

Programme

Bach

Prelude and Fugue C# major book 1

Mozart

Sonata No 18

Scriabin

Sonata No 2

Liszt

Vallée D'Obermann

Liszt

Hungarian Rhapsody No 2

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason is nineteen years old and holds the Victoria Robey Scholarship to The Royal College of Music, studying piano with Vanessa Latache.

Jeneba was a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France 2014 and the Nottingham Young Musician 2013. She was also winner of the Iris Dyer Piano Prize at The Royal Academy of Music Junior Academy, where she studied with Patsy Toh.

Jeneba has played numerous concerts in England, Wales, Paris and the Caribbean as a recital and concerto soloist and as a chamber musician. She has performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1, Ravel's Piano Concerto, Saint-Saëns' Concerto No 2, Mozart's Piano Concerto No 12, Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 and Florence Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement with Chineke! Orchestra at both The Royal Festival Hall and The Royal Albert Hall, where she made her BBC Proms concerto debut in 2021. In 2022 she will record with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Other highlights include recitals at Wigmore Hall, Drapers' Hall and the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields as well as at the Lenzburgiade, Cheltenham and Lamberhurst Festivals. In 2022, Jeneba will also undertake tours of Australia, New Zealand, USA, Antigua and Barbuda with the Kanneh-Masons.

Jeneba has appeared on several television and radio programmes including Radio 3, In Tune, The BAFTAs, The Royal Variety Performance, the BBC4 Documentary *Young, Gifted and Classical*, the *Imagine* documentary for BBC1, *This House is Full of Music* and *BBC2's A Musical Family Christmas with the Kanneh-Masons*. She has recorded for the album, *Carnival*, with Decca Classics.

Jeneba is grateful to Lady Robey, The Nottingham Soroptimist Trust and to The Nottingham Education Trust.

Programme Notes

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue C sharp major from Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I, BWV858

Das Wohltemperierte Klavier, or more commonly, The Well-Tempered Clavier is a collection of 48 preludes and fugues by J S Bach in all the major and minor keys.

Book 1 appeared in 1722 and, some twenty years later, a second volume appeared in Leipzig. Several factors prompted its composition including an incomplete collection of 20 Preludes and Fugues by Johann Fischer (1646-1716) that highlighted the limited number of keys available to early 18th century keyboard players. Bach aimed to complete what Fisher had begun and make possible the performance in all the major and minor keys of the chromatic scale. In this regard, his Well-Tempered Clavier can be seen as a campaign for real tuning.

An additional stimulus for Bach's '48' was its educational use suggested within the work's title page: 'For the Use and Profit of the Musical Youth Desirous of Learning as well as for the Pastime of those Already Skilled in this Study drawn up and written by Johann Sebastian Bach'. In respect of the words 'well-tempered', this refers to the tuning method of keyboards so that the twelve semitones of the chromatic scale are an equal distance apart in perceived pitch.

The Well-Tempered Clavier is a first systematic exploration of harmony and as an 'ordnance survey' of every key of the chromatic scale, it remains unequalled in its inventiveness. The Prelude in C sharp major has a dance-like character generated by its triple time metre, lively rhythms and leaping intervals. The buoyant mood continues in the Fugue where wide intervals and strong rhythms characterise the subject.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Piano Sonata in D major, K 576

1) Allegro, 2) Adagio, 3) Allegretto

It was on the harpsichord that the six-year-old Mozart first demonstrated his extraordinary gifts in recitals across the capitals of Europe. During the 1760s he began his first keyboard compositions, progressing from minuets and variations to three-movement sonatas. A decade later it was for the rapidly developing pianoforte that Mozart wrote his latest sonatas and piano concertos that would become enduring masterpieces.

The years following his marriage in 1782 were amongst his happiest and most successful and when his father visited him in Vienna at the beginning of 1785, he was taken aback by the splendid apartments in which his son lived. But Mozart's success was short-lived and within a few years his financial situation had become precarious. By April 1789, his friend and pupil Prince Lichnowsky took the struggling composer to Berlin in the hope of securing a royal appointment with Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia. Leaving Vienna in early April 1789, they reached Potsdam towards the end of the month where Mozart received an invitation from Friedrich Wilhelm to write 'six easy piano sonatas' for his daughter Friedericke and six string quartets for his resident chamber ensemble. In the end, only three quartets were completed and just one piano sonata in D major (K 576), which turned out to be his last in the medium.

Cast in three movements, the first is built on two contrasting ideas set in motion by a bounding gesture followed immediately by a sprightly response. Mozart shares this opening idea between the hands, its polyphonic discourse owing much to the counterpoint of Bach. While a second, and now eloquent idea eventually makes an appearance, it is the spirited main theme that dominates this sonata form Allegro. The central Adagio is one of Mozart's most profound creations which, despite its initial major tonality, inhabits a certain melancholy. Its gentle musing is swept aside in the exuberant Allegretto, a tour de force of contrapuntal invention allied to no small degree of virtuosity. As his final essay in the genre, this is a marvellous summation of Mozart's artistry.

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Piano Sonata No 2 in G sharp minor, Op 19

1) Andante, 2) Presto

Alexander Scriabin was one of the leading Russian composer-pianists of the generation after Tchaikovsky and one of the most intriguing figures in music history. While his early works bear kinship with Chopin, his romantic inclination was to give way to a tonally ambiguous modernism traceable in a series of Preludes, Etudes and ten Piano Sonatas spanning the years 1892 to 1913.

His extraordinary ego and interests in the occult led to several visionary works culminating in his orchestral *The Poem of Ecstasy*. This work prompted a posthumous assessment from Rollo Myers who claimed Scriabin to be '...a strange and lonely creative spirit whose genius somehow miscarried and led him into paths where no 'pure' musician would ever dare to tread'.

His Second Piano Sonata is a relatively early work, begun in 1892 but not completed for a further five years when progress was interrupted by his European concert tours. Unlike his First Piano Sonata with its echoes of Chopin, his Second Sonata leans more toward the chromaticism of Liszt and Wagner. More fantasia than sonata, it comprises two contrasting movements and may have been inspired by Scriabin's seashore sojourns. Certainly, the mood of the first movement amply fulfils his wish to convey 'the quiet of a southern night on the seashore'. Following a tentative introduction, the Andante is built on two gentle themes: one descending (and initially underpinned by a rocking left hand), the other a simple curving pattern soon developed and 'hidden' within increasingly dense textures. The resulting turbulence eventually subsides for the movement's rapt close. Calm makes way for the raw energy of the stormy Presto where left-hand octaves over scurrying triplets in the right-hand carry both the thematic material and a tarantella-like momentum.

Franz Liszt (1811-86)

Vallée D'Obermann

Franz Liszt was arguably the greatest 19th century keyboard virtuoso who significantly extended the boundaries of piano technique in a vast output of epic proportions. His legendary piano playing earned him fame far beyond his native Hungary and won for him the adoration of many aristocratic women, two of whom became important companions. Liszt's 'rock star' lifestyle, divided between a travelling virtuoso and a composer, seemed at odds with both his unfulfilled marital yearnings and his lifelong spiritual leanings.

In 1861 he settled in Rome in semi-retirement and, as he withdrew from the outside world, his compositions began to reveal an increasingly religious preoccupation.

His European travels had found musical outlet in the descriptive writing which occupies the first two volumes of his *Années de Pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage).

Many of these pieces were written in the 1830's during tours in Switzerland and Italy with his mistress, the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult. Belonging to the first volume of *Années de Pèlerinage* (the Swiss collection) are nine atmospheric portraits of scenes, paintings and heroic figures. Rather than convey any literal narrative, these pieces express a romantic joy at the grandeur of the landscape, one which held a special attraction for the contemporary imagination. *Vallée d'Obermann*, the longest and most elaborate portrait of the set, takes its title from a romantic novel by Étienne Pivert de Senancour who lived in Switzerland about 1800. The music mirrors the life of a solitary person depressed by poverty and tired of life. Initially bleak and resigned, the music closes in a paean of joy.

Franz Liszt

Hungarian Rhapsody No 2

19 Hungarian rhapsodies were to occupy the composer over a forty-year period from 1846. Many, including the second, adopt the pattern of a slow first section (*lassú*) and second fast section (*friss*) familiar to much improvised Hungarian music. Within the opening declamatory and introspective first section and the virtuosic second, Liszt achieves an astonishing variety of expression, his creative imagination seemingly endless.