

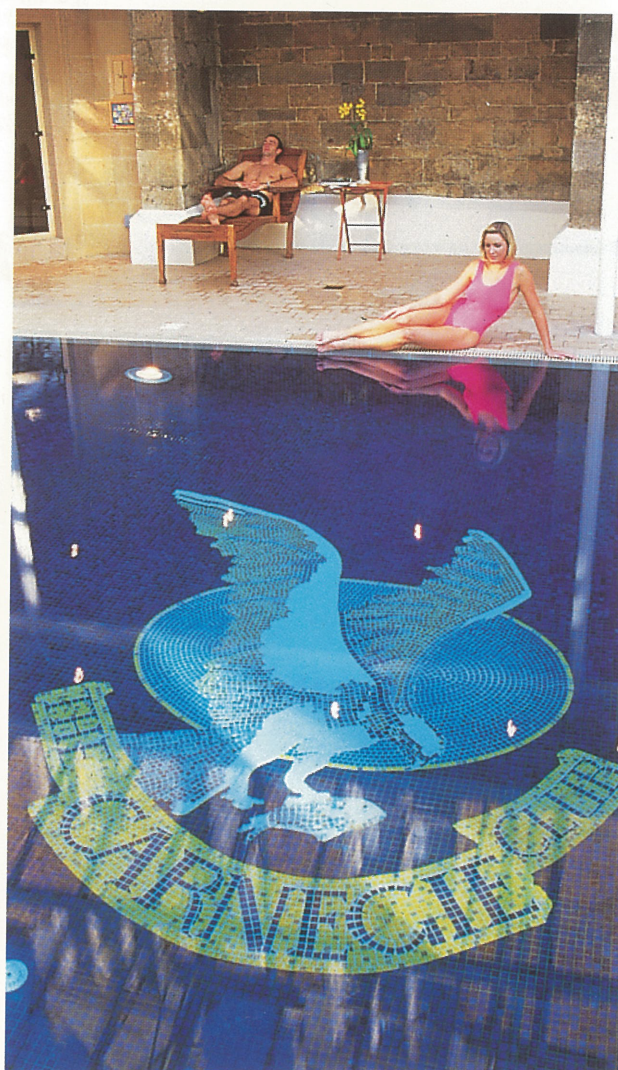
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St Peter's Church, Oundle - 8pm

Roberto Cominati

The Programme

Barcarolle, Op 60

Frédéric Chopin (1809-1849)

Chopin was a brilliant pianist as well as composer. He used the piano in every work he wrote, but turned away from traditional forms, preferring self-contained, free compositions in one movement and, like this *Barcarolle*, often in sophisticated imitation of popular forms. Written in 1845, this work imitates the song of a Venetian gondolier, and although it is in 12/8 instead of the conventional 6/8, it is absolutely typical of its time in being in F sharp major.

Sonata in B minor, Op 58

Frédéric Chopin

Allegro maestoso - Scherzo: molto vivace - Largo - Finale: presto non tanto

During the 1840s Chopin's income came mainly from playing in the aristocratic salons of Paris and teaching wealthy pupils. Composition was wearisome; he loathed writing music out, and the B minor sonata was the only work he composed in 1844.

As Schumann said of the earlier B flat minor sonata, its title is "a caprice, if not a jest. He has simply bound together four of his most unruly children to smuggle them into a place which they could not otherwise have penetrated!" Only in its use of four movements does it recall the classical sonata: the first movement is a kaleidoscopic parade of themes, the *Scherzo* recalls a piano miniature, and the third a nocturne. The brilliant *Finale* is perhaps the most Chopinesque, and least like a conventional sonata movement, of all.

Interval

Sonatine

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

In 1905 Ravel made his third attempt to win the Paris Conservatoire's coveted *Prix de Rome* for composition, but was disqualified after the preliminary round for deliberately breaking the rules of academic counterpoint. Despite this he continued both to enter competitions and to transgress, contributing more than the required 75 bars when the *Weekly Critical Review* challenged composers to write the first movement of a *Sonatina*. The competition was then cancelled because of the magazine's poor finances, but shortly afterwards Ravel wrote the remaining two movements of a work which helped redirect the early 20th century towards exquisite miniatures.

Pavane pour une Infante Défunte

Maurice Ravel

Ravel's early career was equally contentious: his teachers at the Paris Conservatoire found his indisputable talent diluted by his iconoclastic attitudes, and audiences were puzzled by his challenging ideas. The "elegance and charm" of the uncharacteristically conventional *Pavane pour une Infante Défunte* was therefore greatly welcomed when it was first performed in Paris on 5th April 1902.

This work's popularity remains undimmed, but later the composer cited its rather poor structure and the glaring influence of Chabrier as faults. He was also irritated by other pianists' slow and "remarkable" interpretations - "It is the Princess who is dead, not the Pavane" - and became tired of explaining that the title had no meaning other than being a collection of alliterative words.

Sonata No 3 in F sharp minor, Op 23 Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Drammatico - Allegretto - Andante - Presto con fuoco

Although Scriabin at first pursued a career as a virtuoso pianist, he also enjoyed composition. While his earlier works recall Chopin, this Sonata is in his later, more Lisztian, style. Written soon after his marriage in 1897, the sonata is described by Alfred Swan as "the glorious apotheosis of his youthful ideals in music". The composer often sang the *Finale's* A major theme to his little daughter as a lullaby.

The Performer

Born in Naples in 1969, Roberto Cominati studied piano from an early age, and was just 8 years old when admitted for special merits to the Conservatoire in Naples.

He has won prizes at major piano competitions in Italy, and more recently at international events. The most notable of these were in 1996 in Sydney and at the Leeds International Piano Competition in the same year, shown on BBC television. His busy recital career takes him to venues throughout Europe, and he has recently undertaken a tour in Japan.



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2 Church Lane, Stibbington.

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The Festival Club is open today 10am to midnight
Bar Hours: 6.30pm to 11.30pm