

## Reception for Friends of the Festival

One of the most valuable sources of encouragement for the Festival comes from its large body of Friends. They give help in all kinds of ways, not just financially but also by providing accommodation for visiting artists, collecting people from the station, and many other kinds of practical assistance.

In return we are pleased to have invited Friends of the Festival to join us for an informal reception before this evening's concerts, as a small thank you for their generous support.

We are always delighted to welcome new Friends. If you would like to become a Friend of the Festival and would like to know more, please ask a Steward at one of the concerts, or telephone the Festival Office on 01832 272026.

## Alison Farr, cello

8pm  
St Peter's Church, Oundle  
(the Parish Church)

### The Programme

*Chaconne, BWV 1004*

J S Bach (1685-1750)  
arr. Busoni (1866-1924)

This mighty Chaconne was first composed as the last movement of Bach's D minor Partita for unaccompanied violin and, lasting twelve minutes, can have been barely comprehensible to his contemporaries. Its power and apparently mysterious origins were, however, very attractive to 19th century Romantic musicians: 'There are moments', said Johann Kreisler, E T A Hoffmann's fictional epitome of the impetuous, romantic musician, 'especially when I study the works of the great Sebastian Bach, in which the mystical rules of counterpoint and the relationships of the notes fill me with terror'.

One of the first composers to recognise the work's potential for arrangement was Mendelssohn, who in 1847 added a piano accompaniment to the original score. Today, however, it is being played in a transcription for piano solo which the devoted Bach enthusiast, Ferruccio Busoni, made in about 1897.

*Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* Olivier Messiaen  
(1908-1992)  
No. 13: *Noël*  
No. 15: *Le Baiser de l'enfant Jésus*

This large scale set of piano pieces dates from 1944, and is dedicated to Messiaen's wife, Yvonne Loriod, who gave their first performance in March 1945. *Noël*, a vivid depiction of bells both large and small, is headed, 'Carillon - The Christmas Bells ring with the sweet names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph'. In contrast, *Le baiser de l'enfant-Jésus* is said to have been inspired by an engraving of the child Jesus leaving his mother's arms to embrace St Thérèse of Lisieux, and depicts the growing brightness as the world is gradually bathed in the light of Christ's love.

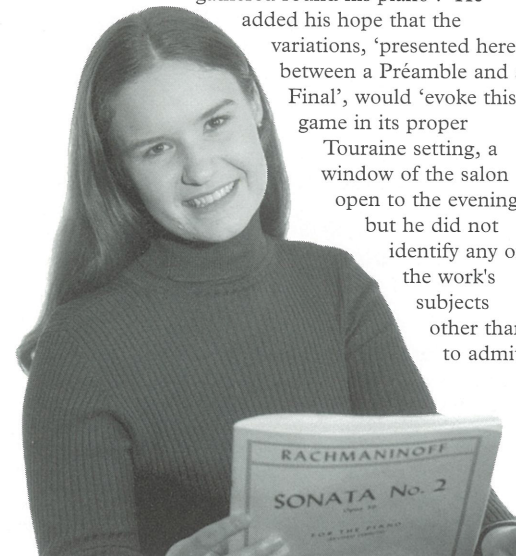
*Les Soirées de Nazelles* Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

*Préambule*  
*8 Variations: Le comble de la distinction*  
*Le cœur sûr la main*  
*La Désinvolture et la discrétion*  
*La suite dans les idées*  
*Le charme enjôleur*  
*Le contentment du soi*  
*Le goût du malheur*  
*L'alerte vieillesse*  
*Cadence*  
*Final*

For much of the 1920s, until he bought his own house in the neighbouring village of Noizay, Poulenc lived in

rooms in a house in Nazelles, Touraine, which belonged to Virginie Liénard. In her youth Tante Liénard had heard both Liszt and Wagner, and now in her 80s was devoted to the music of Stravinsky. Music was clearly welcome in the house; in 1930, shortly after he moved out, Poulenc wrote the *Soirées de Nazelles*, explaining that the eight variations were 'improvised during long country evenings at Nazelles, when the author played musical portraits with a group of friends gathered round his piano'. He added his hope that the

variations, 'presented here between a *Préambule* and a *Final*', would 'evoke this game in its proper Touraine setting, a window of the salon open to the evening', but he did not identify any of the work's subjects other than to admit



that the *Final* was a sort of self-portrait, and that *L'Alerte Vieillesse* was Tante Liénard. The work was first performed in 1936 in a BBC broadcast, with Poulenc himself at the piano.

*Etudes-tableaux, Op 33* Sergei Rachmaninov  
(1873-1943)  
*no 1 in F minor*  
*no 2 in C*  
*no 3 in C minor*  
*no 6 in E flat*

Although by about 1910 Rachmaninov enjoyed an international reputation as a pianist, he disliked the incessant touring which was involved in giving so many recitals, and greatly valued the time he could spend each summer on his uncle's country estate at Ivanovka. Among the works which he composed during these periods of leisure were the *Etudes-tableaux*, which date from 1911 and were each inspired by an unspecified external visual stimulus.

## The Performer

Alison Farr has recently completed her studies at Wells Cathedral School and has taken up a scholarship to continue her studies at the Royal Academy of Music. Her performance of Grieg's Piano Concerto with the London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra at the Queen Elizabeth Hall was subsequently broadcast on BBC Radio 3. During a tour of Russia in 1998 Alison performed Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2, and in the same year was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition, when she gave a bravura performance of Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Other competition successes have included winning the Audi Junior Musician 1994.

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