

St
Martin
in
the
Fields

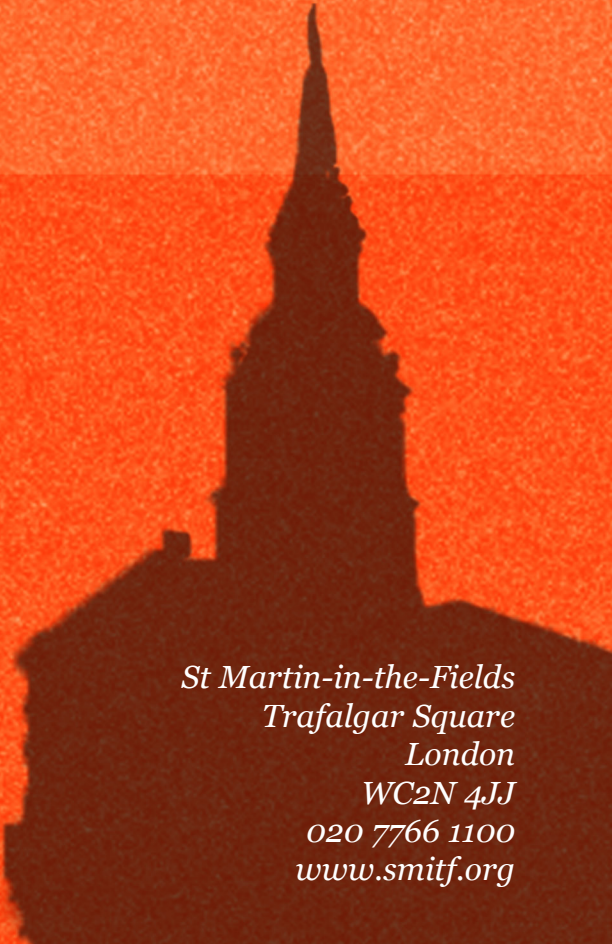


FRESH HORIZONS

Peter Donohoe

*Available to watch as many times as you like
from 7.30pm, Thursday 18 March 2021,
and available for 30 days.*

*St Martin-in-the-Fields
Trafalgar Square
London
WC2N 4JJ
020 7766 1100
www.smitf.org*



FRESH HORIZONS



PROGRAMME

Moment Musical No 6 in Ab — Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Song Without Words No 6 in Ab 'Duetto' — Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Klavierstücke No 5 in F 'Romanza' — Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Klavierstücke No 6 in Eb minor 'Intermezzo' — Brahms

Elegy No 3 'Meine Seele bangt und Hoffet zu Dir' — Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)

Lyric Pieces No 5 'Erotik' — Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Lyric Pieces No 6 'To Spring' — Grieg

Impromptu No 3 in Gb — Schubert

Impromptu No 4 in Ab — Schubert

Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C — J.S. Bach (1685-1750) arr. Busoni

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PROGRAMME NOTES

by Sarah Maxted

In this beautifully curated programme, Peter Donohoe explores the extraordinary expressive range of Romantic music for solo piano.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was a Viennese composer, born and bred, whose oeuvre of chamber music, art song and piano works has come to be recognised as pivotal in the transition from late-classical to early-Romantic style. Sadly, most of this recognition did not come until decades after Schubert's tragically short life, as later Romantic composers championed the brilliance of his works. ***Moment Musical No 6 in Ab*** is from a collection of short piano pieces, published in Vienna in 1828 after Schubert's death. Each of the *Moments* is brief (under 10 minutes) but richly characterful and well-suited to both professionals and the Viennese public, who wanted piano music they could play and enjoy at home. *Moment in Ab major* is an elegant Allegretto and Trio, with emotional intensity that reveals itself through Schubert's use of dynamic contrasts, suspenseful short silences and ambiguous harmonies. The closing cadence decrescendos to finish on an open octave of Ab, leaving the listener with a searching sense of emptiness and yearning.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was a German Romantic composer, greatly admired for his symphonies, orchestral works and oratorios. He demonstrated his more intimate lyrical style in eight volumes of *Songs Without Words* for solo piano, written and published at various stages in his career. Although tuneful character pieces for the piano were already a core element of Romantic tradition, the idea of explicitly calling them *Songs Without Words* was newly devised by Mendelssohn, perhaps with the influence of his sister and fellow composer Fanny Mendelssohn. ***Songs Without Words No 6 in Ab 'Duetto'*** is from the third book of *Songs*, composed in 1836-37. It has the title 'Duetto' since it features two melodic lines, representing two singers, which should be equally emphasised in performance. This also implies perhaps a hint of romantic dedication as this was the year Mendelssohn met his future wife Cécile Jeanrenaud.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was born in Hamburg but spent most of his professional life immersed in the vibrant musical scene of Vienna. He was both an establishment figure, venerating the classical formality of Mozart and Beethoven, and an innovator, influencing generations of modernist composers to come. His *Sechs Klavierstücke Op 118* were published in 1893 and dedicated to composer and pianist Clara Schumann. They are peerless examples of the introspection and lyricism that shine through the music of Brahms' autumn years. ***Klavierstücke No 5 in F 'Romanza'*** opens with chorale-like reverence and simplicity, then explores intricate whimsy and lightness in its middle section.

No 6 in Eb minor ‘Intermezzo’ begins with a melody suggesting the ‘Dies irae’ chant of the requiem mass. Brahms creates a brooding atmosphere with sweeping arpeggios, enigmatic chromaticism and ominous repetition of the requiem motif. The middle section offers a bold response to the existential questions of the piece’s opening, answering with affirmation and heroism. However, this confidence is short-lived, and the motif of uncertainty returns to the foreground.

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) was an Italian pianist and composer, whose works encompass a stylistic journey from late-Romanticism to atonal modernism. Early in his career, he greatly admired Brahms and dedicated two sets of piano *Études* to the veteran composer. Busoni’s *Elegies* were written in 1907 (published in 1908 as a cycle of solo piano pieces) and were a significant milestone in the development of his style beyond Romanticism. He wrote, “My entire personal vision I put down at last and for the first time in the *Elegies*”. ***Elegy No 3 ‘Meine Seele bangt und Hofft zu Dir’*** (‘My soul trembles and hopes of thee’) is based on a Lutheran chorale and explores a richly imagined atmosphere of agitation, awe and soul-searching anxiety.

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) was Norway’s leading composer of the nineteenth century, a significant figure of both the Romantic era and the folksong revival movement that helped establish Norwegian identity in music. A pianist himself, some of Grieg’s most iconic works were written for piano, including the unforgettable theatrical flourish that opens his *Piano Concerto in A minor*. He composed a fantastic array of 66 *Lyric Pieces*, published in 10 volumes from 1867 to 1901. These two pieces are from the third book published in 1886. ***Lyric Pieces No 5 ‘Erotik’*** is a love-song evoking perhaps not the modern carnal implications of the title, but a more delicate and vulnerable side of romance. The mood takes only a brief turn towards darker colours of passion, before returning to the tender beauty of the main theme. ***No 6 ‘To Spring’*** brims with bright enthusiasm and irrepressible vitality, thanks to the eager insistence of repeated crotchet chords that persist through to the very final bars of the piece.

Franz Schubert composed eight *Impromptus* in 1827, which were later published in two sets of four, and are often considered companion pieces to his *Moments Musical*. ***Impromptu No 3 in Gb*** brings to mind some of Schubert’s most exquisite art song compositions, with its quivering broken-chord accompaniment underpinning a truly beautiful and plaintive melody. Whilst the melody builds in intensity, the left-hand accompaniment discovers dramatic patterns of triplet embellishments, lurching and plummeting in the style of Schubert’s great narrative lieder such as *Erkönig*. ***Impromptu No 4 in Ab*** transports us to another realm of Schubert’s imagination, no less fantastical. The right-hand revels in stylish cascades of semiquavers, leading gradually to a warm, pastoral melody. The contrasting middle section brings an impassioned, melancholic theme in C# minor, before a comforting return to the shimmering semiquavers in Ab major and a simple, triumphant finish.

One of Ferruccio Busoni’s most remarkable achievements was his extensive catalogue of transcriptions and arrangements of the keyboard works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Published from 1894 to the end of his life, these accomplishments of deep engagement in the music of Bach also stimulated the advancement of Busoni’s own style. In his transcription of ***Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue in C*** the majesty, purity and ebullience of Bach’s masterpiece is superbly reinvigorated for piano performance.

FRESH HORIZONS

PERFORMERS

Peter Donohoe

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953. He studied at Chetham's School of Music for seven years, graduated in music at Leeds University, and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, for his musicianship, stylistic versatility and commanding technique.

Peter Donohoe (c. Sussie Ahlburg)



In recent seasons he has appeared with Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic and Concert Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonia, RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Symphony Orchestra, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He has undertaken a UK tour with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as giving concerts in many South American and European countries, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Russia, and USA.

His most recent discs include *Tchaikovsky Solo Piano Works*, which was Instrumental Choice in BBC Music Magazine, and three volumes of *Mozart Piano Sonatas* with SOMM Records. Disc 1 was BBC Music Magazine's 'Recording of the Month' in April 2019; and discs 2 and 3 received high praise from Gramophone Magazine, Classical Ear and Musical Opinion.

He has performed with all the major London orchestras, as well as orchestras from across the world: the Royal Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Philharmonic, Swedish Radio, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Vienna Symphony and Czech Philharmonic Orchestras.

Peter Donohoe is an honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities, and was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the 2010 New Year's Honours List.

Our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for supporting the Fresh Horizons concert series at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

This concert was pre-recorded in the church and edited together before broadcast. The performers and technical crew carefully adhere to all current government regulations for COVID-19.

FRESH HORIZONS

Other concerts in the **Fresh Horizons series:**

Stile Antico: A Garden of Delights

Thursday 18 February, 7.30pm

London Mozart Players:

Beethoven Violin Concerto

Thursday 25 February, 7.30pm

Stile Antico: Toward the Dawn

Thursday 4 March, 7.30pm

Academy of St Martin in the Fields:

Bach and Brahms

Thursday 11 March, 7.30pm

Piatti Quartet

Thursday 25 March, 7.30pm

Stainer – The Crucifixion

Thursday 1 April, 7.30pm

Handel – Messiah

Thursday 8 April, 7.30pm

The Gesualdo Six

Thursday 15 April, 7.30pm

**Academy of St Martin in the Fields
with John Butt**

Thursday 22 April, 7.30pm

Chineke! Chamber Ensemble

Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm

All concerts are available to watch from 30 days after their release date

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