

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 24 September 2024  
7.30pm

Angela Hewitt piano

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

Sonata in A Kk322  
Sonata in D Kk145  
Sonata in D minor Kk417  
Sonata in C Kk460  
Sonata in F minor Kk519  
Sonata in F minor Kk466

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Partita No. 1 in B flat BWV825 (by 1726)  
*I. Praeludium • II. Allemande • III. Courante • IV. Sarabande • V. Menuet I • VI. Menuet II • VII. Gigue*

*Interval*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor Op. 5 (1853)  
*I. Allegro maestoso • II. Andante espressivo • III. Scherzo. Allegro energico • IV. Intermezzo. Andante molto • V. Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato*



SUPPORT OUR AUDIENCE FUND: EVERY NOTE COUNTS

Ensure Wigmore Hall remains a vibrant hub of musical excellence by making a donation today.  
[wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate) | 020 7258 8220



Join & Support  
Donations

*Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.*



*Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.*

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://Wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



Despite being a prolific composer of music in several different genres, the fame of **Domenico Scarlatti** today overwhelmingly rests on his 555 keyboard sonatas. Most of them were written for his patron and pupil, Princess Maria Barbara of Portugal (later Queen of Spain). Typically, Scarlatti's sonatas are in a simple binary form, consisting of two distinct sections that are both repeated, but the sheer variety of musical invention they contain is astounding.

The Sonata in A Kk322, for example, is a spirited work that calls us to attention from the outset with three repeated notes. It evokes the fashionable *galant* style, which emphasised naturalness and simplicity: here, the melody is accompanied only by minims, and has a popular, song-like quality. Another 'popular' device appears in the Sonata in F minor Kk 519, an Andalusian dance where whole phrases are transposed up, increasing the tension and excitement. Sharp contrasts are found in the Sonata in D Kk145, from its bright opening to a more contrapuntal section featuring syncopated part-playing between the hands, and a final section filled with brilliant passagework.

Two other, larger-scale sonatas in tonight's programme showcase different qualities. With the Sonata in D minor Kk417, one of the few not in binary form, Scarlatti reveals himself as a master polyphonist, constructing a fugue that begins in three voices but then transforms into a thrilling *moto perpetuo* in the left hand. The Sonata in C Kk460, meanwhile, contains several passages distinctly reminiscent of early Spanish guitar technique, including arpeggio chords and phrases in the *punteado* (plucked) style. Arpeggio figures also form a key element of the ethereal Sonata in F minor Kk466, above which a touchingly ornamented right hand sings out in lament.

Like Scarlatti, **Johann Sebastian Bach** hailed from a famous musical family. In 1723, Bach moved to Leipzig, a city that was famous then, as now, for its book trade. It was at the 1726 Michaelmas Book Fair that he announced the first in an ambitious series of (self-published) keyboard Partitas. Five more followed, and they were all re-issued in 1731 as a set, entitled *Clavier-Übung* ('Keyboard Practice').

The word 'Partita' refers to an ordered suite of dance movements, in the manner of Bach's English and French Suites. As the first in the collection, the Partita in B flat BWV825 was designed to be both impressive and accessible. It opens with an elegant *Praeludium*, and continues with a sequence of dances (*Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande* and two *Menuets*) largely built around a broken B flat major chord. The finale, an Italian *Gigue*, is a brilliant study in hand-crossing, and the technical acrobatics demanded of the player make it thrilling to watch and listen to.

The Sonata in F minor Op. 5 is the third and last of **Johannes Brahms's** piano sonatas, all of which were composed in his youth. Robert Schumann called them 'veiled symphonies', and their huge orchestral textures

prefigure Brahms's future endeavours, including his D minor piano concerto. Written in 1853, the F minor sonata is closely linked to Brahms's trip to Düsseldorf in which he introduced himself to Robert and Clara Schumann, and may have been inspired by Robert's sonata in the same key (Op. 14).

The first movement is cast in a heavy 3/4 tempo (like the second movement of the *Ein deutsches Requiem*). It opens with a series of huge, forceful chords, followed by a gloomy march featuring an ominous three-note motif. The second theme is more flowing and expressive, but the rich, widely spaced harmonies so characteristic of Brahms's piano music are still present. Although the development has a particular focus on the triplet motif, it fails to reappear in the reprise; Brahms instead moves to the lyrical second theme, now in F major.

Unlike the slow movements of the other two sonatas, which are based on German songs, the *Andante espressivo*, in A flat major, is a song without words. It is based on a poem by Sternau, *Junge Liebe* ('Young love'), that Brahms quotes in the score: 'Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint / Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint / Und halten sich selig umfangen' ('The evening falls, the moonlight shines / Two hearts are united in love / And they hold each other blissfully'). One is reminded of Carl Tausig's comments about Chopin's *Barcarolle*, that the dualism of two lovers is expressed in intervals of thirds and sixths: here, the singing first theme is made up of intimate chains of descending thirds, before Brahms then shifts to D flat for a second theme, built around sixths. Although marked 'extremely quiet and gentle', it soon develops into something much more intense and passionate. Some of this intensity is carried over into the repetition of the opening theme, but true climax is achieved in a new section that begins quietly but builds into an enormous, ecstatic coda.

The third movement, a muscular *Scherzo*, jolts us out of this reverie, although the contrasting trio perhaps hints at what has just passed. A dark funeral march, dominated by a drum-like motif, follows; Brahms titled it 'Intermezzo: Rückblick' ('Reminiscence'), which may allude to another Sternau poem, *Bitte* ('Request'), that speaks of a love grown cold and withered.

The final movement is a rondo that begins playfully but gradually becomes more thematically complex. An initial excursion away from the rondo melody is based on the personal motto of the violinist Joseph Joachim, who was a close friend of Brahms: F-A-E, or 'Frei aber einsam' ('Free but lonely'). Another theme, a chorale, then takes over, eventually leading to a crashing, two-stage coda where at one point the rondo theme even accompanies itself. Now in glorious F major, the demons of the first movement are a distant memory, replaced by rhythmic hijinks and radiant, joyful abandon.

© Dr Andrew Frampton 2024

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.