



T B S



Ariel Lanyi - piano



11 February 2024
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Programme

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Piano Sonata No 30 in E major, Opus 109

Vivace ma non troppo; Prestissimo; Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

This sonata, completed in 1820, is the first of Beethoven's last three great sonatas: Op. 109, Op. 110 and Op. 111. In these sonatas, Beethoven grappled with his personal afflictions, which he expressed in his own words as "Oh God, give me strength to conquer myself".

The first movement of Op. 109 is questioning and disturbing, with two starkly contrasting ideas, the first serene and lively – *vivace*; the second dark and grief-stricken. This makes for a most profound and enigmatic movement.

The second movement is a violent outburst of anger – *prestissimo*; stark and ruthless in character.

As if purged by the above outburst, the final movement is one of Beethoven's most beautiful set of variations, with a hymn-like theme radiating compassion, warmth and love. This theme is then used in six variations, the final one being a magnificent climax to the sonata, with shimmering trills and the suggestion of tolling bells. This was the first time that Beethoven used an andante for the final movement.

Frédéric Chopin (1810 - 1849)

Polonaise-Fantaisie in A flat major, Opus 61

Chopin transformed the polonaise, the national dance of his native Poland, into an art form, gradually treating it in a freer and more sophisticated way, moving away from the simplicity of its origins to a type of fantasia. In the Op.44 Polonaise in F sharp minor this transition was already obvious, but it was not until the Op.61 work, of 1845–6, that he eventually used the title Polonaise Fantaisie – and this was destined to be his last polonaise.

It was during his 1846 stay with the novelist George Sand, at her home at Nohant, that Chopin completed the work, despite the fact that external problems, including ill health, were making the creative process difficult at this time. Although he would be dead within three years, there was no evidence that his creative powers were waning, for he was breaking new ground and the Polonaise Fantaisie was undoubtedly one of his finest and most interesting compositions. The harmonic texture is closely woven and the almost symphonic introduction has been likened to Wagner. The piano speaks with a completely new voice, particularly in such moments as the ever increasing trill, over a pedal note, immediately following the intermezzo section.

TBS continues to operate with a retiring collection rather than fixed-price tickets.

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Max Reger (1873 - 1916)

Variations on a Theme by Bach, Opus 81

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| No 1 Theme: Andante | No 9 Variation 8: Vivace |
| No 2 Variation 1: L'istesso tempo | No 10 Variation 9: Grave e sempre molto espressivo |
| No 3 Variation 2: Sempre espress. ed assai legato | No 11 Variation 10: Poco vivace |
| No 4 Variation 3: Grave assai | No 12 Variation 11: Allegro agitato |
| No 5 Variation 4: Vivace | No 13 Variation 12: Andante sostenuto |
| No 6 Variation 5: Vivace | No 14 Variation 13: Vivace |
| No 7 Variation 6: Allegro molto | No 15 Variation 14: Con moto |
| No 8 Variation 7: Adagio | No 16 Fugue: Sostenuto |

Max Reger was a German composer, pianist, organist, conductor, and academic teacher. He was born in Brand in Bavaria and worked as a concert pianist, as a musical director at the Leipzig University Church, as a professor at the Royal Conservatory in Leipzig, and as a music director at the court of Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen.

Reger's Op. 81 Variations on Bach's Cantata No. 128, *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt Allein*, are a remarkable combination of rigour and variety. The counterpoint is bedazzling, the harmony feels both titanic and open-ended, and the range of textures deployed is extraordinary.

Reger's dedication to Bach bore especially rich creative fruit, not only in these Variations but in a number of ingenious keyboard transcriptions. The Variations and Fugue on a theme of Johann Sebastian Bach dates from the summer of 1904, a period that also saw the births of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Delius's *Koanga*, and Charles Ives' *March 1776*. The times were certainly a-changing, and although perennial in their eloquence and vitality and the uncommon richness of their modulations, the Variations are nonetheless rooted in the musical past, much as Bach's own music had been.

The prompting theme is taken from the beautiful contralto/tenor duet 'Seine Allmacht zu ergründen, wird sich kein Mensch finden' ('No man can fathom His omnipotence') which is, in turn, from Bach's Cantata No 128, *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein*. Reger asks for the melody to be played 'sweetly and always very legato—that is to say, like an oboe solo' (Bach's original is scored for oboe d'amore and continuo) and, while treating it to appreciative pianistic colours, opts thereafter to home in on particular elements of the theme rather than to vary it 'whole'. The first two variations extend the mood among some gentle elaborations, while the third, with its coruscating climaxes and undulating accompanying figures, breaks the mould with typical chromatic boldness. Reger canters off apace with his fourth and fifth variations, makes wrist-straining demands on his pianist in the sixth (a lusty Allegro molto), and then slams on the brakes for an introspective Adagio, hinting at the C major tonality that will dominate the energetic eighth variation. The deeply expressive writing that follows recalls a parallel passage roughly halfway through Beethoven's 'Diabelli' Variations (Variation No 14) where, as here, the mood suddenly darkens to questioning introspection—though not for long.

But Reger, like Beethoven, was wont to break his own spells. After a lively Poco vivace and an agitated Allegro in C sharp minor, he sustains what initially sounds like a noble Sarabande, before whisking us back to the home key with two quick final variations. But this is by no means the end of the matter. There is the Fugue, a colossal, three-tier edifice, the first two episodes being four-part fugues (Bach's original melody reappears in the treble towards the end of the second), the last section combining them both for a towering grand finale.

Ariel Lanyi

Born in Jerusalem in 1997, Ariel studied with Lea Agmon and Yuval Cohen. Based in London, he recently completed his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Ian Fountain. He has received extensive tuition from eminent artists such as Robert Levin, Murray Perahia, Imogen Cooper, Leif Ove Andsnes, Steven Osborne, and the late Leon Fleisher and Ivan Moravec. Awards include 1st Prize at the 2018 Grand Prix Animato Competition in Paris and 1st Prize in the Dudley International Piano Competition, as well as a finalist award at the Rubinstein Competition.

In March 2023, Ariel was honored to receive the Prix Serdang, a Swiss prize awarded by the distinguished Austrian pianist Rudolf Buchbinder. The prize is endowed with CHF 50,000 and is not a competition, but a recognition of a young pianist's achievements and an investment in their future.

Prior to this, Ariel won 3rd prize at the 2021 Leeds International Piano Competition, performing Brahms Concerto No. 2 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Andrew Manze in the Finals. He was a prize winner in the inaugural Young Classical Artists Trust (London) and Concert Artists Guild (New York) International Auditions, also in 2021.

An avid chamber musician, Ariel has collaborated with leading members of the Berliner Philharmoniker and the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, as well as with eminent musicians such as Maria João Pires, Marina Piccinini, Charles Neidich and Torleif Thedéen. Recent highlights have included projects at the Wigmore Hall, Homburg MeisterKonzert series in Germany, the Menton Festival in France, Perth Concert Hall (broadcast by BBC Radio 3), and across the UK including the Brighton and Bath Festivals. Ariel also recorded with the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg under the auspices of the Orpheum Stiftung as part of their Next Generation Mozart Soloist series, and gave recitals at the Kissinger Sommer, Fundação Juan March in Madrid, and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Ariel regularly appears in concerts broadcast on Israeli radio & television and on Radio France, and has recorded live concerts for the Vancouver Recital Society and Banco de la República Colombia.

In 2021 Linn Records released his recording of music by Schubert to critical acclaim, with future releases also planned in the coming seasons.

Future Farnham Concerts

Spire Church, South Street, Farnham, GU9 7QU

3-00pm Sunday 25 February: Renata Konycska- piano

7-30pm Saturday 16 March: SongHa Choi – violin and piano recital

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7-30pm Saturday 18 May: Elizabeth Cooney, violin, & Daniel Hill, piano

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