

MON 11 MARCH 2024, 7.30PM

TYLER HAY (piano)

RNCM International Artist Diploma Recital

RNCM Carole Nash Recital Room

Our International Artist Diploma (IAD) represents the pinnacle of achievement in performance at the RNCM and welcomes a small number of artists each year who are on the cusp of international careers.

Each artist carefully curates their own programme of music to showcase their talent and artistic identity.

Tyler is thrilled to present a programme that features what he describes as 'giants of 19th century pianism'.

Programme

Carl Czerny Nouveau Gradus ad Parnassum Op 822 No 46
'Grande Étude en forme de Variations'

John Field Nocturne No 4 in A major; Nocturne No 6 in F major

Adolf von Henselt Études caractéristiques Op 2 Nos 6, 3 and 8

Sigismond Thalberg Tarantella Op 65

Interval

Charles-Valentin Alkan Symphonie Op 39 Nos 4-7

Franz Liszt Variations on Bach's Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen

Tyler Hay *piano*

Tyler Hay (piano)

Tyler Hay was born in 1994 and first showed a prodigious talent for the piano when he won the Dennis Loveland award in Kent for his performance of Liszt's Mephisto Waltz no 1 at the age of 11. He gained a place to study at the Purcell School in 2007 where he studied under Tessa Nicholson. He continued his studies with Graham Scott and Frank Wibaut at the Royal Northern College of Music and with Niel Immelman and Gordon Fergus-Thompson for a Masters degree at the Royal College of Music.

Tyler has performed programmes at Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall and the Purcell Room and has played Ravel's Concerto for Left Hand Alone at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Saint-Saëns' *Piano Concerto No 2* at Symphony Hall with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

In 2016, Tyler won first prize in the keyboard section of the Royal Overseas League Competition and as well as winning the RNCM's Gold Medal Competition, also won first prize in the Liszt Society International Competition. Tyler won 1st prize in the Dudley International Piano Competition in November 2022.

CDs of Liszt, John Ogdon, Kalkbrenner and Field are available on Brilliant Classics and an album of virtuoso piano music by contemporary British composer Simon Proctor is also available on Navona Records.

Carl Czerny (1791-1857)

Czerny may well be the most misrepresented composer in the entire history of piano music. He himself categorised his compositions into 3 areas; studies and exercises for pianists of all ages and standards (most of which were never intended for public consumption), concert pieces such as paraphrases and fantasies based on famous themes of the day, and serious large scale works such as piano sonatas, string quartets and symphonies.

At his best, Czerny had a strikingly distinctive voice that finds itself somewhere in between the worlds of Beethoven and Schubert. He was an expert in variation form and this piece happens to be the last in a phenomenally difficult collection of études, dating from 1853, that are an updated musical response to Clementi's Gradus Ad Parnassum; 100 études and exercises written in the classical style in 1817. Books 3 and 4 (nos 26-46) in Czerny's op 822 are entirely made up of preludes and fugues, with this final piece being the only exception. It begins with a curtain raising introduction and then an entirely simple, charming and almost comical 8-bar theme. One could almost imagine the beginning of a Punch and Judy show as the 34 variations that follow present a masterclass in character and texture.

John Field (1782-1837)

It is now a well-accepted fact that the Irish master John Field invented the nocturne as a musical genre. His playing was adored for its lightness and exquisite delicacy of touch and his concept for a dreamlike and meditative form of piece was to be realised as early as 1809 with the first version of what would go on to become his nocturne no 8.

His 4th in A Major is a deeply expressive song that features a brief but emotionally turbulent middle section, most unusual for Field's nocturnes. It was dedicated to 'Her Excellency' Madame Marie de Rosenkampf, whom Liszt often wondered about, having been the recipient of the nocturne that in his view was the most beautiful. The 6th in F Major is a little more pastoral in feel. It was originally called 'Cradle Song' and the lullaby element is most noticeable at the end when soft chimes are heard in a high register. Both works are almost Mozartian in their fragile and precious perfection.

Adolf von Henselt (1814-1889)

The great German virtuoso, Henselt, was one of the most popular piano composers of the early 19th century. His music was championed by Anton Rubinstein and he was a major influence on Rachmaninoff, having taught his (and Scriabin's) teacher, Zverev. Much of his career centred on being the court pianist for the Empress Alexandra Feodorevna (wife of Tsar Nicholas I) but despite living to 75, his life as a performing pianist was cut short at 33 due to chronic stage fright.

Written alongside each other in the mid-1830's, the op 2 and op 5 sets of 12 Études in all keys are remarkably poetical. They are in fact often given a brief line of poetry or some short words of evocative description, arguably making them the first "Études-Tableaux" written for the instrument. No 6 in F sharp Major has the line "if I were a bird, I would fly unto thee." No 3 in B minor is named "grant my wishes." No 8 in E flat minor is accompanied by the words, "you attract me, drag me away, engulf me." Rachmaninoff found many of these Études to be as worthy as those of Chopin and even made a studio recording of op 2 no 6.

Sigismond Thalberg (1812-1871)

Said to have been the only serious rival to Liszt in the 1830's and 40's, Thalberg's reputation as the foremost virtuoso of his time saw him earn millions (in today's money) by touring Europe, Britain and America. His impeccable technical command was legendary and his greatest admirers included Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Schumann.

His rivalry with Liszt was more public than personal and it culminated in a famous "duel" on January 31st 1837 at the home of the Countess Cristina Belgiojoso. After the most extraordinary display of pyrotechnics, the event was proclaimed a draw and the countess declared that "Thalberg is the first pianist in the world - Liszt is unique." Thalberg was known affectionately as "Old Arpeggio" and he pioneered an entirely new pianistic texture called the "3-hands technique" whereby the right hand would encompass the full range of the treble with arpeggios and the left hand would adopt an accompanying figure with the two thumbs meeting in the middle to play the melody. His operatic fantasies were a main staple of 19th century piano repertoire but this tarantella is an entirely original piece, displaying Thalberg's melodic gift and fiery feel for the tarantella dance.

Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888)

Out of all the great 19th century musical geniuses, Alkan was surely the most enigmatic. Referred to by Rossini as "that great prodigy," he enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 6 (on the violin), only to graduate at 7 and a half. His formidable piano technique was said to have been the only in existence capable of making Liszt nervous of playing in public but then at only 25, Alkan suddenly and inexplicably withdrew himself from public life. Much research has gone into the evidence surrounding his life and the strongest current theory suggests that this may have been due to having had an illegitimate child, who curiously would go on to become the great French pianist, Delaborde. Whatever the case, he was a deeply eccentric man that developed his genius in an artistic vacuum that consequently caused his compositions to be some of the most strikingly individual works in the repertoire.

The "Symphonie" makes up nos 4-7 in his 12 Études in all minor keys. It is an amazingly masculine and rhythmically vigorous work and the key structure sees each movement a perfect 4th apart from the next. The stiff and severe second movement was originally published with the words "Funeral March on the death of a good man;" thought to be an homage to the composer's father. The great American pianist Raymond Lewenthal described the blistering finale as "a gallop through hell."

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Aside from his reputation as the 19th century's greatest pianist, Franz Liszt was also one of the most important compositional geniuses of the age. His harmonic explorations and innovations were groundbreaking and by 1859, when the original prelude was written from which these variations began life, Liszt had adopted a new Germanic chromaticism that was to be a huge influence on Wagner. He had lost his son Daniel to consumption that year and after his daughter Blandine lost her life to breast cancer in 1862, he expanded on Bach's descending line of "tears, sorrows, worries, fears," to create these 30 variations in the manner of a baroque passacaglia. The work is a powerful exploration of the composer's struggle through the various stages of grief. After a cataclysmic funeral march and a pensive passage of recitative where father and daughter communicate with each other, Liszt writes a setting of Bach's final chorale, Was Gott tut, das ist wohl getan (What God Does, Is Done Well). The melodic patterns now move in an upwardly direction and the music builds to an emotionally cathartic bursting point. Finally, the "Great Hungarian Master" lets go of his grief and allows his daughter's ascension towards heavenly realms.