



Friday 28 July 2023, 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Petworth



The Leeds International Piano Competition Prizewinner:
Kaito Kobayashi

PROGRAMME NOTES

French Suite No.3 in B minor BWV814

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

1 Allemande
4 Anglaise

2 Courante
5 Menuets 1 & 2

3 Sarabande
6 Gigue

J.S. Bach was an undisputed master of the keyboard whose imaginative gifts elevated his harpsichord and organ music to a new level. His six French Suites were begun during the composer's years of service to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, the first four dating from 1722. The movements follow the typical German pattern of dances and end with a Gigue. While there is no lack of counterpoint in some of the movements, the accent is on melodic interest, a quality that has endeared the works to students and teachers alike. The opening 'Allemande' abounds in imitation using the initial intervals to generate all subsequent material. An almost unbroken stream of quavers underpins the lively 'Courante', while an expressive 'Sarabande' is followed by a jubilant 'Anglaise' with its hidden choral-like melody. Two Menuets, one delicate characterised by its walking bass and arpeggio figuration, the other demure, yield to an exuberant 'Gigue' marked by its leaping intervals lending much joie de vivre.

Hommage à Bach

György Kurtág (born 1926)

Hungarian composer, pianist, and teacher György Kurtág is among the most distinguished of contemporary composers and has become identified with his concentrated, expressive miniatures. Many of these are collected in *Signs, Games and Messages*, an ongoing compilation begun in 1973 that reflect his preoccupation for composers he loved. Amongst these numerous tribute works, including those for Scarlatti, Schubert and Stravinsky, is this Hommage à J.S B, notable for its 'tiny, subtle gestures'.

Le Tombeau de Couperin

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

1 Prélude
4 Rigaudon

2 Fugue
5 Menuet

3 Forlane
6 Toccata

A few weeks after Ravel had completed his Piano Trio in August 1914 he made repeated attempts to enlist in the army but served as a hospital orderly and later as a truck driver. It was during this time that he was preoccupied with ideas for a 'French Suite' for solo piano. The plans only reached fruition in late 1917 following his medical discharge at Verdun when he returned to the work's earlier sketches during his convalescence in Normandy. Ravel completed the score in November adding the title *Le Tombeau de Couperin* – 'An Epitaph on Francois Couperin'. Rather than a specific homage to

Couperin, it is more a tribute to eighteenth-century French music in general. The choice of the word 'Tombeau' (tomb) reflects his decision to dedicate each of the six movements to friends who had been killed in the war.

The suite begins with a 'Prélude' - a *mouvement perpétuel* - based on a persistent figure of six semi-quavers. There follows a gentle and ingenious three-part Fugue – the only example of this device in Ravel's published output. The bitter-sweet 'Forlane' (an Italian dance form like a slow gigue) is an extended movement characterised by its sinuous, rather plaintive, theme set off by piquant harmonies. Next is a breezy 'Rigaudon' whose rustic exuberance finds relief in a calmer and innocent central trio. A stately 'Menuet' frames a trio with a musette-like drone-bass. The concluding 'Toccata' is a stunning showpiece, and its outward virtuosity masks any sense of emotional attachment arising from the tragic events surrounding *Le Tombeau's* conception.

The distinguished French pianist Alfred Cortot succinctly commented of *Le Tombeau*, 'No glorious monument could honour the memory of the French better than these luminous melodies ... a perfect expression of our culture and of our tradition'.

Four Impromptus D. 935

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

1 Allegro moderato
3 Theme: Andante

2 Allegretto
4 Allegro scherzando

Schubert wrote two sets of Impromptus in 1827, and such is their length and emotional range that Robert Schumann believed some of them to be movements belonging to a sonata. Indeed, there is little impromptu about these works, nothing casual that merits their misleading title. The second group (D. 935) appeared at the end of a miraculous year that had included the two Piano Trios and the completion of *Winterreise*. The bleakness of the songs is vanishes in the Impromptus in favour of an equable mood and, at times, serenity of spirit. The melodically rich First Impromptu in F minor is built on three principal ideas: a resolute idea with a lyrical tag, an expressive melody of repeated chords and a consoling hand-crossing melody.

No less composed is the Second Impromptu in A flat, in which a halting waltz embraces a central Trio of rippling quavers. For the Third Impromptu in B flat Schubert recycles one of his best-known tunes (the incidental music to *Rosamunde*) as the basis for five variations. They accumulate in ingenuity (note the scintillating second variation, the minor key third and the sonorous fourth) and culminate in a carefree display piece that draws to a close with a slower version of the original tune. A distinctly Hungarian aspect colours the Fourth Impromptu marked by offbeat accents, stamping rhythms and wide leaps: its life-affirming mood belying the misery that Schubert endured as he approached his final year.

David Truslove, 2023

This event is kindly sponsored by Frances Carver, Sir Vernon Ellis, Christopher Hampson, Anthea Martin-Jenkins, John & Corinne Older, Kees & Diana van der Klugt and an anonymous donor

Kees & Diana van der Klugt are supporting this event in memory of their beloved daughter, Melissa