

LSO St Luke's

CHAMBER MUSIC

BBC
RADIO 3

SOLO PIANO
BERTRAND CHAMAYOU

Friday 1 March 2024 1-2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

Maurice Ravel Jeux d'eau; Gaspard de la nuit
Unsuik Chin Piano Études Nos 4 to 6
Maurice Ravel Selections from 'Miroirs'

Bertrand Chamayou piano

Recorded for future broadcast on **BBC Radio 3**

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THE CRYPT CAFÉ & BAR

The Crypt café and bar is open from one hour before concerts and during the interval (where applicable). Please note, card payments only. Only cold drinks are permitted inside the Jerwood Hall.

PROGRAMME NOTE WRITERS

Kate Hopkins is English-language editor (concerts) for Salzburg Festival. She has written articles for organisations including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the Salzburg Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and book reviews for *NB Magazine* and *The Wagner Journal*.

Leah Broad is an award-winning music writer, historian, and broadcaster. Leah holds a DPhil from the University of Oxford and writes about twentieth century cultural history, particularly women in music. *Quartet*, Leah's award-winning first book, is a group biography of four women composers: Ethel Smyth, Rebecca Clarke, Dorothy Howell & Doreen Carwithen.

Jeux d'eau

Maurice Ravel



1901



6 minutes

As a student at the Paris Conservatoire, Maurice Ravel was seen as an impulsive, uncontrollable hothead – his piano teacher observed that he acted ‘not always with full control’. He proved so unwilling to commit himself to the Conservatoire’s methods that he was dismissed from classes in 1895. Nonetheless, he returned two years later to study composition with Gabriel Fauré, who saw Ravel’s talent and encouraged him to develop his unique voice. This must have been quite a confidence boost for the young Ravel – this, his first major piano work, is dedicated ‘to my dear tutor Gabriel Fauré’.

Meaning something like ‘playing water’, Ravel said that *Jeux d'eau* was ‘inspired by the noise of water and by the musical sounds which make one hear the sprays of water’. When it premiered, its rippling arpeggiations and constantly shifting harmonies caused a scandal. Nobody had heard anything like it before. Fellow composer Camille Saint-Saëns denounced it as ‘total cacophony’, but history has agreed with the writer Léon-Paul Fargue, who heard it as ‘a revelation’.

This piece not only established the foundations of Ravel’s style, but it also helped give shape to one of the 20th century’s most important musical movements: Impressionism.

Gaspard de la nuit

Maurice Ravel



1908



22 minutes

- 1 **Ondine**
- 2 **Le gibet**
- 3 **Scarbo**

By 1908, Ravel still had a firebrand status and was regularly attacked by institutions and critics. But he had also gained an increasingly large group of supporters – not least the powerful patron Winnaretta Singer, Princesse de Polignac. Many of Ravel's works were premiered in her salon, including 'Ondine', before the full suite was heard at the Salle Érard the next day.

Gaspard de la nuit was inspired by a collection of prose poems by Aloysius Bertrand with the same title – 'Gaspard' coming from the Persian meaning a guard of royal treasures. In 'Ondine' a water nymph sings to seduce passers-by, Ravel using similar techniques to *Jeux d'eau* to create her murky, liquid world. 'Le gibet' (The Gibbet) gives a view of a desert where 'the corpse of the hanged one' is visible on the horizon, 'reddened by the setting sun'. All that can be heard is 'the bell that tolls from the walls of a city.'

Finally, the suite ends with the night-fiend 'Scarbo', who 'pirouettes' through the room, cackling and grating his fingernails.

Famous as one of the piano repertoire's most challenging pieces, Ravel said of 'Scarbo' that he had intended 'a caricature of romanticism. Perhaps it got the better of me.'

Nos 4 to 6 from Six Piano Études

Unsuk Chin



1995–2003



10 minutes

- 4 **Scalen**
- 5 **Toccata**
- 6 **Grains**

combined into new sounds by granular synthesis. In 'Grains' I attempted to simulate this concept on the keys of the piano.'

Today's programme is defined by virtuosity. Each piece broke new ground in some way when it was written – but also owes something to pianist and composer Franz Liszt, whose challenging works and reputation for almost superhuman technique have made him synonymous with pianistic difficulty.

Jeux d'eau references Liszt's *Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'este*. Of these études, Chin says that she was 'very much attracted by the boundary-crossing, 'transcendental' (Liszt) aspect on which all important études are based: the idea that the pianist is prepared to push themselves to – or past – their limits.'

Each étude focuses on a different idea and technique. No 4 has a relatively strong orientation on the piano music of classical modernism'. In No 5 'a very dynamic forward motion dominates', and the set closes with an étude titled 'Grains'.

Chin explains that this refers to 'elementary digital sonic particles' in electro-acoustic music, 'obtained by dissection of recorded sounds, and

Selections from ‘Miroirs’

Maurice Ravel



1904–05



15 minutes

3 **Une barque sur l’océan**

4 **Alborada del gracioso**

These two pieces come from *Miroirs*, a five-movement piano suite that Maurice Ravel composed in 1904–05. He dedicated each movement to a member of Les Apaches: a group of avant-garde artists of which he was a member. As with many of the piano works of Ravel’s near-contemporary Claude Debussy, *Miroirs* is intensely pictorial.

‘Une barque sur l’océan’, the third movement, depicts a boat sailing on a calm ocean. Cascading arpeggios portray the surging waves, while bell-like figuration in the piano’s upper register illustrates sunlight glinting on the waters. Ravel uses the whole range of the piano to give a sense of the sea’s vast expanse.

‘Alborada del gracioso’ is the suite’s penultimate movement. The Spanish title roughly translates as ‘jester’s morning song’. (Ravel observed that the Spanish jester is a more benign figure than in many other traditions.) The piece’s spirited outer sections evoke strumming guitars and the rhythms of the seguidilla (a moderately fast triple-time dance from southern Spain); its central episode is more lyrical and romantic.

Miroirs was given its premiere in 1906 by Ravel’s great friend and fellow-Apache Ricardo Viñes. Ravel subsequently made successful orchestral versions of both ‘Une barque sur l’océan’ (in 1906), and ‘Alborada del gracioso’ (in 1919).

Bertrand Chamayou

piano



© Marco Borggrever

Bertrand Chamayou was born in Toulouse and studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Jean-François Heisser. He completed his training with Maria Curcio in London.

Chamayou performs regularly at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Lincoln Center and Wigmore Hall. He has appeared at festivals including New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Lucerne Festival, Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival and Beethovenfest Bonn.

Engagements during 2024 include recitals both solo and with cellist Sol Gabetta, flautist Emmanuel Pahud and soprano Barbara Hannigan; Grieg's Piano Concerto with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine under Emmanuel Villaume; Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with the Filarmonica della Scala under

Philippe Jordan; Unsuk Chin's Piano Concerto and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G with the London Symphony Orchestra under François-Xavier Roth and Sir Antonio Pappano respectively and Scriabin's Piano Concerto with the Sinfonieorchester Köln under Andris Poga in Cologne.

As a chamber musician, he has recently worked with Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Quatuor Ébène, Antoine Tamestit and Sol Gabetta, and appeared in the Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series and at Salzburg Easter Festival, Schleswig Holstein Musik Festival, the Berlin Philharmonie and the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Chamayou's many successful recordings include *Naïve*, a disc of music by César Franck, which was awarded several accolades. For his recording of Camille Saint-Saëns' Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 5 he was awarded the *Gramophone* Recording of the Year Award 2019. The only artist to win France's prestigious Victoires de la Musique on four occasions, he has an exclusive recording contract with Warner/Erato and was awarded the 2016 ECHO Klassik for his recording of Ravel's complete works for solo piano.

FUTURE CONCERTS

At LSO St Luke's

Thursday 11 April 1pm

BERTRAND CHAMAYOU & FRIENDS

Music by Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim.

Bertrand Chamayou piano
Fleur Barron mezzo-soprano
Tabea Zimmermann viola

Friday 12 April 1pm

BERTRAND CHAMAYOU: SOLO PIANO

Music by Erik Satie and John Cage

Bertrand Chamayou piano

At the Barbican

Thursday 14 March 7pm

BEETHOVEN AND UNSUK CHIN

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No 2
Unsuik Chin Piano Concerto
Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No 8

François-Xavier Roth conductor
Bertrand Chamayou piano
London Symphony Orchestra

Thursday 18 April 7pm

RAVEL PIANO CONCERTO

David Raksin
The Bad and the Beautiful – Suite
Maurice Ravel Piano Concerto in G major
Ralph Vaughan Williams Symphony No 5

Sir Antonio Pappano conductor
Bertrand Chamayou piano
London Symphony Orchestra

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