

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 4 October 2024  
1.00pm

Pavel Kolesnikov piano Samson Tsoy piano

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)	Prelude and Fugue in C major Op. 87 (1950-1)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Prelude and Fugue in G minor from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book II</i> BWV885 (c.1740)
Dmitry Shostakovich	Prelude and Fugue in D Op. 87
Johann Sebastian Bach	Prelude and Fugue in D minor from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book II</i> BWV875
Dmitry Shostakovich	Prelude and Fugue in D minor Op. 87
Johann Sebastian Bach	Prelude and Fugue in G minor from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book I</i> BWV861 (1722)
Dmitry Shostakovich	Prelude in C sharp minor Op. 87
Johann Sebastian Bach	Fugue in C sharp minor from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book I</i> BWV849 Prelude in E flat from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book I</i> BWV852
Dmitry Shostakovich	Fugue in E flat Op. 87 Prelude and Fugue in G minor Op. 87
Johann Sebastian Bach	Prelude and Fugue in C from <i>The Well-tempered Clavier Book I</i> BWV846



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This programme was conceived as a metaphor or a ritual celebrating mutual illumination. It revives and relives the poignant dialogue between Johann Sebastian Bach and Dmitry Shostakovich through their preludes and fugues, a music form that is itself intrinsically dialogic in nature, in a way that has never been done before.

Bach's double collection of preludes and fugues in every key, comprising two volumes of 24 and completed in the first half of the 18th Century, is revered by musicians as one of the greatest monuments of Western music. Though ironically introduced by Bach merely as a didactic and entertaining collection for musicians and amateurs ('for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study'), it is truly a universe in its own right. The themes, emotions and inventions found in these 48 pieces seem infinite, not to mention their formal beauty and perfection of Bach's polyphonic technique.

In turn, Shostakovich's cycle of 24 preludes and fugues, written in 1950-1, serves as a direct response to Bach. Since the rediscovery of Bach in the 19th Century, he has been a subject of ever-growing admiration, with many musicians paying tribute to him in one way or another. Shostakovich, in particular, was possibly the first major composer to openly 'converse' with composers of the past through his work. His pieces, especially in the late period, are full of quotations, references (both direct or hidden, and sometimes even mocking) from Bizet and Rossini to Wagner and Ustvolskaya.

However, Shostakovich's relationship with Bach seems more profound, respectful, intense and, ultimately, closer. In his cycle of preludes and fugues he doesn't 'play' with references, doesn't 'use' Bach's work to enrich his own. In a way, he does the contrary: entering the domain of Bach knowingly and respectfully while bringing in his very own sensibility and technique. There is no sense of rivalry or competitiveness here, nor, interestingly, a sense of worship. Shostakovich's cycle is distinctly his own - written in his own language, his own style, exploring subjects and emotions that are recognisably his. It feels encouraged, inspired, perhaps even initiated by Bach, with a wonderful warmth and purity in this interaction across centuries. Despite the gentle use of techniques reminiscent of Bach's and a nod to their influence, Shostakovich's cycle is remarkably independent. Powerful in its own right, it doesn't necessarily make one think of Bach. It is only when the two are brought together that their deep-rooted kinship becomes apparent.

In this recital the preludes and fugues of two great composers will be played with two pianos, sometimes individually, sometimes passed between two pianists, and sometimes shared. There is even a moment when a prelude of one composer is matched with a fugue by the other. While some may find this gesture unnecessary and even eccentric, we think of it as a beautiful and meaningful symbol of a dialogue transcending time.

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