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King's Hall
Wednesday 11th
January 2017

ALESSANDRO TAVERNA



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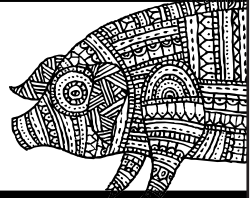
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TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Chopin

Ballade No. 1 in G minor, op 23 (*Last performance at ICC 10/09/1952*)

Ballade No. 2 in F major, op 38 (*First performance at ICC*)

Ballade No. 3 in A flat major, op 47 (*Last performance at ICC 05/10/1994*)

Ballade No. 4 in F minor, op 52 (*Last performance at ICC 03/10/2001*)

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

Gershwin

Songbook Selection

(First performance at ICC)

Kapustin

Concert études Nos. 7 and 8, op 40

(First performance at ICC)

Gulda

Play Piano Play (Nos. 1, 5, 9 and 6)

(First performance at ICC)

Gershwin

Rhapsody in Blue

(First performance at ICC)

Ilkley Concert Club

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The Club records its appreciation of the invaluable assistance and support given by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council.



PROGRAMME NOTES

CHOPIN
(1810-1849)

Ballade No. 1 in G major, op 23
Ballade No. 2 in F major, op 38
Ballade No. 3 in A flat major, op 47
Ballade No. 4 in F minor, op 52

Composed between 1836 and 1843, Chopin's four *Ballades* developed an emerging genre of non-vocal music beneath the abstract surface of which lay a narrative (the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz had appeared in 1830, Mendelssohn's first collection of *Songs Without Words* in 1835). Telling a story (often with a supernatural element) in a series of brief, simple stanzas accompanied by the same tune repeated stanza after stanza, the typical vocal ballad of the nineteenth century may seem an unpromising model for instrumental music but, by contrasting the repetition of motifs with stirring musical drama, Chopin fashioned four of his greatest works for solo piano. Each ballade opens with a simple melody in a gentle swinging rhythm reminiscent of a narrative voice (think 'once upon a time...') evoking the short lines and regular stanzas of a typical ballad poem. Soon the drama of the 'story' spills out into the music as new themes are introduced and eventually fused with the first theme in a denouement of spectacular, virtuosic fireworks.

The most lyrical of the set, the first ballade is filled with nostalgia; its waltz-like themes are amongst Chopin's best-known melodies. The second ballade, dedicated to the composer's champion, Robert Schumann, contrasts a gentle lullaby with a raging tempest before the opening melody returns, chastened, in the minor key. The third is the most optimistic of the set and the only one to conclude in a major key. Elegant and warm, it maintains the character of a dance throughout. Considered by many to be his greatest achievement, the fourth ballade has a more complex polyphonic form. The very essence of the Romantic sensibility, it is a gripping musical narrative which sets the imagination racing. *(Duration: 35 minutes)*

INTERVAL

(Coffee, tea and bar facilities available in the Winter Garden)

**GERSHWIN
(1898-1937)**

Songbook Selection

Swanee; Nobody but you; I'll build a stairway to Paradise; Do it again; Fascinatin' rhythm; Oh, lady be good; The man I love; Clap yo' hands; My one and only; 'S wonderful; Strike up the band; I got rhythm.

'George Gershwin died July 11, 1937' wrote one of the composer's many friends, John O'Hara, 'but I don't have to believe it if I don't want to.' Killed by a brain tumour when he was at the height of his powers, Gershwin left behind a legacy comprising not only some of the finest popular songs of the twentieth century, but also a superb opera (*Porgy and Bess*) and a handful of orchestral works (including a piano concerto) which succeed in combining jazz idiom with classical forms; he was perhaps the first and remains the greatest 'cross-over' composer. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants (his father had been a mechanic in the Russian Imperial Army), Gershwin left school at 15 to work as a 'song plugger' on New York's Tin Pan Alley. Showing no interest in music until he was 11, Gershwin had taught himself to play the piano which his parents had given to his brother Ira, who became his lyricist in a partnership which dominated Broadway with a series of smash hit musicals from which we will hear a selection of melodies tonight. His breakthrough came in 1919, when his song *Swanee* was taken up by Al Jolson.

In the 1920s, Gershwin travelled to Paris where he was rejected as a pupil by Ravel. ('Why become a second-rate Ravel when you're already a first-rate Gershwin?' the Frenchman enquired). Returning to America, Gershwin was beginning to establish himself in Hollywood before his career was cut so tragically short. The golden age of the film musical lay just ahead in the 1940s and 1950s whilst, at the time of his death, Gershwin had a growing fascination with the work of the classical *avant garde* (including Berg and Schoenberg); as with Mozart and Schubert, it is extraordinary to think what he may have achieved had he lived another twenty to thirty years.

(Duration: 18 minutes)

KAPUSTIN
(Born 1937)

Concert études, Op 40
No. 7 ('Intermezzo')
No. 8 ('Finale')

Born in Ukraine, Nikolai Girshevich Kapustin established himself as a jazz pianist and arranger in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Like George Gershwin, he fuses jazz idioms in formal classical structures. Following JS Bach, he has composed a set of 24 Preludes and Fugues and his eight études, from which we will hear two, are modelled on Chopin. Kapustin has never regarded himself as a jazz musician: 'I never tried to be a real jazz pianist,' he has said, 'but I had to do it because of the composing. I'm not interested in improvisation – and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? All my improvisation is written, of course, and they became much better; it improved them.' He cites Oscar Peterson as the single most important influence on his own music. A virtual recluse, Kapustin has done little to promote his music abroad although there is now a Kapustin Society active in England, dedicated to disseminating his scores and collecting royalties on his behalf. *(Duration: 8 minutes)*

GULDA
(1930-2000)

Play Piano Play
(Nos. 1, 5, 9 and 6)

Born in Vienna, Friedrich Gulda established a reputation as an interpreter of Beethoven and Mozart in the 1950s before embracing the world of jazz. Unlike Kapustin, Gulda was drawn to improvisation, even founding an improvisation school (the International Musikforum). He wrote that jazz provided '...the rhythmic drive, the risk, the absolute contrast to the pale, academic approach I had been taught.' In a remarkably diverse career, he composed a set of piano variations on the Doors' *Light My Fire*, jammed with Chick Corea and taught Claudio Abbado and Martha Argerich, who has referred to Gulda as 'my most important influence'. In 1999, he announced his own death so that a forthcoming Vienna concert might serve as a 'resurrection party'. Eschewing the sartorial standards expected of a concert artist, he once appeared naked on stage with his girlfriend for a rendition of Schumann songs on the recorder. Published in 1971, *Play Piano Play* is a set of ten exercises dedicated to his second wife, Yuko, and intended for students who seek to develop mastery of the piano as well as to 'soak up the fundamentals of modern piano style'. Employing Latin American, pop and jazz rhythms, the studies serve a dual purpose: first as

preparatory pieces intended to help classical pianists achieve one of the steps within what Gulda called the 'long road to freedom' and, secondly, as pieces to bring fun to the performer through practising and the audience through listening. (Duration: 10 minutes)

GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Rhapsody in Blue

Between 1920 and 1924, George Gershwin composed for an annual Broadway show produced by impresario, George White. After a production called *Blue Monday*, the bandleader in the pit, Paul Whiteman, asked Gershwin to compose a number that might 'make jazz respectable'. Hard at work on his first opera, *Sweet Little Devil*, Gershwin is said to have forgotten about the request until he read a newspaper article announcing that Whiteman's next concert would feature a new Gershwin composition. Writing at a manic pace in order to meet the deadline, Gershwin completed *Rhapsody in Blue* a few days before the premiere. Orchestrated for 'theatre band' by Ferde Grofé, the piece is most often heard today in its later (1942) version for piano and symphony orchestra. Gershwin himself prepared the version for solo piano which we will hear tonight.

Gershwin told his biographer that inspiration had come to him on a train journey to Boston, 'With its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang that is so often so stimulating to a composer – I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise ... And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the Rhapsody, from beginning to end. No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in my mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance.'

In whatever guise, *Rhapsody in Blue* is one of the most familiar pieces of modern times. Strange then to recall that it first appeared in a programme entitled 'An Experiment in Modern Music' which concluded with Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*. (Duration: 15 minutes)

Alessandro Taverna

Although this is Alessandro Taverna's first performance for Ilkley Concert Club, he is probably already well known to many of you. Since his Leeds success in 2009, his wonderful playing has been heard in venues all over North and West Yorkshire. Those of us who have heard him will know that we are in for a treat this evening.

The following biographical notes have been supplied by Alessandro's agent:

Alessandro Taverna established his international career by winning Third Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2009. The Independent review of this performance mentioned his 'magisterial account ... suffused with grave beauty. This Italian is remarkable ... 50 minutes of flawless poetry!' Since then he has gone on to perform in some of the most important European concert halls including Teatro alla Scala Milan, Musikverein Vienna, Royal Festival Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, Munich Gasteig, Berlin Konzerthaus, Philharmonic Hall Liverpool, Sala Verdi Milan, Bridgewater Hall Manchester and Auditorium Parco della Musica Rome.

His success at the Leeds Competition has led to many engagements with the most prestigious orchestras including Filarmonica della Scala, Münchner Philharmoniker, Royal Philharmonic, Minnesota, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Bucharest Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony and Scottish Chamber orchestras working with conductors including Fabio Luisi, Lorin Maazel, Daniel Harding, Thierry Fischer and Reinhard Goebel.

The prestigious Keyboard Trust has presented him in recitals in London, New York, Berlin and Hamburg and he opened the 2009/10 season of The Châteaueville Foundation in Castleton, the Virginia estate of the late Lorin Maazel.

Born in Venice Alessandro Taverna has won numerous awards in international competitions, including in 2009 1st prize in the Minnesota International Piano Competition leading to a prestigious American tour (including his debut in New York City), 2nd prize in the London International Piano Competition. In September 2011 he won the Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Prize awarded by the Eppan Piano Academy and he has recently received the Premio Giuseppe Sinopoli Prize.

A documentary on his life and his performances at the Leeds Piano Competition was shown on BBC4. He has also recorded for BBC Radio 3, Radio Classica in Italy, Slovenian National Radio and Television and for Classic FM in South Africa. In January 2015 SOMM Recordings released a CD of Piano Sonatas by Nikolai Medtner performed by Alessandro Taverna. A second disc of works by Debussy and Ravel will be released in early 2017.

He has studied with Sergio Perticaroli at the Santa Cecilia National Music Academy in Rome and with Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover. Last year he was selected for the prestigious Lake Como Piano Academy where he had the opportunity to work with distinguished artists including Malcolm Bilson, Andreas Staier and Fou Ts'ong.

CLUB NOTES

THE INTERNET AND CONCERT CLUB

About 80% of ICC Members have email addresses and seem to be happy with using email. This figure has barely changed over two years.

Three things we need to state clearly—

1. We will always communicate by post with Members who do not have email (or prefer not to use it).
2. We will use email where possible to communicate with those Members supplying email addresses—it saves a great deal of time and money (about £160 in stamps alone for each mail shot).
3. For the foreseeable future we will send out brochures and tickets by Royal Mail.

We have a Members Database that we use to deal with application forms, ticketing, printing labels, bulk emailing etc... This information will not be sold or supplied to other organisations. However, we do email information on behalf of other relevant organisations. Most notably we send out emails for the Friends of the King's Hall and Winter Garden to help to sell tickets for concerts related to our interests. Example – we sent emails to Members about the recent Chris Barber concert. That raised a substantial sum that will go towards making future improvements to our wonderful concert hall.

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‘The ICC web based systems are developed in VB.Net WebForms. Developers will need experience of Visual Studio and .Net development, with a solid understanding of SQL databases: SQL Stored Procedures and T-SQL VB.Net experience would be ideal, though C# experience would be acceptable if the developer was confident in working with VB.Net.’

If you do know a colleague, friend or relative who might have some of these skills please contact David Bridgewater dbridgewater62@gmail.com

David Wharmby (ICC Chairman)

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Chopin: There are so many excellent recordings of Chopin's most famous works that it is often a case of choosing your favourite pianist. My current favourite recording is by Ivan Moravec on Supraphon SU 3583-2 (medium price). Various Mazurkas and the Barcarolle op 60 complete the disc. A more recent recording, at budget price, which has attracted very favourable reviews, is by Cedric Tiberghien on Harmonia Mundi HMG 501943. Brahms's Ballades, op 10, complete the CD.

Gershwin: An excellent recording, which includes both Gershwin pieces, is performed by Michael Endres on Oehms OC 418 (medium price). A few other Gershwin works complete the disc.

Kapustin: The extremely talented Marc-André Hamelin has all the technique necessary to perform all the op 40 Concert Studies on Hyperion CDA 67433 (full price). Other Kapustin pieces complete the disc.

Gulda: Sasha Grynyuk performs Play Piano Play superbly, and completes the CD with works by Glen Gould, including his Piano Sonata. The disc is from Piano Classics PCL 0043 (medium price).

Raymond Waud. rayward@gmail.com

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