

Friday 16th July

Celebrity Piano Recital

Chiao-Ying Chang

7.30pm
St Peter’s Church

Sonata no 4 in E flat, Op. 7
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Molto allegro e con brio
Largo, con grand espressione
Allegro
Rondo, poco allegretto e grazioso
Dating from 1796 this, the fourth of Beethoven's monumental cycle of 32 piano sonatas, offers a spacious panorama of the young composer's developing individuality; its original title, ‘Grande Sonata’, reflects the epic scope of the work.

The first movement sweeps forward with vigour and passion, propelled by a surge of quavers in 6/8 time, its urgency tempered by lyrical moments and surprising plunges into new keys. In the second movement, where measured silence seems as eloquent as sound, Beethoven affords us glimpses of his later maturity; the following *Allegro*, part minuet, part scherzo, teases with nifty rhythmical twitches and eruptions in the minor key.

Controversially, the finale offers little in the way of conventional brilliance; the returning rondo theme is tender and flowing and perhaps lends some credence to the gossip which nicknamed the Sonata *Die Verliebte* ('the Beloved'): Beethoven had dedicated the work to a pupil, the Countess Babette von Keglevics.

Klavierstücke, Op.119
Intermezzo in B minor
Intermezzo in E minor
Intermezzo in C
Rhapsody in E flat
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

This set comprises the last piano pieces that Brahms published (actually together with the six of Op118). The first, passionately sad, he sent to Clara Schumann to mark his 60th birthday, and the letter called attention to its dissonances, daring her to like it. She did, and aptly called it "a grey pearl" and "sadly sweet". The second is a wistful yet playful piece in variation style, its middle looking back to the most ingratiating of the waltzes. There follows a true, quicksilver intermezzo (only one and a half minutes) beginning with the tune at the bottom of the right hand. Brahms called all these three pieces indifferently ‘intermezzo’, but the fourth rings down the curtain as a *Rhapsody*. Clara appreciated the five-bar ‘Hungarian’ rhythms of the hammered phrases of Brahms's youth. Thereafter the music becomes sectional for a while, but it is pulled together with a real ‘hammer and tongs’ ending.

Interval

Prelude in C major, Op,32 no.1
Prelude in D major, Op. 23 no.4
Prelude in C minor, Op.23 no.7
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

Given Rachmaninov's status as a virtuoso pianist, it is hardly surprising that the piano figured so prominently in his output. Like Chopin, he wrote preludes for piano in all the major and minor keys. Solo pieces were naturally to the fore, and twenty-four preludes were published under three different opus numbers.

The series started with the C sharp minor (Op. 3, no. 2). He added the ten preludes of Op. 23 and the series was completed with the thirteen preludes of Op. 32. In this latter set he developed his technique of forming a piece from tiny melodic or rhythmic fragments. The Op. 32 set dates from 1910 and was first performed publicly by Rachmaninov himself in December 1911.

Op. 23 was completed in 1903. Rachmaninov dedicated the set to Siloti, one of his early piano teachers and a former pupil of Tchaikovsky and Liszt. They were part of the creative outburst that followed the composition of the second piano concerto, and share much of the work's harmonic richness and textural complexities. Taken together, Rachmaninov's preludes prove him to be a perfect miniaturist and contain his most creative piano writing.

The *D major Prelude no.4* is a tender, unhurried flow of *cantabile* melody, alternating between major and minor and using a left-hand accompaniment in triplets. The melody later appears in the alto voice with a descant of great beauty. Tension increases to produce a climax, which does little to disturb the essential serenity of the piece. Towards the end the main theme appears in octaves and the final bars are simple and restrained.

A restless and often turbulent piece, the *C minor Prelude* no.7 is from start to finish a rush of semiquavers, among which appear snatches of themes which are never allowed a full statement. The restlessness increases to a peak when a final swoop from top to bottom of the keyboard ends in a sudden and violent coda in the major key.

Of the Op. 23 preludes Rachmaninov himself wrote: "I took the precaution to have the ten preludes of Op. 23 copyrighted by a German publisher. I think them far better music than my first preludes, but the public has shown no disposition to share my belief." Modern opinion has certainly brought a favourable adjustment to this view.

Piano Sonata no. 8 in B flat, Op. 84
Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Andante dolce; Andante sognando ; Vivace
Like Rachmaninov, Prokofiev was also a pianist of great virtuosity, and composed extensively and most successfully for the instrument. His music has gained in popularity, particularly so in America, France and Britain, and many listeners will be familiar with the chief characteristics of his individual style: the sharp contours of melody, the terse, almost mechanical, rhythms, the gritty dissonance of the harmony, the clear and logical form, and the frequent audacity of the sound in general.

The piano sonatas, though not adhering to any model, and strongly individualistic, are in the great 19th-century tradition in that they use the full sonorities of the instrument, and are not purely percussive, nor in quasi-18th century style. Each of the nine sonatas speaks with a definite and contrasting voice; they make fascinating and often strange music. The sixth, seventh and eighth sonatas are sometimes known as the War Trilogy, since they were all composed during the second World War.

Sonata no. 8 was begun in 1939 but not completed until 1944 when it was first performed by Emil Gilels. Its form of two *andantes* plus a *scherzo* is unusual and some critics have noted that the work lacks a final movement, forgetting that Prokofiev only rarely followed the classical pattern. The first movement begins calmly with a first subject of some melancholy, its gentle flow aided by syncopated accompaniment. The second-subject material has a flickering nervous quality. Neither subject has a suggestion of the storm and passion which is to happen in the development section, and although this whirlwind of emotion eases off on the entry of the calm first melody, it does return with some violence in the *con brio* coda.

The second *andante* movement is perhaps more appealing with its minuet-like rhythms, its melodies of almost Schubertian grace, and its alternating tone colours of D flat and D major. It is a short movement and its content almost makes homage to eighteenth century style.

Something of this style is carried into the final *scherzo*. Its lively, triplet flow, its piquant themes and its impish harmonic colouring are typical of the composer in his 'Classical Symphony' mood. It is a movement of some length with well-defined sections, one of which, marked *Allegro ben marcato*, moves into 3/4 rhythm and forms the middle section of some power and drama. Finally, the return to the mood of the opening section re-establishes the playful element which continues to the end of what one critic has called 'a movement of gigue-like burlesque, with the vitality of Haydn!' and perhaps a reminder of the composer's own remark about his music of this period: “I have striven for a clear, musical language readily understood and loved by the listener”.

Chiao-Ying Chang
Born in 1981 in Taiwan,Chiao-Ying won First Prize at the National Piano Competition in Taiwan at the age of only eleven. In 1997 she was the youngest student to enter the Royal Academy of Music, where she studies with Christopher Elton and Maria Curcio. She recently graduated with distinction and a DipRAM, the Academy’s highest award and this season becomes a Hodgson fellow.

In September 2003 Chiao-Ying won 5th Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, performing Beethoven’s Concerto no.4 in the Finals with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder. She immediately went on to win the top prize at the Taiwan International Competition.

Since arriving in the UK Chiao-Ying has won a series of top prizes at major international competitions including 3rd Prize at the 2002 ARD Munich Competition and 2nd prize at both the 2000 AXA Dublin and the 1998 Ettlingen International Competitions.

Over the last year Chiao-Ying has given recitals throughout the UK including concerts at Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, Purcell Room and Kettles Yard, Cambridge. Abroad she has appeared as soloist at the Busoni Festival in Bolzano, Italy, the Kammermusikfest des ARD-Wettbewerbs in Germany and in Schloss Elmau, Munich, and Berlin. In 2003 Chiao-Ying recorded the complete Schubert Impromptus, D.899 and D.935, on the German label Audite.

Sponsor Mr & Mrs Richard Winfrey



Saturday 17th July

The RCO Lecture

Geoffrey Hindley

10am
Oundle School Music Department,
Gascoigne Building

Music is the most immediate of the arts: the one most intimately related to the brain's neural patterns.

Today's standard computer terminal depends on its keyboard – a mechanism first developed by medieval organ builders. But it is Geoffrey Hindley’s contention that today's world-dominant, innovative machine technology is heir to an evolution in patterns of thought cradled by the West's unique musical tradition.

Geoffrey Hindley
After reading History at Oxford, Geoffrey Hindley trained under Alfred Deller and sang with Brompton Oratory choir. In the 1970s he scripted Radio 3's ‘Music for a Medici Wedding’ for Leo McKern and Musica Reservata (of which he was secretary). Also an editor and lecturer, he spent six years teaching at Le Havre University and was for a time visiting professor at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Geoffrey’s numerous publications include 'The Larousse Encyclopaedia of Music’ Contributing General Editor, and ‘A History of Musical Instruments’. He has lectured on medieval and music history at international conferences in Europe and the USA.

