at a performance of Delius's *Brigg Fair* in May 1910 and though they were polar opposites in many ways, they began a friendly correspondence about folk music and its influence on their work. Bartók offered to send Delius some Romanian folksongs, and it is these that are most apparent in the *2 Pictures*. The first, 'In Full Flower', is rhapsodic, with hints of folksong and pentatonic scales, decorated with birdsong. There is harmonic adventurousness too: chords built on the intervals of a fourth, and a closing section coloured by Debussy-like washes of whole-tone scales. The second, 'Village Dance', is more overtly inspired by the folk dances Bartók heard in Transylvania. The opening theme, heard in bare octaves, dominates this rondo in which two further ideas provide contrast. As David Cooper wrote in his biography of Bartók, the music 'sounds unforced and entirely sympathetic to its source of inspiration'. Originally written for orchestra, Bartók made a solo piano arrangement published in 1912. The present version for two pianos was made by the great Bartók pianist **Zoltán Kocsis** (1952–2016) and published in 1978.

Franz Liszt composed a *Grosses Concert-Solo* for solo piano in 1849–50, returning to the same material in 1866 to create the *Concerto pathétique* for two pianos. The highly original structure is a single movement which encompasses elements of a multi-movement work. The most famous example in Liszt of this formal innovation is the Sonata in B minor (1853), but the *Concerto pathétique* is similarly imaginative in design. For a time, Liszt toyed with arranging it for piano and orchestra but never completed this (his pupil Eduard Reuss did, with Liszt's assistance), so the *Concerto pathétique* stands as his most significant work for two pianos. The vigorous opening *Allegro energico* in E minor reaches a triumphal climax, marked *Grandioso* which gives way after a brief cadenza to the *Andante sostenuto* in D flat major. This reaches a majestic peak before the *Allegro agitato assai*, a development and transformation of the themes already presented. The closing section begins with an *Andante, quasi marcia funebre*, but this soon becomes freer and more rhapsodic before an *Allegro trionfante* brings this work to a blazing conclusion in E major.

Claude Debussy completed the *Nocturnes* in December 1899 and the first two movements ('Nuages' and 'Fêtes') were performed in December 1900. The complete première (with 'Sirènes') followed in October 1901. Before 'Sirènes' had even been heard, Ravel was asked to make an arrangement of it for

two pianos, with the other pieces arranged by Raoul Bardac (Debussy's stepson) who had been encouraged to undertake the transcription by Debussy himself. As the Debussy scholar Denis Herlin has pointed out, Ravel's arrangement earned him a copy of the full score of the *Nocturnes* inscribed 'to Maurice Ravel, in true sympathy, Claude Debussy, April 1901'. In 1909, Ravel returned to the *Nocturnes*, probably using his 1901 version of 'Sirènes' and adding his own versions of 'Nuages' and 'Fêtes'. The complete Ravel version was performed by Ravel and Louis Aubert at a concert of the Société musicale indépendante on 24 April 1911. Ravel admitted that the most difficult piece to arrange had been 'Sirènes', and tonight's performance uses the later transcription of this movement made by Zoltán Kocsis. Debussy wrote in 1901 that the *Nocturnes* were intended to convey 'all the various impressions and special effects of light that the title suggests' – in other words, the inspiration was more from Whistler's *Nocturnes* than from Chopin's. 'Nuages' evoked a walk across one of the bridges over the Seine on a stormy day. Debussy told a friend that he envisaged 'thunderclouds swept along by a blustery wind, and a boat passing by'. 'Fêtes' was inspired by noisy crowds celebrating in the Bois de Boulogne, and – in the central section – a procession with the band of the Garde républicaine. Debussy himself summarised 'Sirènes' as a depiction of 'the sea and its countless rhythms; then, among the waves made silver by the moonlight, is heard the mysterious song of the Sirens.'

Ravel composed *La valse* in 1919–20 and the composer's own version for two pianos was used for a private performance given at the home of Misia Sert, before the work's public première (in its orchestral version) on 12 December 1921. Ravel's apotheosis of the Viennese waltz was originally composed in versions for two pianos and solo piano, before he decided to orchestrate it. A small gathering of friends met at Misia's house to hear the new work, including Sergei Diaghilev (who was considering staging it with the Ballets Russes), Stravinsky, and Poulenc, who left an eye-witness account: 'Ravel arrived without any fuss, his music under his arm, and Diaghilev said to him: "Well, my dear Ravel, what luck to hear *La valse*." And Ravel played it with Marcelle Meyer, probably not terribly well, but still it was *La valse*. ... When Ravel finished, Diaghilev made a remark that I thought was very acute: "Ravel, it's a masterpiece, but it's not a ballet. It's a portrait of a ballet." Stravinsky said *not one word!* I was dumbfounded, but it gave me the lesson of a lifetime in modesty, because Ravel picked up his music very calmly, without worrying what people thought of it, and went away quietly.'

© Nigel Simeone 2021

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.