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SIR STEPHEN HOUGH

Thursday 28 November, 7.30pm
Djanogly Recital Hall

PROGRAMME

Six Etudes de Concert, Op.35 No 2: Automne
Autrefois, Op.87 No.4
Les Sylvains, Op.60

Cécile Chaminade

Fantasie in C major, Op.17

Robert Schumann

Interval

Sonatina Nostalgica

Stephen Hough

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58

Frederic Chopin

Please ensure all mobile phones are switched off. Photographs and videos of the performance are not permitted.

There is a Sennheiser Infrared enhanced hearing system in the Djanogly Recital Hall; please request a headset from our front-of-house staff to enhance your enjoyment of this evening's concert.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Six Etudes de Concert, Op.35 No 2: Automne
Autrefois, Op.87 No.4
Les Sylvains, Op.60

Cécile Chaminade
(1857-1944)

Born in Paris, Chaminade began composing seriously in her early twenties. Her music was hugely popular in the early decades of the twentieth century, but her reputation slumped considerably after her death, and has only recently begun to revive. Best-known as a composer of songs and short piano pieces, she also produced works on a larger scale, including an orchestral Suite, a ballet score, two works for solo instrument and orchestra – *Concertstück* (Concert-piece) for piano, and *Concertino* for flute – and two piano trios.

Her *Six Concert Studies* were published in 1886. 'Automne' (Autumn), the second of the set, remained by far her best-known piece, even while the rest of her output was almost completely ignored. The gracefully song-like opening section is followed by darker, more turbulent music, before the opening returns to round off the piece.

'*Autrefois*' ('Once', 'Previously', or 'In the past') is the fourth, and best-known, of Chaminade's *Six Pièces Humoristiques*, Op 87, published in 1897. As the title implies, this is a look back to French baroque music, specifically evoking the dance known as the *forlane*. It begins with an elegant section marked 'delicately', followed by a quicker, toccata-like central passage, with a return of the opening to neatly wrap things up.

Les Sylvains was first published in 1892. Sylvans are wood-spirits in classical mythology, often identified as the half-human, half-goat creatures known as fauns. The song-like opening theme begins in the middle of the keyboard, with accompanying figures above and below. It returns twice more, its appearances separated by more mercurial episodes, with sprays of notes running all over the keyboard, ending the piece with a delicate flourish from bottom to top of the keyboard.

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Fantasie in C major, Op.17

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

1. *Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen;*
2. *Massig, durchaus energisch;*
3. *Langsam getragen, durchweg leise zu halten.*

Schumann's Fantasy in C owes its origin to two events, one personal and one public. Begun in June 1836, the first movement was originally conceived as a response to his enforced separation from his future wife, Clara Wieck, when her father forbade them to meet and ordered them to return each other's letters. Two years later, after they had been able to resume writing to each other, Schumann described the movement to Clara as "the most passionate thing I have ever composed – a deep lament for you". The music includes a number of passing references to the last song of Beethoven's song-cycle *An die Ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved), which begins with the words "Take, then, these songs, songs of passion and pain, and let them, like an echo, recall our love."

A year before Schumann began work on the Fantasy, a committee had been set up to raise money for a monument to Beethoven in his birthplace, Bonn (it included, incidentally, August Schlegel, brother of the poet Friedrich Schlegel, quoted by Schumann on the score of the Fantasy – see last

paragraph). Beethoven's presence in the first movement took on added significance, and Schumann later added the two remaining movements. He originally described the completed work as a 'Grand Sonata', but it was eventually published, in 1839, under the title 'Fantasy', reflecting both the unconventional sequence of the three movements and their individual structures. It is dedicated to Liszt, one of the Beethoven project's most committed supporters, and Schumann intended that the committee should be given a hundred copies to sell to raise money for the fund.

The Fantasy was his most successful attempt so far at creating an integrated large-scale musical structure. The moderately-paced opening movement ("To be played fantastically and passionately throughout") begins with surging, restless figures in the left hand supporting a passionate falling theme that incorporates the first of the Beethoven allusions. The music eventually reaches a more introverted, simpler-textured section headed 'Im Legendenton' (In legendary style), a calmer contrast to its turbulent surroundings. The music is then re-energised, bringing back the opening theme, but it eventually fades to a quiet, withdrawn ending, with the most overt Beethoven reference of all.

The second movement ("Moderate tempo. Energetic throughout") has the character of a triumphal march, in which a crisp skipping rhythm soon comes to the fore. This also insinuates itself into the slower middle section, building gradually to the return of the opening, and it takes over completely in the quicker final section.

Gentle introspection is the dominant mood of the finale ("Slow and solemn. To be kept soft throughout"). A slight increase in speed brings a new idea, which will give rise to an imposing climactic theme heard twice during the course of the movement. Immediately after the second of these appearances – the climax of the movement and, arguably, of the entire work – it returns in its original form, leading the Fantasy to its peaceful conclusion.

During the time that Friedrich Wieck forbade Robert and Clara to write, one channel of communication remained open to them, since she was able to continue playing his music in public. The significance of the quotation from Friedrich Schlegel which Schumann wrote at the head of the score of the Fantasy would not have escaped her:

Through all the notes
In earth's many-coloured dream
There sounds one soft, long-drawn note
For the one who is listening secretly.

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Sonatina Nostalgica

Sir Stephen Hough
(b.1961)

This little sonatina, lasting under five minutes, was written for my friend (and fellow Gordon Green student) Philip Fowke in celebration of his 70th birthday. It is 'nostalgica' on three levels: firstly, it was commissioned by my old school, Chetham's; secondly, it deliberately utilises a romantic musical language of yesteryear; but most importantly it evokes literal homesickness for the places of our youth, in this case the little 'sonatina' village of Lymm in Cheshire.

The first movement is in ABA form and is made up of two contrasting but equally lyrical motives. A dotted rhythm gesture appears in the final bar and becomes the theme of the second movement. The Finale plays with these three ideas, tossing them around in a spirit of celebration.

The road from Danebank

Danebank was a grand country house which gave its name to today's Dane Bank Road. Along and about this road are places resonant with memories for me, not least the nursing home where my mother lived her final years. By happy coincidence some of Philip Fowke's forebears, the Watkin family, lived at ... Danebank.

The bench by the Dam

Lymm Dam is the picturesque source of the village, a calm lake whose surface reflects mature trees and the handsome steeple of the parish church. I had a bench installed there commemorating my parents. Drive a few miles down the road and you'll find the birthplace of John Ireland whose musical shadow falls over this pastoral movement.

A gathering at the Cross

Lymm Cross is a monument at the heart of the village and this movement is an affectionate tribute to the countless friends and family members who have gathered for parties and dinners and carol-singing within striking distance of its crumbling sandstone structure over many years.

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Piano Sonata No 3 in B minor, Op.58

**Frederic Chopin
(1810-1849)**

1. *Allegro maestoso*;
2. *Scherzo. Molto vivace*;
3. *Largo*;
4. *Finale. Presto ma non tanto*.

Chopin wrote three piano sonatas, beginning with the rarely-heard Sonata in C minor, completed when he was eighteen years old. Sonata No 3 was composed in the summer of 1844. He was at the height of his powers as a composer, and his health and his relationship with the novelist George Sand (Baroness Aurore Dudevant), had not yet begun their irreversible decline. It can often be misleading to read too much of a composer's personal circumstances into their music, but the Third Sonata's more relaxed, outgoing emotional world certainly makes a strong contrast with the tense, fevered introspection of the Second Sonata, completed five years earlier.

The first movement's sturdy opening theme – whose initial descending figure will return at the end of the movement – is powerful and concise, in contrast to the expansive second theme, which contains at least four distinct melodic ideas. As the music continues, the first theme dominates, but then passing references to the second group of themes begin to enter the picture. It is only after the first these returns in full that we realise that the recapitulation (the climactic return to the key the movement started in, usually marked by the return of the opening music) has already begun, and that it has bypassed the first theme completely. There is a short coda, based on the little descending figure which opened the movement.

The brief scherzo is a straightforward three-part structure. The mercurial outer sections, propelled by the flickering figuration that launch the movement, are set against a slower central section based on a gentle song-like melody; occasional syncopations in the accompanying texture create a dreamy, languorous effect.

A stern figure in octaves introduces the third movement, but this gives way to a lyrical theme – one of those passages in Chopin where the influence of contemporary Italian opera composers such as Bellini comes to the surface. It unfolds over the ghost of a slow march rhythm in the left hand. The long central section comes from the world of Chopin's nocturnes. The earlier theme then brings the movement to a gentle close.

The mood is broken by the pounding chords that open the finale. Unlike the wealth of themes in the first movement, here there are just two. The first is agitated and impetuous, the other, in B major, is all steely determination. Chopin springs a surprise when, after we've heard the opening theme a second time, in E minor, he brings the second theme back, moving with an electrifying jolt into E flat major, the key of the scherzo. The main theme eventually returns in the home key, followed by a triumphant major-key coda.

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SIR STEPHEN HOUGH

Named by *The Economist* as one of Twenty Living Polymaths, Sir Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career of a concert pianist with those of a composer and writer. In recognition of his contribution to cultural life, he became the first classical performer to be given a MacArthur Fellowship, and was awarded a Knighthood for Services to Music in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2022.

In a career spanning over 40 years, Stephen Hough has played regularly with most of the world's leading orchestras, including televised and filmed appearances with the Berlin, London, China, Seoul and New York Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Concertgebouw, Budapest Festival and the NHK Symphony Orchestras. He has been a regular guest of recital series and festivals including Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, London's Royal Festival Hall, Salzburg, Verbier, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Aspen, Tanglewood, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh.

He begins his 2024/25 concert season with his 30th appearance at the BBC Proms, performing at Last Night of the Proms to a live audience of 6,000 and a televised audience of 3.5 million. Over the course of the following 12 months, Hough performs over 80 concerts on four continents, opening Philharmonia Orchestra's season at the Royal Festival Hall, performances with the Cleveland Orchestra, performing a solo recital at Barbican Centre and giving the world premiere of his Willa Cather-inspired Piano Quintet at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall. Following the 2023 world premiere of his own Piano Concerto (*The World of Yesterday*), named after Stefan Zweig's memoir, Hough brings the work to Adelaide, Bournemouth, Oregon, Singapore and Vermont Symphony Orchestras.

Hough's discography of 70 recordings has garnered awards including the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, several Grammy nominations, and eight Gramophone Awards including Record of the Year and the Gold Disc. For Hyperion he has recorded the complete piano concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky as well as celebrated solo recordings of the Final Piano Pieces of Brahms, Chopin's complete nocturnes, waltzes, ballades and scherzi, as well as recitals of Schumann, Schubert, Franck, Debussy and Mompou. Upcoming releases include a Liszt Album, a recital of encores, including arrangements made for Lang Lang's Disney project, and Hough's own Piano Concerto.

As a composer, Hough's *Fanfare Toccata* was commissioned for the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and performed by all 30 competitors. His 2021 String Quartet No.1 *Les Six Rencontres*, was written for and recorded by the Takács Quartet for Hyperion Records. Hough's body of songs, choral and instrumental works have been commissioned by Musée du Louvre, National Gallery of London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, the Wigmore Hall, the Genesis Foundation, Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, BBC Sounds, and the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. His music is published by Josef Weinberger Ltd.

As an author, Hough's memoir *Enough: Scenes from Childhood*, was published by Faber & Faber in Spring 2023. It follows his 2019 collection of essays *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More* which received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and was named one of the *Financial Times*' Books of the Year. His novel *The Final Retreat* was published in 2018 (Sylph Editions). He has also written for *The New*

York Times, The Telegraph, The Times, The Guardian and the *Evening Standard*. Hough is an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple, an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society, an Honorary Fellow of Cambridge University's Girton College, the International Chair of Piano Studies and a Companion of the Royal Northern College of Music, and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School in New York.