
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Autumn - Winter 2017

Tuesday 24 October 2017

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Bobby Chen · piano

Programme of works by HAYDN, McLEOD,
BACH-BUSONI and LISZT.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Sonata in C Major Hob XVI:50

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro molto

Three Protest Pieces (1992)

John McLeod (b.1934)

Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV639

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)-Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)

Chaconne in D minor BWV1004

Johann Sebastian Bach-Ferruccio Busoni

Ballade No.2 in B minor S.171

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Throughout Haydn's life, the piano sonata was not intended to be played by virtuoso pianists, but rather meant as entertainment at home, to be played by amateurs. Because of this state of affairs, many of Haydn's piano sonatas were of differing sophistication, reflecting the students they were written for.

Haydn had come across Therese Jansen Bartolozzi, a student of Clementi, who was a leading pianist in London at the time. She was a highly competent pianist, and impressed Haydn enough for him to compose two sonatas for her, the C Major Hob XVI:50, and the E-flat Major Hob XVI:52. These two sonatas, composed in 1794-95, reflected her impressive technique, as well as making full use of the more powerful English instrument.

The whole of the Allegro first movement is basically comprised of one theme, lasting only 6 bars, which is suddenly interrupted by a pause. The passages which follow, develop the first theme, testing the pianist with running thirds, left hand octaves, and rapid finger work. The second theme, in the dominant key, is the same as the first theme. The development section breaks up the first theme, using lots of imitations, octaves, runs, running thirds, chords, and rapid key changes, all the while trying to use all the available notes on the piano. A unique feature here is Haydn's only ever use of the directive 'open pedal'.

The second movement, Adagio, requires the performer to perform expressively all the difficult florid runs, octaves, multiple voices, and some wide leaps.

The Rondo features lots of teasing pauses, rapid runs, unannounced key changes and making use of the entire range of the piano.

'The Fox, in agony, surrenders his blood to the night'

'A mountain stream, poisoned and choked with effluents, struggles to reach the sea'

'The stag, its heart pierced by an arrow, disappears into the mist'

John McLeod's **Three Protest Pieces** occur as piano interludes in his song-cycle 'Chansons de la Nuit et du Brouillard', to poems by the French poet and novelist Jean Cayrol. Cayrol's post-war poetry and his many novels often explore, in a wide variety of styles, 'the never-ending threat of apocalypse to which man is subjected through his moral agency and through biological inheritance' (Ian Higgins) and these piano interludes attempt to explore and highlight the universal themes of animal cruelty and environmental pollution.

John McLeod is one of Scotland's foremost composers and amongst the UK's busiest and most prolific. He studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music with Sir Lennox Berkeley but later came under the influence of Witold Lutoslawski who became his mentor. John has won many awards for his work including the Guinness Prize for British composers and in June 2016 was appointed CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. His works have been commissioned, performed and recorded by leading orchestras including the Philharmonia, Hallé, BBC SSO, RSNO, SCO, NYOS as well as orchestras in Poland, Germany and the USA and by many ensembles and international soloists. In the past few years his output has increased dramatically to include major performances at the BBC Proms and at leading Festivals.

www.johnmcleod.uk.com

'Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ' ('I cry to you, Lord Jesus Christ'), after the first verse of Johann Agricola's hymn, was one of 46 chorale preludes for organ from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* (Little Organ Book), mostly composed between 1708 and 1717. At that time, Bach held the post of court organist in Weimar, where he accompanied hymns, and improvised on existing chorale tunes to create new organ music for worship services. In the title page from the autograph, Bach wrote: 'Little Organ Book. In which a beginning organist receives given instruction as to performing a chorale in a multitude of ways while achieving mastery in the study of the pedal, since in the chorales contained herein the pedal is treated entirely obbligato. In honour of our Lord alone. That my fellow man his skill may hone.'

Originally, his *Orgelbüchlein* was to be of 164 chorale preludes, designed for one liturgical year.

Busoni visited Leipzig in May 1888, before he started working at the Musikinstitut in Helsinki, and was at a concert with his student, Frau Kathi Petri, who was Egon Petri's mother, when the Prelude and Fugue in D Major BWV 532 by Bach was performed. Frau Petri asked if he wanted to transcribe the work for piano. Busoni did, it became BV B 20, and was dedicated to her.

In 1891, when he was in Moscow, he completed his BV B 23, from Bach's Two- and Three-Part Inventions, which was dedicated to Helsinki's Musikinstitut, and inspiring him to continue transcribing Bach's works for piano until around 1919. Between 1907 and 1909, he transcribed Bach's complete Chorale-Preludes.

From 1881, when Busoni had the honour of being the youngest person elected to the Accademia Filharmonica of Bologna, to when he and his wife settled in Berlin in 1894, he held teaching posts in Helsinki, Moscow and Boston. It was in 1893, when they were living in America, that Busoni transcribed Bach's solo violin **Chaconne** to piano.

His Chaconne piano transcription is one single part of a nearly 30-year long project, which started around 1888/1889, finished around 1919, and culminated in the publications of Busoni Ausgabe (Joh. Seb. Bach Klavierwerke), Bach-Busoni Collected Edition (Bach-Busoni Gesammelte Ausgabe), and *Sechs Tonstücke* (Six Tone Pieces).

In the epilogue to his Bach-Busoni Collected Edition, Busoni wrote: "I have my father to thank for the good fortune that he kept me strictly to the study of Bach in my childhood, and that in a time and in a country in which the master was rated little higher than Carl Czerny. My father was a simple virtuoso on the clarinet, who liked to play fantasias on *Il Trovatore* and the *Carnival of Venice*; he was a man of incomplete musical education, an Italian and a cultivator of the *bel canto*. How did such a man in his ambition for his son's career come to hit upon the very thing that was right? I can only compare it to a mysterious revelation. In this way he educated me to be a "German" musician and showed me the path that I never entirely deserted, though at the same time I never cast off the Latin qualities given me by nature."

The Chaconne (Ciaccona), is the 5th movement of Bach's Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin. It may be interesting to know that the first recorded public performance of this work was in 1841, performed by violinist Ferdinand David, with an improvised piano part played by Mendelssohn.

Liszt composed much programmatic music based on works of art, poetry or other literary works, drawing inspiration and using ideas from the works of Goethe, Dante, Faust, Raphael, Michelangelo, Ingres, Heine, Lamennais, H. C. Andersen, Baudelaire and others.

Liszt composed the **Ballade No.2** in the spring of 1853, shortly after the completion of the monumental B minor Piano Sonata. By this time, he had given up performing in public, and was residing in Weimar. The Ballade is reputedly based on the Greek myth of Hero and Leander, a story immortalized by Byron and Keats, although there is some evidence that Liszt could have been inspired

instead by Gottfried Bürger's ballad Lenore. In the Greek myth, Leander fell in love with a priestess of Aphrodite, who lived in a tower on Sestos, on the edge of the Hellespont. He wooed her with charming words and during the warm summer, guided by Hero's night time light, he swam across the Hellespont to reach her. However, one day, the waves became wild, and Leander was drowned. Hero was stricken with grief and threw herself off the tower and died.

The piece starts with a rising low right hand theme accompanied by ominous chromatic left hand runs, interrupted by an ethereal second theme in the dominant key, high up on the piano. This exposition is then repeated a semitone lower, a common Lisztian device. Thereafter, a magnificent sense of narrative drama takes over, with seamless uses of octaves, runs, and chords, in developing the contrasting materials from the exposition. At times, the music becomes semi-operatic, with an abundance of lyrical and rhetorical passages, and all the pianistic virtuosity becomes a complete servant to the musical textures and architecture.

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Described by International Piano Magazine as: "...an armour-clad player of complete technique, a thinking musician, a natural Romantic. Young bloods come no better", Malaysian **Bobby Chen** studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Ruth Nye. He burst on the scene in 1996 with a sensational season of concerts, which included a British tour with Lord Menuhin in a performance of Beethoven's Triple Concerto and a recital at the Royal Festival Hall as part of the South Bank Prokofiev Festival. He has performed under conductors Lan Shui, Mathias Bamert, Maximiliano Valdés, Sir Neville Marriner, Pierre-André Valade, Giancarlo Guerrero and with several orchestras including the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Warsaw Sinfonia, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta. He broadcast live for UK's Classic Fm, Ireland's Raidió Teilifís Éireann (Radio Television Ireland), Hong Kong's Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and USA's Pianoforte Chicago and 'Jack Price Radio Show'. He featured as a 'Star of Malaysia' in the official Malaysian airport magazine 'Convergence'.

He has played at Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall, Dublin's National Concert Hall, Singapore's Victoria Concert Hall, USA's Midland Centre of the Arts, Holland's Hermitage Amsterdam, Poland's Antonin Palace, UK's Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall, Royal Concert Hall, Cadogan Hall, Menuhin Hall, and

Wigmore Hall. He has performed under the special auspices of Australia's Southern Highlands International Piano Competition, at Brazil's Musica Nova Contemporary Music Festival, Sweden's Lidköping Music Festival, Ireland's Music for Wexford and Wicklow Arts Festival, UK's Worcester Three Choirs Festival, Guildford International Music Festival and Marlborough College Summer School. He was selected for the South-East Asian début of the Complete Beethoven Sonatas Cycle in Singapore, represented Malaysia for the 27th Annual Federation of Asian Cultural Promotion (FACP) Conference, and celebrated Malaysia's 50th Anniversary as a nation playing a new piano concerto in London. He made his début recital, public masterclass and radio recording in Hong Kong, his début recital at Italy's Fazioli Concert Hall, and played his 4th solo recital at London's Wigmore Hall, his 1st duo Wigmore recital with pianist Leslie Howard, and his 6th solo concerto appearance with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra at Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Twin Towers.

In 2016 he played solo recitals at the Sibelius Museum in Turku and at the National Concert Hall in Dublin, and chamber music in Lidköping and in Dusseldorf. He ended 2016 by running the 4th Overseas Masters Winter Piano Academy (OMWPA), on the premises of the Yehudi Menuhin School. Concerts in 2017 and 2018 will be in Vietnam, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden and the UK, including his 7th solo concerto appearance with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra at Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Twin Towers.

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FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Friday 27 October

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square

Edinburgh University Singers

John Kitchen (conductor)

Calum Robertson (organ)

J.S. BACH Lobe den Herrn, alle Heiden

and motets by MENDELSSOHN and BRUCKNER

Admission Free