

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 27 November 2024
7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

From *Kinderszenen* Op. 15 (1838)

Von fremden Ländern und Menschen •
Curiose Geschichte • *Hasche-Mann* •
Bittendes Kind • *Glückes genug* •
Wichtige Begebenheit • *Träumerei* •

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Rêverie (c.1890)

Robert Schumann

From *Kinderszenen* Op. 15

Am Camin • *Ritter vom Steckenpferd* •
Fast zu ernst • *Fürchtenmachen* • *Kind*
im Einschlummern • *Der Dichter spricht*

Claude Debussy

Arabesque No. 2 (c.1890)

Robert Schumann

Arabeske in C Op. 18 (1838-9)

Claude Debussy

Children's Corner (1906-8)

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum • *Jimbo's*
Lullaby • *Serenade for the Doll* • *The*
Snow Is Dancing • *The Little Shepherd* •
Golliwogg's Cake-Walk

Interval

Claude Debussy

Berceuse héroïque (1914)

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007)

Klavierstück IX (1961)

Claude Debussy

Etudes Book II (1915)

Pour les degrés chromatiques • *Pour les*
agréments • *Pour les notes répétées* •
Pour les sonorités opposées • *Pour les*
arpèges composés • *Pour les accords*

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Schumann composed *Kinderszenen* in February and March 1838, writing 30 pieces in all but eventually choosing 13 for the published set which he described to Clara as 'sweet little things' – though a decade later he told Carl Reinecke that 'they are reminiscences for those who have grown up.' They certainly made a deep impression on one of Schumann's most illustrious colleagues: in June 1839 Franz Liszt wrote that 'as to the *Kinderszenen*, I owe you one of the most invigorating joys of my life ... I have a three-year-old daughter [and] I play the *Kinderszenen* to her in the evening two or three times a week. She is utterly delighted – and myself even more so, as you can imagine'.

This comment raises the perennial question about *Kinderszenen*: were they written for children or adults? The judgement of history seems to have been that it doesn't matter: these inspired, poetic miniatures can be relished on many different levels.

The *Arabeske* was composed a few months later, at the end of 1838, while Schumann was in Vienna – a visit which produced several piano works. The *Arabeske* is refined and graceful, deliberately written as a piece intended to give pleasure.

Children's Corner was written in 1906-8 and published in September 1908 with a dedication to **Debussy's** three year-old daughter Chouchou. Through adult eyes, these six pieces explore the realms of childhood toys and fantasies, although the first piece, *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum*, alludes to Clementi's exercises – and presumably to Chouchou's piano lessons yet to come. The second piece depicts Jumbo the elephant who lived for a time in Paris's Jardin des plantes ('Jimbo' being the Parisian dialect pronunciation) – a creature for whom Debussy seems to have had real affection, given the originality of his lullaby. The *Serenade for the Doll* describes a porcelain doll and makes extensive use of pentatonic scales. *The Snow is Dancing* is an animated tone-poem for piano, while *The Little Shepherd* is straightforward, heartfelt and tender. The concluding *Golliwogg's Cake-walk* is a romp, made all the more entertaining by Debussy's comic allusions to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Rêverie was written in about 1890, just as Debussy was starting to find his individual voice. His later judgement on the piece (in a letter from 1904) was brutal: 'In two words: it's bad'. Maybe after composing *Pelléas et Mélisande* Debussy felt that the *Rêverie* wasn't representative, but its gentle, dream-like mood, coloured with some beguiling harmonies, is still effective. The *Arabesques* date from the same time and were first published in 1891. The second of them is an ingenious and capricious piece, with a hint of the quixotic energy that was to infuse many of Debussy's later, bolder piano works.

The years of World War I saw Debussy's health go into a sharp decline, but he continued to compose, writing three magnificent instrumental sonatas (of a projected

set of six) and piano music which continued his lifelong quest for innovation. The *Berceuse héroïque* was an occasional piece, written for a morale-boosting volume in honour of the Belgian King and his people, published for Christmas 1914 as *King Albert's Book*. Debussy based the *Berceuse* on the Belgian national anthem ('La Brabaçonne') which emerges from a rather desolate context of dark piano textures and austere harmonies. It was while working on an edition of Chopin's music for his publisher Durand that Debussy conceived the idea of composing some études of his own. He wrote them in a bout of feverish creativity in the summer of 1915, during a break from Paris at Pourville, near Dieppe. Debussy was delighted with the results: on 28 August 1915, he wrote to Durand: 'I have put much love and trust in the future of the *Études* ... I am pleased to have created a work which – false vanity aside – will occupy a special place', adding a few weeks later that 'I'm happy they have come out so well.' Book II, comprising Nos 7-12 of the *Etudes*, begins with a study of 'les degrés chromatiques' in which fragments of rapid chromatic figurations, mostly in the right hand, are underpinned by a chordal idea. *Pour les agréments* is concerned with ornamentation and decoration – drawing inspiration from the French clavecinistes, while in no way imitating them. The study for repeated notes is a remarkable exercise in tonal ambiguity: the key is often uncertain, and Debussy experiments gleefully with unusual harmonies and dissonances. *Pour les sonorités opposées* explores subtle differences of timbre for expressive effect – a notable feature of Debussy's own piano playing according to Alfredo Casella, who recalled that Debussy's 'sensitivity of touch was incomparable.' *Pour les arpegges composés* presents a range of arpeggio figures – by turns delicate and dazzling – while the final étude, *Pour les accords*, brings the set to an exultant close, more direct in expression than its predecessors, but no less challenging for the player. Debussy dedicated the *Etudes* 'à la mémoire de Frédéric Chopin.'

Stockhausen wrote 19 *Klavierstücke* between 1952 and 2003. His *Klavierstück IX* was completed in 1961 and given its première by Aloys Kontarsky on 21 May 1962 in Cologne. It opens with over 200 repetitions of a single chord, but the colours of the chord gradually change during a very long diminuendo. This remarkable opening – thought to have been inspired by Stockhausen's interest in non-European music – is followed by a contrasting idea, much freer and slower. This is then juxtaposed with and interrupted by the repeated chords in a dramatic (and sometimes disquieting) dialogue. At the end, the piece dissolves into filigree arabesques at the top of the piano's register, occasionally underpinned by bass notes, before fading into a long, unearthly silence.

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Tour de Debussy: Concerts 2021 - 2024

Wednesday 20 October 2021 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Debussy	Danse bohémienne Images oubliées
Wagner	Prelude from <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> arranged by Zoltán Kocsis
Liszt	Isolde's Liebestod from Wagner's <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> S447
Liszt	Sposalizio from <i>Années de pèlerinage, deuxième année, Italie</i> S161
Debussy	Arabesque No. 1
Maurice Ohana	Etude No. 5 'Quintes' from <i>12 Etudes d'interprétation</i> Etude No. 4 'Main gauche seule' from <i>12 Etudes d'interprétation</i>
Debussy	Images, Series 1 L'isle joyeuse

Saturday 23 October 2021 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano; Quatuor Danel; Leon Bosch double bass

Debussy	String Quartet in G minor Op. 10 Danse sacrée et danse profane
Franck	Piano Quintet in F minor

Tuesday 11 January 2022 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Pierné	Nocturne en forme de valse Op. 40 No. 2
Decaux	Le Cimetière from <i>Clairs de lune</i>
Debussy	Nocturne
Ravel	Gaspard de la nuit
Debussy	Préludes Book II

Thursday 13 January 2022 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano; Dmitry Shishkin piano

Bartók	2 Pictures Op. 10 transcribed by Zoltán Kocsis
Liszt	Concerto pathétique S258
Debussy	Nocturnes transcribed by Maurice Ravel & Zoltán Kocsis
Ravel	La valse (version for 2 pianos)

Sunday 13 November 2022 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Debussy	Images, Series 2
Bartók	Improvisation on Hungarian Peasant Songs Op. 20 No. 7
Fauré	Nocturne No. 6 in D flat Op. 63
Debussy	Estampes
Debussy	Préludes Book I

Tuesday 15 November 2022 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano; Orsino Ensemble

Debussy	Syrinx Première rhapsodie
Sancan	Sonatine for flute and piano
Poulenc	Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano
Magnard	Quintet for piano and winds Op. 8

Saturday 15 April 2023 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Debussy	Ballade slave
Chopin	Ballade No. 2 in F Op. 38
Debussy	Mazurka
Chopin	Mazurka in B minor Op. 30 No. 2
Debussy	Valse romantique
Chopin	Waltz in F minor Op. 70 No. 2
Debussy	Tarentelle styrienne
Chopin	Tarantelle in A flat Op. 43
Boulez	Notations
Debussy	Etudes Book I

Monday 17 April 2023 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano; François-Frédéric Guy piano

Debussy	<i>Jeux arranged by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet</i>
Ravel	Rapsodie espagnole (version for 2 pianos)
Stravinsky	The Rite of Spring (version for 2 pianos)

Tuesday 13 February 2024 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano

Debussy	Suite bergamasque
Liszt	Hymne de la nuit S173a/1
	Schlaflos! Frage und Antwort S203
	En rêve S207
Debussy	La plus que lente
Liszt	Valse-impromptu S213
Massenet	Valse folle
Debussy	Masques
Satie	Gymnopédie No. 1
Massenet	Papillons noirs
Debussy	D'un cahier d'esquisses
Liszt	Toccata S197a
Massenet	Toccata
Debussy	Pour le piano

Thursday 15 February 2024 7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano; Steven Isserlis cello; Irène Duval violin

Debussy	Violin Sonata in G minor
Caplet	Élégie
Wagner	Elegy
Debussy	<i>Élégie transcribed by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet for cello and piano</i>
Ravel	Sonata for violin and cello
Sally Beamish	Suite for cello and piano <i>based on Claude Debussy</i>
Debussy	Cello Sonata