

# barbican



## Classical Music

### Concert programme

## Lang Lang in Recital

Thu 17 Apr 7.30pm

Hall

# Important information



## When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.15pm, with a 20-minute interval.



## I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



## Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



## Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



## Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



## Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



## Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

# Lang Lang in Recital

Thu 17 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

## Lang Lang piano

**Gabriel Fauré** Pavane in F sharp minor

**Robert Schumann** *Kreisleriana*

1 Äusserst bewegt

2 Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

3 Sehr aufgereggt

4 Sehr langsam

5 Sehr lebhaft

6 Sehr langsam

7 Sehr rasch

8 Schnell und spielend

*Interval 20 minutes*

**Frédéric Chopin** Mazurkas:

Op 7 No 3

Op 17 Nos 1, 2 and 4

Op 24 Nos 2 and 4

Op 30 Nos 3 and 4

Op 33 No 3, 4 and 2

Op 59 No 3

Polonaise in F sharp minor, Op 44

Produced by the Barbican

Programme produced by Harriet Smith

All information correct at time of printing

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**Tonight the spotlight is on superstar pianist Lang Lang, who brings his customary pizzazz and *joie de vivre* to music by Fauré, Schumann and Chopin, the last of these a composer with whom he has long been particularly closely associated.**

Superstar pianist Lang Lang performs a programme of music which holds a special place for each of the featured composers. From Fauré's intimate, private statement in one of his most popular works to Schumann's eight-movement love letter to his beloved Clara, the evening culminates in music by Chopin, including a selection of his mazurkas – perhaps his most personal music, imbued with nostalgia for his Polish homeland.

Fauré wrote his much-loved Pavane in F sharp minor, Op 50, in 1887. It was originally conceived as an orchestral piece with optional choral parts, and was later transcribed for solo piano, probably by the composer himself. This offers a more intimate, yet equally evocative interpretation of the ancient dance form.

The pavane, a slow, stately court dance of Spanish origin, popular in the Renaissance, provides an appropriate form for Fauré's fundamentally elegant and lyrical style. In the solo piano version, the melodic line retains its graceful, flowing quality while harmonic subtleties are brought into sharper focus. The music's melancholic yet refined atmosphere is enhanced by rich, chromatic harmonies and delicate phrasing for which Fauré is renowned.

Schumann's early work *Kreisleriana* was inspired by Johannes Kreisler, a half-mad musical genius created by E T A Hoffmann (who features in three of his novels and

some of his journalism too). Composed in just four days in 1838, during his secret courtship of Clara Wieck, Schumann considered it his favourite piece. It's partly a love letter in disguise for her: 'Play my *Kreisleriana* sometimes!' he told her. 'There's a very wild love in a few movements, and your life and mine and many of your looks.'

Even by Schumann's standards, *Kreisleriana* counts among his most emotionally charged works for solo piano. Comprising eight contrasting movements, which display the dual aspects of his personality – the impulsive, passionate Florestan and the introspective, poetic Eusebius – these contradictory characters permeate the work, giving it a dynamic and unpredictable nature. The result is a *tour de force* of Romantic expression with rapid shifts between fiery, impetuous passages and tender, lyrical moments, mirroring Schumann's own inner turbulence. The harmonic language is bold and exploratory, with unexpected modulations and colourful chromatic textures. Yet, despite the intensity, moments of introspection reveal a sense of longing and vulnerability. Clara Wieck found the piece captivating, describing it as 'wild, fantastic, and of the deepest meaning'.

For Chopin, the mazurka connected him to his homeland more directly any other of his music, and he wrote some 59 of them, each with, according to Robert Schumann, 'an individual poetic feature, something distinctive in form or expression'.

The mazurka, or mazurek, originated in the Polish region of Mazovia, near Warsaw, a dance in triple time, with an emphasis on the second or third beat. Chopin took this rough Polish peasant dance and refined it, as he did with the waltz and the polonaise (the latter also of Polish origin), elevating the mazurka to drawing room 'art music', highly sophisticated and richly expressive. Within the genre there's great range and variety: some are lively, full of rhythmic vitality,

others are more soulful and melancholy. Each one, whether joyful or sorrowful, introspective or uplifting, offers a glimpse into Chopin's deeply personal experience of memory, longing and identity.

They are some of Chopin's most original compositions, yet all are redolent of their folk origins, characterised by their rhythmic complexity and harmonic daring. Unconventional accentuation, syncopation and uneven phrase structures capture the spirit of the folk dance while pushing the boundaries of the traditional form. The composer's use of modal harmonies, chromaticism and intricate counterpoint gives these pieces a unique and sometimes ambiguous tonal landscape.

The polonaise is another traditional Polish dance in three time, though of a highbrow rather than rustic origin, and like the mazurkas, it became, for Chopin, a highly expressive vehicle for national identity. The Polonaise in F sharp minor, composed in 1841, combines his deep sense of patriotism with sophisticated musical language. Often referred to as the 'tragic', this Polonaise is marked by its dark, introspective character, blending elements of tragedy, nostalgia and defiance.

Here, Chopin expands the polonaise form, creating a dramatic fantasy-like narrative with contrasting sections that alternate between bold, martial rhythms and reflective, lyrical passages. The work opens with an assertive theme underpinned by powerful chords and a driving rhythm, immediately establishing a sense of intensity and urgency. At the heart of the piece is a contrasting mazurka section in A major. This lyrical, almost idyllic interlude has a folk-like charm, suggesting a deep sense of longing for the composer's homeland. Yet the return of the polonaise theme reaffirms the underlying tension and drama, leading to a tumultuous coda that concludes the work with a sense of unresolved conflict.

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## Lang Lang

Lang Lang is a leading figure in classical music today – as a pianist, educator and philanthropist, he has become one of the world's most influential and committed ambassadors for the arts in the 21st century. Equally happy playing for billions of viewers at the 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony in Beijing, the 2020 Dubai EXPO Opening Ceremony, or for a few hundred children in public schools, he is a master of communicating through music.

Lang Lang gives sold-out concerts all over the world. He has formed ongoing collaborations with conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Barenboim and Christoph Eschenbach, and performs with all the world's top orchestras. Millions of viewers watched his performances at the Grammy Awards with Metallica, Pharrell Williams and jazz legend Herbie Hancock.

He has enjoyed exciting collaborations beyond classical music, including working with global pop icons Ed Sheeran, John Legend, Rose from BLACKPINK, J Balvin and Jay Chou. He has also collaborated with Disney.

For more than a decade, Lang Lang has contributed to musical education worldwide. In 2008 he founded the Lang Lang International Music Foundation,

aimed at cultivating tomorrow's top pianists, championing music education at the forefront of technology and building a young audience through live music experiences. In 2013 he was designated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a Messenger of Peace.

His influence extends into the luxury world, where he is a Global Ambassador for Allianz, Dior, Hublot and Hennessy. He has also designed a limited-edition Steinway Black Diamond piano, introduced the Steinway Spirio Cast to the world, created his Hublot limited-edition watch and designed the interior of a Bugatti car.

Lang Lang started playing the piano at the age of three and gave his first public recital before he was five. At nine, he entered Beijing's Central Music Conservatory and won First Prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians at 13. He subsequently went to Philadelphia to study with Gary Graffman at the Curtis Institute of Music. He was 17 when his big break came, substituting for André Watts at the Gala of the Century, playing Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Christoph Eschenbach.

Lang Lang's boundless drive to attract new audiences to classical music has brought him worldwide recognition: he was presented with the 2010 Crystal Award in Davos and was picked as one of the 250 Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum. He is also the recipient of honorary doctorates from the Royal College of Music, the Manhattan School of Music and New York University. In 2011 he was honoured with the highest prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and received the highest civilian honours in Germany and France. In 2016 he performed for Pope Francis at the Vatican. He has also performed for numerous other dignitaries, including four US presidents and monarchs from many nations.

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**Khatia Buniatishvili & Friends**  
Thu 12 Jun, Hall



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