

Cathedral Concert Society

Piano recital by **Riyad Nicolas**



Monday 8 October 2018 | Ripon Cathedral

www.riponconcerts.co.uk

Welcome

A very warm welcome to the start of the 2018–19 concert season, which follows a wonderful summer of music-making in Ripon and beyond. Large audiences have filled concert halls and other venues and demonstrate a huge appetite for classical music. We hope that the diet we have in store for the coming months will suit all tastes. As usual the programme is varied in terms of the groups of musicians and the music played.

Those of you who were unable to attend the AGM last month missed a wonderful talk by Professor Stephen Walsh on his new book *Debussy: A portrait in sound* which gave fascinating insights into the composer's life. The book is thoroughly recommended and copies are available at The Little Ripon Bookshop.

With the sounds of the recent Leeds International Piano Competition still ringing in our ears, I see that the 2105 winner, Anna Tsybuleva, who is well known to us, returns to Yorkshire on Friday 11 January for a recital for The British Music Society of York chamber concert series at the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall.

Another of our "alumni", the clarinettist Joseph Shiner, is performing in the same chamber concert series on Thursday 8 November.

This evening's concert is special not only for the performance we will hear but also in a wider context:

Riyad Nicolas and his violinist wife, Mariela Shaker, whom President Barack Obama named as a White House Champion of Change for World Refugees, are passionate about the role of music in people's lives. They are planning to run a series of music workshops for children in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. She explains, "many of the children in refugee camps have been exposed to many harsh and inhumane scenes. I want these children to feel the power of music and convey to them the idea that carrying a musical instrument is preferable to carrying a weapon".

There will be a retiring collection in support of this work at the end of the concert.

Roger Higson, Chairman

With grateful thanks to the following for their generous support:

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Non Members

Peter Hirschmann

And any others who have donated to the Society since this programme went to press.

Cathedral Concert Society

Patron: Julius Drake

Monday 8 October 2018 Piano recital by Riyad Nicolas

Programme:

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A flat, Op.110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Gaspard de la nuit (1908)

Ondine

Le Gibet

Scarbo

– interval –

During the interval refreshments will be available in the South Transept.

Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Presto non tanto

Liszt-Paganini

Grandes Etudes de Paganini, S.141: No. 6

Piano by courtesy of Making Music and the North West Piano Centre

we get on with



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Beethoven's last three sonatas were written together in 1820-22 in response to a commission from the publisher Schlesinger. This **A flat sonata**, the central sonata in the group, was the last to be delivered. Like many of the late works they contain fugues (think of the late string quartets) - there are two fugues in this sonata, both of them in its last movement. The sonata opens with a moderately-paced, very expressive, singing theme followed by a lightly-articulated but fast passage leading to the second group of themes. The structure is essentially conventional. However those with a need for excitement and experiment need look no further than the second movement, a *scherzo and trio* in duple rather than the normal triple time. It is very fast and sardonic. It is in the final movement that the meat is to be found. There is no formal "slow movement" as such but the *scherzo* links seamlessly into the almost operatic *recitative and arioso* which begins the final movement. There follows a three-part fugue which ultimately leads back to the *arioso*, now marked "exhausted". Then comes the second fugue with very detailed performance instructions, so that it gradually speeds up and loudens and becomes more lively and confident. It would not be late Beethoven if the structure of this final fugue did not include adjusted references to the first fugue and to the other movements. They are there to be heard.

Aloysius Bertrand's (1807-1841) collection of spooky prose poems, ***Gaspard de la Nuit***, was first published

in 1842 but few copies were sold. It gradually became known among the Paris cultural élite but it was not til 1895 that it was republished and became more widely known. Its 1908 reprint would have been the inspiration for **Ravel's** composition of these hair-raising pieces, what he described as "these three poems of transcendental virtuosity" (cf Liszt). Pianist Steven Osborne has confessed that, "among pianists, *Gaspard* has a fearsome reputation, one of the contenders for the title of Most Difficult Piano Piece Ever Written".

Ondine is the story of the water-nymph who falls in love with a human: the nymph inhabits a pianistic waterworld of continuously rippling figuration, water in which her tender melody is nevertheless always to be found swimming. The impression is of darkness, mystery, and a magical world of water.

Le Gibet (the gibbet) is the slow movement of this three-part quasi-sonata. It is a picture of desolation and misery, a musical landscape of the singular, breathtaking image of a lonely corpse "reddened by the setting sun".

Scarbo the malevolent dwarf was intended by Ravel to be impossibly difficult to play (harder, he said, than the notorious *Islamey* of Balakirev). It portrays the goblin who invades the poet in his sleep, scary and relentless and horrible. *Scarbo* is truly the work that represents transcendental virtuosity. The music is unbelievably difficult and seems very advanced and

dissonant for Ravel's time. Literally every key of the piano is used. Furthermore, the virtuoso elements become a vehicle for conveying the poetry, which like the music is frenetic and bizarre, almost hallucinogenic.

Gaspard received its first performance in 1909 by Ravel's friend, the virtuoso pianist Ricardo Viñes (Ravel himself could never have played it - far too difficult).

Chopin wrote his third and last piano sonata in 1844. The **Sonata in B minor** gives us the essence of Romantic music. The first and last movements have the character of a ballade, the second is a scherzo with trio, and the third is a nocturne. With the opening bars the pianist announces his presence and will conduct the listener with romantic clarity and purpose through this splendid sonata. Many attempts have been made to provide a narrative structure but it is better to listen and allow the music to tell its own story. The second movement is the scherzo and the third a night song.

The 24th Caprice of master violinist **Niccolò Paganini** must surely be the piece most often successfully subjected to variations by other composers. Brahms, Rachmaninov. Lloyd Webber, Alison Balsom and Ripon's own Philip Wilby have all used it to advantage. Wikipedia lists no fewer than 54 examples. Many instrumentalists, seeing how far Paganini himself had stretched his own virtuosity, decided to go one or more better, in effect saying, "I'll show them!" Liszt perhaps started the rot but

others such as Ysaÿe, Nathan Milstein, Marc-André Hamelin, Leopold Auer and Benny Goodman eagerly followed.

Liszt's offering is the last of his **Six Transcendental Studies after Paganini**, written in 1838-1840. His determination to become as great a piano virtuoso had stemmed from the experience of hearing Paganini on the violin in Paris in 1832. As with so many of his earlier compositions Liszt later revised this study (in 1851), simplifying and clarifying the textures (and in some cases reducing the terrifying stretches required in the original version). While not a transcription of Paganini's original, Liszt's version closely follows its structure and in many cases manages to reproduce in pianistic terms particular violinistic effects. There are eleven variations.

Riyad Nicolas piano

Syrian-British pianist Riyad Nicolas was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1989, and has already established himself as a leading figure of his generation on the international performing circuit. He has been complimented by such musicians as Daniel Barenboim, Vladimir Ashkenazy and John Lill.

Riyad has given solo recitals in many prestigious venues in London, including Royal Albert Hall, Cadogan Hall, Wigmore Hall, Barbican, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, St. James's Piccadilly, and Leighton House. Concert performances have also taken him to the USA including a debut at the Kennedy Center in Washington

and Chicago Cultural Center (Dame Myra Hess series), Yehudi Menuhin Forum in Switzerland and other concerts in France, Spain, Germany, the Gulf, Lebanon and Syria.

In the UK he is regularly invited to give recitals hosted by the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe and the Chopin Society UK, and has performed extensively for over 50 music societies in the UK and in numerous UK musical festivals.

Riyad made his first appearance as a soloist with an orchestra in Aleppo at the age of ten. Since then, he has performed with many orchestras including the London Chamber Orchestra at the Cadogan Hall, Emirate Symphony Orchestra in Dubai, Young Musician Symphony Orchestra at St. John's Smith Square, Todmorden Symphony Orchestra, the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra at the opening of the new Damascus Opera House, the Syrian Expat Orchestra as well as with the Gomidas Chamber Orchestra of Aleppo.

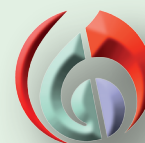
Riyad has been selected recently to be a Tillett Trust Young Artist and an artist at the Countess of Munster Trust Concert Scheme. He has won numerous international prizes and awards including First Prize with a recording contract at the Françaix International Piano Competition in Paris and the first prize at the Norah Sande Award in the UK, the Christopher Duke Recital Prize in the UK and the Ciutat de Carlet International Piano Competition in Spain. He also won Second Prize at the

Seiler International Piano Competition in Greece, Educational Award Prize at The London International Piano Competition and was a finalist at the Busoni International Piano Competition.

Besides solo performances, Riyad is also a keen chamber music player, and has performed regularly in duos with violin and flute, collaborating with artists including the eminent flautist Wissam Boustany.

Riyad first came to London in 2005 when he was awarded a two-year scholarship to study at the Purcell School of Music with Sulamita Aronovsky, continuing to work with her at the Royal Academy of Music, where he graduated in 2011. In June 2015, Riyad graduated with a distinction in a Master of Performance course at the Royal College of Music, studying with Dmitri Alexeev and Vanessa Latache, when he won the Gold Medal at the prestigious Chappell Piano Competition. Riyad also teaches piano at the Junior Department of Guildhall School of Music, Finchley Music School and Beethoven Music School.

Through music Riyad has been promoting peace and raising awareness for the plights of the Syrian people and performing for many organisations such as UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, the Arab British Centre, Said and Asfari Foundation.



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20 OCTOBER 2018 - 7.30PM

Brahms - Academic Festival Overture
Beethoven - Piano Concerto No. 5 (Soloist Peter Donohoe)
J S Bach - Piano Concerto in D minor (Soloist Peter Donohoe)
Brahms - Symphony No. 3 in F
Peter Donohoe will give a pre-concert talk for this concert at 6.15pm in the quire of the Cathedral.

Conductor: Xenophon Kelsey MBE - Concert sponsored by Trevor & Elizabeth Ingham

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM:

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Adults £20; Concessions £18; Students £5; Under 16's free

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Cathedral Concert Society

Recitals & chamber concerts in Ripon 2018-19

2018–19 season

All concerts at 7.30pm in
the quire of Ripon Cathedral
unless otherwise stated

The Music Serenade

Andrew Long *violin*

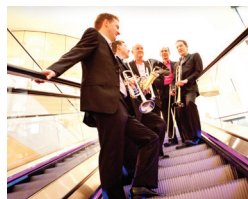
Robert Ashworth *horn*

Ian Buckle *piano*

Monday 12 November 2018



The Music Serenade



Benjamin Edouard

Onyx Brass Quintet

Onyx Brass Quintet

Monday 10 December 2018

St John's Church, Sharow



Dante String Quartet

Dante String Quartet

Monday 14 January 2019

Philip Smith *baritone*,

Julius Drake *piano*

Monday 11 February 2019



Helen Tabor

Philip Smith



Mario Bongiovanni

Julius Drake

Kammerphilharmonie

Europa

Monday 11 March 2019

Full details and online booking at www.riponconcerts.co.uk