

LSO St Luke's

CHAMBER MUSIC

BBC
RADIO 3

KIRILL GERSTEIN

Friday 12 July 2024 1-2.05pm

Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

Frédéric Chopin Polonaise-Fantasy

Brad Mehldau Nocturne No 3 from 'Après Fauré'

Gabriel Fauré Nocturne No 13 in B minor

Francis Poulenc Three Intermezzos

Franz Liszt Polonaise No 2 in E major

Robert Schumann Faschingschwank aus Wien

Kirill Gerstein piano

Recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3

LSO

STILL TO COME

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

September to October

Exciting artists selected by BBC Radio 3 explore a great variety of music, all taking place on an intimate scale.

BEETHOVEN DEDICATIONS

September to November

An undisputed icon: delve into the music of a master composer.

ORNAMENTS OF THE BAROQUE

October to November

Full of fantasy and charm, discover the beauty of Baroque music.

SAVE WITH MULTIBUY DISCOUNTS

£12 tickets when you book 3+ concerts

[iso.co.uk/bbcradio3](https://www.iso.co.uk/bbcradio3)

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We always hope you have a great experience. Visit [Iso.co.uk/survey](https://www.iso.co.uk/survey) to complete a short survey about today's concert.

THE CRYPT BAR

The Crypt 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.

In accordance with the requirements of Islington Council, persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly forbidden without formal consent from LSO St Luke's.

Please make sure that digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

Polonaise-Fantasy

Frédéric Chopin



1846



11 minutes

Frédéric Chopin's piano music was dominated by dance forms, especially those derived from the peasant dances of his native Poland, such as the mazurka and the polonaise. This last style, given a veneer of aristocratic sophistication at the French and Polish courts in the 17th century, became for Chopin a potent nationalist symbol after the Poles' unsuccessful revolt against Russian domination in 1831.

His first published composition, written at the age of seven, was a Polonaise, and the last group of pieces published in his lifetime included three mazurkas, and this *Polonaise-Fantasy*. These were composed during the summer of 1846 at Nohant, the country home of Aurore Dudevant, a writer (and Chopin's lover) better-known under her *nom de plume* George Sand.

Sand described how she and Chopin both worked 'shut up like hermits' during the long, hot afternoons – 'he is still composing masterpieces, although he claims that nothing he does is worth anything'. In fact, this apparent creative idyll masked the approaching end of their nine-year affair: Sand took great delight in regaling visiting acquaintances with extracts from her latest novel, in which

the noble and long-suffering heroine's ex-lover, clearly modelled on Chopin, is vindictively portrayed as sickly, needy, and emotionally unstable. By the late autumn Chopin had returned to Paris, and within a few months he and Sand were barely on speaking terms. Thereafter his fragile health declined rapidly, and he died of tuberculosis two years later aged only 39.

The *Polonaise-Fantasy*, one of the 'masterpieces' mentioned by Sand, is a complex and enigmatic piece. Liszt declared it 'unfathomable', but it is now acknowledged as one of his finest piano works. Although it makes use of the characteristic polonaise rhythm, its harmonies seem to anticipate Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, while its fluid structure owes more to the fantasy than the traditional dance form.

Programme note written by Wendy Thompson

Nocturne No 3 from 'Après Fauré'

Brad Mehldau



2024



2 minutes

Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. His compositions include song cycles for Anne Sofie von Otter and Ian Bostridge, a Piano Concerto, and *Three Pieces after Bach*, inspired by selections from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

The composer writes: 'If the sublime foreshadows our mortality, Fauré's late works might communicate the austerity of death – Fauré's as it approached him, but also the apprehension of our own. We find a kinship with the composer finally, in the form of a question that he tossed off into the future, to us. This Nocturne is one of a set of four pieces, *Après Fauré*, that I have composed to accompany Fauré's music, to share the way I have engaged with Fauré's question, with you, the listener.'

Programme note written by Tonya Lemoh

Nocturne No 13 in B minor

Gabriel Fauré



1921



6 minutes

Like Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy*, Gabriel Fauré's Nocturne No 13 in B minor, was composed three years before his death. Born in 1845, Fauré was a composition pupil of Camille Saint-Saëns. He became one of the most influential composers of his generation, mentoring and encouraging the development of French composition.

Fauré was a great admirer of Chopin, not least as the composer who took the complexity and emotional scope of the Nocturne genre to an entirely new level. Fauré's Nocturnes bear some resemblance to those of Chopin, being constructed along similar lines, typically with two outer sections framing a strongly contrasting middle section. Fauré's harmonic language is markedly different, however, and his use of chromaticism more distinctive. His writing is also more contrapuntal, with interweaving middle voices providing a substantial foil to the main melodic line.

Written in 1921 at a time when Fauré was experiencing increasing deafness and physical frailty, the opening series of suspensions in Nocturne No 13 seem

especially poignant. Unlike much of his piano music, which leans towards the understated, this Nocturne reveals a series of intense emotional states. The hymn-like opening evokes a sombre and eloquent sense of pathos, which transitions to a restless middle section, culminating in a desperately impassioned climax and finally subsiding in an elegiac resignation of repeated B-minor chords.

This thirteenth nocturne is a curious hybrid in stylistic terms, containing elements of Late Romanticism akin to the tormented mysticism of Alexander Scriabin as well as embracing aspects of Impressionism. Aaron Copland called Fauré 'the Brahms of France', and certainly the emotional depth of Nocturne No 13 recalls some of the most passionate utterances of Johannes Brahms – but contained within the terrible elegance of a very French expression of despair.

Programme note written by Tonya Lemoh

Three Intermezzos

Francis Poulenc



1934 to 1943



9 minutes

No 1 in C major

No 2 in D-flat major

No 3 in A-flat major

'Half monk and half naughty boy' was how one critic described Francis Poulenc, who during his 'naughty boy' phase was a member of *Les Six*, a group of irreverent young French composers originally brought together by writer Jean Cocteau in the early 1920s, who delighted in 'shocking the bourgeoisie'. The last time Poulenc collaborated with several of his erstwhile colleagues was in 1949, when he contributed a Mazurka to an anthology of songs commemorating the centenary of Chopin's death. In 1936 the violent death of a fellow composer in a car accident turned Poulenc's thoughts towards his Catholic faith, and much of his later work, such as the Organ Concerto, the opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and the *Gloria*, springs from his spiritual reawakening.

Unlike the majority of professional pianist-composers, Poulenc, who was born into an affluent family of pharmaceutical manufacturers, had no formal conservatory training. He was expected to go into the family business, but instead he rebelled and took lessons from the eccentric Spanish pianist and champion of Claude

Debussy and Maurice Ravel, Ricardo Viñes, to whom Poulenc said he owed his fledgling efforts in music and everything he knew about the piano.

Although he became an exceptionally proficient pianist, Poulenc apparently didn't rate his own piano music very highly. He claimed only to like four pieces, one being the last of three piano Intermezzos. The first two, a fiery Presto in the style of his Russian contemporary Prokofiev, and a slower, more romantic piece in the mellow key of D flat, were composed in August 1934; and the third, Poulenc's favourite, nine years later in Nazi-occupied Paris. This A-flat Intermezzo is the most lyrically Chopinesque of the three, with its instruction that the melody should be 'accompanied by a halo of pedals'.

Programme note written by Wendy Thompson

Polonaise No 2 in E major

Franz Liszt



1851



9 minutes

Born 18 months after Chopin, but with a lifespan almost twice as long, the Hungarian pianist, conductor and composer Franz Liszt enjoyed a sensationally successful career as a touring virtuoso. As a glamorous young man he performed all over Europe to packed audiences, revelling in the frenzied adulation (particularly from young women) known as 'Lisztomania'. Then, at the age of 35, he abruptly gave it all up, moved to Weimar as a court conductor, and hardly ever played the piano in public again.

The death of Chopin, whom he had met in Paris in the 1830s and regarded as a close friend, prompted Liszt to begin writing a biography of the Polish composer, and to raise a monument in his memory. In 1851 he composed a pair of Polonaises of his own, of which the second is far brighter and livelier than its subdued companion. The E-major Polonaise is constructed like a set of variations, each more spectacularly brilliant than its predecessor.

Programme note written by Wendy Thompson

Faschingsschwank aus Wien

Robert Schumann



1839



21 minutes

- 1 **Allegro: Sehr Lebhaft**
- 2 **Romanze: Ziemlich Langsam**
- 3 **Scherzino**
- 4 **Intermezzo: Mit Grösster Energie**
- 5 **Finale: Höchst Lebhaft**

Robert Schumann set out with the intention of becoming a virtuoso pianist, but a disabling hand injury put paid to his career, and he turned instead to music journalism and composition.

In early October 1838 he travelled to Vienna, hoping in the first instance to find a publisher for his journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and then to find enough well-paid work to enable him to settle permanently with the pianist Clara Wieck, to whom he had been secretly engaged for a year in the teeth of her father's opposition. Sadly the city of Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert proved disappointing. 'Vienna is a city where they are afraid of everything new ... Even in music they want nothing revolutionary', wrote Schumann.

He only spent eight months in Vienna, but while there he experienced the Viennese carnival season – the period between Epiphany and the beginning of Lent, when the city gave itself over to hedonistic pursuits such as masked balls, extravagant costumes, jesters and parades of decorated floats.

Towards the end of his stay Schumann began a five-movement suite of piano pieces inspired by the Carnival, completing four of them before he left and the finale back in Leipzig. He was fascinated by musical ciphers, and the word 'Faschingsschwank' (Carnival) incorporates the letters ASCH SCHA (A – E flat – C – B; E flat – C – B – A in English musical notation), which form the basis of the melodic material. Two bright, lively and virtuosic outer movements enclose a brief, reflective Romanze in G minor, and an energetic, fast-flowing Intermezzo, while the central movement is a sprightly miniature scherzo. Listen for the cheeky quote of *La Marseillaise* (French National Anthem) in the opening Allegro.

Programme note written by Wendy Thompson

Kirill Gerstein

piano



© Marco Borggreve

Pianist Kirill Gerstein's repertoire ranges from Johann Sebastian Bach to Thomas Adès. Born in the former Soviet Union, Gerstein is an American citizen based in Berlin. His career is similarly international, with worldwide performances ranging from concerts with the Chicago and Boston Orchestras, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Royal Concertgebouw, Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics, London Symphony Orchestra and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO) to recitals in London, Berlin, Vienna, Paris and New York.

Gerstein is also in demand for the breadth of his musical influences which, in recent seasons, has led to residencies with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO), London's Wigmore Hall, the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and the London Symphony Orchestra.

Gerstein's most recent release on Myrios Classics was a double album of music by Claude Debussy and Komitas. He first collaborated with the label in 2010 and through the partnership has been able to realise many projects. Deutsche Grammophon's 2020 release of the world premiere performance of Adès' Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, written for Gerstein, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, won a 2020 *Gramophone Award* and was nominated for three Grammy Awards. He released his *Rachmaninoff 150* recording in 2023 as a tribute to the mark the composer's 150th year, featuring his performance of the Second Piano Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Kirill Petrenko, recorded live on Berlin's Waldbühne stage.

Gerstein was born in Voronezh in Russia in 1979. He studied jazz and classical piano at the Berklee College of Music in Boston (their youngest student), completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees in classical piano with Solomon Mikowsky at New York's Manhattan School of Music and went on to further studies with Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid and Ferenc Rados in Budapest. Gerstein is the sixth recipient of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award, First Prize winner at the tenth Arthur Rubinstein Competition and an Avery Fisher Career Grant holder.

FUTURE CONCERTS

Friday 6 September 1pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

Claude Debussy Cello Sonata
Johannes Brahms Cello Sonata No 2 in
F major

Andrei Ioniță cello
Alim Beisembayev piano

Friday 6 September 6pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

Johann Sebastian Bach
Cello Suite No 5 in C minor BWV 1011
Cello Suite No 3 in C major BWV 1009

Andrei Ioniță cello

Thursday 12 September 1pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

Dmitri Shostakovich Piano Trio No 1
Johannes Brahms Piano Trio No 1

Aleksey Semenenko violin
Andrei Ioniță cello
Alim Beisembayev piano

Thursday 19 September 1pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

Karol Szymanowski String Quartet No 2
Robert Schumann String Quartet No 3

Quatuor Arod

Friday 19 September 6pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

Sergei Prokofiev Selections from Ten
Pieces for Piano Op 12
César Franck Piano Quintet

Quatuor Arod
Elisabeth Brauß piano

Thursday 26 September 1pm

BEETHOVEN DEDICATIONS

Ludwig van Beethoven 12 Variations on
'Se vuol ballare' (from Mozart's 'The
Marriage of Figaro')
Violin Sonata No 9, 'Kreutzer'

Chloë Hanslip violin
Danny Driver piano

Friday 18 October 1pm

NEW GENERATION ARTISTS

John Corigliano Fantasia on an Ostinato
Ludwig van Beethoven Eroica Variations,
Improvisations
Franz Liszt Funerailles
Frédéric Chopin 'Heroic' Polonaise in
A flat major

Alexander Gadjiev piano

Thursday 24 October 1pm

BEETHOVEN DEDICATIONS

Ludwig van Beethoven Sextet in E flat
major Op 71
Octet in E flat major Op 103
Rondino in E flat major

LSO Wind Ensemble

lso.co.uk/radio3

Stay in Touch



@Isostlukes



LSO St Luke's / BBC Radio 3



@Isostlukes / @BBCRadio3

These concerts are recorded for future broadcast, and you can listen on BBC Radio 3 at a later date.

For scheduling information, visit bbc.co.uk/radio3

SUBSCRIBE

Get our latest updates delivered to your inbox. Visit lso.co.uk/elist

WATCH

Find performance clips, behind-the-scenes footage, interviews and family and learning resources at youtube.com/LSO

Please recycle this programme after use.