



barbican

Classical Music

Concert programme

Stephen Hough

Wed 4 Dec 7.30pm

Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.30pm, 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, or during the interval.



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 G, 1 and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

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

Stephen Hough

Wed 4 Dec 7.30pm, Hall

Stephen Hough piano

Cécile Chaminade *Automne*

Autre Fois

Les Sylvains

Robert Schumann *Fantasie in C major*

1 *Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen*

2 *Mässig. Durchaus energisch*

3 *Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten*

Interval 20 minutes

Stephen Hough *Sonatina Nostalgica*

London premiere

1 *The road from Danebank*

2 *The bench by the Dam*

3 *A gathering at the Cross*

Frédéric Chopin *Sonata No 3 in B minor*

1 *Allegro maestoso*

2 *Scherzo: Molto vivace*

3 *Largo*

4 *Finale: Presto, ma non tanto; Agitato*

Produced by the Barbican

Programme produced by Harriet Smith

All information correct at time of printing

Printed by APS Group on Edixion Offset

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The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre

Stephen Hough appears tonight as pianist and composer in a recital that reframes large-scale works by Chopin and Schumann in the context of Chaminade and his own new *Sonatina*.

Stephen Hough is an artist who loves to surprise, and he begins tonight's concert with music by Cécile Chaminade, a figure whom history has been quick to judge as a 'mere' miniaturist. To put her in context: she was born in 1857, was noticed as a 12-year-old by Bizet (who dubbed her his 'little Mozart'), but was not able to attend the Paris Conservatoire because her father deemed it unfitting for someone of her class. That said, she did study piano, violin and composition privately with professors from that august institution. After a lifetime of touring, championing her own music, she was recognised when she became the first female composer to be honoured with the Légion d'Honneur in 1913.

Chaminade's well-known *Automne* comes from her *Six Études de concert*, Op 35: it sets a gloriously mellow melody against a quietly flowing backdrop, before letting rip in a fiery inner section. From here, we move to the charming neo-Baroque of *Autrefois* (the fourth of her *Pièces humoristiques*, Op 87), published in 1897, in which its lyrical, plaintive outer sections contrast with a darting toccata-like section, jostling between major and minor phrases and throwing some sparkling trilling into the mix. *Les Sylvains*, Op 60 brings us to the world of the faun that so beguiled Debussy in his ground-breaking tone-poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Chaminade's being published in 1892, two years before Debussy's was unveiled. Hers may be a less sensual affair, but the contrast between the consoling solidity of the opening idea and the more febrile response is entirely beguiling – and it is the latter that wins out.

Robert Schumann wrote his C major *Fantasie* (1836–8) as a musical love-token to his prospective wife Clara Wieck. 'The most passionate thing I have ever composed – a



profound lament for you. The others are weaker, but nothing to be ashamed of.' So wrote Schumann to his beloved of the first movement of his *Fantasie*, sketched (though not completed) in the midst of their enforced separation in the summer of 1836. Not surprisingly, all three movements are shot through with references to Clara.

The *Fantasie* opens with a falling five-note theme, so associated in his music with Clara, set against a swirling backdrop, which makes its intrinsically mournful character disturbed too. There's consolation in the secondary idea, but throughout the movement what strikes you is less its form and more the apparent free flow from one idea to another. Schumann also quotes a fragment from Beethoven's song-cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the distant beloved'), which is only fully revealed in the warmly glowing coda. The second movement is a triumphant march – a real graveyard for pianists, the wide leaps leaving not the slightest margin for inaccuracy, while the manic closing bars, marked to be played even faster, are not for the faint of heart. The finale is surely one of the most ravishing movements in all Schumann, based on a simple rippling figure that traces radiant harmonies. Into the theme that emerges from the bass-line Schumann subtly weaves Clara's falling five-note idea. And just as you think you've got the measure of this movement, there's a surprise switch of key from C major to A flat, which brings with it a new idea next to which Schumann scribbled in his notebook 'dabei selig geschwärmt, als ich krank war' ('was in blissful rapture, when I was ill'). Rapture indeed!

Stephen Hough writes:

My little *Sonatina Nostalgica*, lasting under five minutes, was written for my friend (and fellow Gordon Green student) Philip Fowke in celebration of his 70th birthday. It is 'nostalgic' on three levels: firstly, it was commissioned by my old school, Chetham's; secondly, it deliberately utilises a Romantic musical language of yesteryear; but most importantly it evokes literal homesickness for the places of our youth, in this case the little 'sonatina' village of Lymm in Cheshire.

1 The road from Danebank: Danebank was a grand country house which gave its name to today's Dane Bank Road. Along and about this road are places

resonant with memories for me, not least the nursing home where my mother spent her final years. By happy coincidence some of Philip Fowke's forebears, the Watkin family, lived at ... Danebank.

2 The bench by the Dam: Lymm Dam is the picturesque source of the village, a calm lake whose surface reflects mature trees and the handsome steeple of the parish church. I had a bench installed there commemorating my parents. Drive a few miles down the road and you'll find the birthplace of John Ireland whose musical shadow falls over this pastoral movement.

3 A gathering at the Cross: Lymm Cross is a monument at the heart of the village and this movement is an affectionate tribute to the countless friends and family members who have gathered over many years for parties and dinners and carol-singing within striking distance of its crumbling sandstone structure.

The first movement is in ABA form and is made up of two contrasting but equally lyrical motifs. A dotted rhythm gesture appears in the final bar and becomes the theme of the second movement. The finale plays with these three ideas, tossing them around in a spirit of celebration.

From perfection in miniature to the larger canvas of Chopin's B minor Piano Sonata, written in 1844. Its volcanic opening movement has an almost unstoppable outpouring of themes, the sheer number of them threatening to destabilise the form itself. It's followed by a *moto perpetuo* Scherzo, a fireball of generally hushed explosive energy, calmed only temporarily by the Trio. After a gruffly rhetorical opening, the Largo conjures a nocturne-like mood, its silvery melody never losing its graveness, even as Chopin toys with it, winding it sinuously around a rocking accompaniment. Consolation is found in the haunting extended middle section. The finale begins with weighty rising chords that take command of the entire instrument, before Chopin launches into a nervously energetic idea. It is this theme, counterbalanced by a ringing counterblast in B major, that dominates, culminating in one of the most brilliant and positive codas imaginable.

Harriet Smith



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Stephen Hough

Named by *The Economist* as one of Twenty Living Polymaths, Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career of a concert pianist with those of a composer and writer. In recognition of his contribution to cultural life, he became the first classical performer to be given a MacArthur Fellowship, and was awarded a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2022.

In a career spanning over 40 years, he has played regularly with most of the world's leading orchestras, including televised and filmed appearances with the Berlin, London, China, Seoul and New York Philharmonic orchestras, and the Royal Concertgebouw, Budapest Festival and the NHK Symphony orchestras. He has been a regular guest at recital series and festivals, including Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, the Royal Festival Hall, Salzburg, Verbier, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Aspen, Tanglewood, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh..

He appeared as both performer and composer at the 2024 Last Night of the Proms. Over the next 12 months he gives over 80 concerts on four continents, opening the Philharmonia

Orchestra's season at the Royal Festival Hall, performing with the Cleveland Orchestra, and giving the world premiere of his Willa Cather-inspired Piano Quintet at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall. Following the 2023 world premiere of his own Piano Concerto (*The World of Yesterday*), named after Stefan Zweig's memoir, he brings the work to the Adelaide, Bournemouth, Oregon, Singapore and Vermont Symphony orchestras.

His discography of 70 recordings has garnered awards including the *Diapason d'Or de l'Année*, several Grammy nominations, and eight *Gramophone Awards*, including Record of the Year and the Gold Disc.

As a composer, Stephen Hough's *Fanfare Toccata* was commissioned for the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and performed by all 30 competitors. His 2021 String Quartet No 1 *Les Six Rencontres*, was written for and recorded by the Takács Quartet for Hyperion Records. His output of songs, choral and instrumental works has been commissioned by Musée du Louvre, National Gallery of London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, Wigmore Hall, the Genesis Foundation, Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, BBC Sounds and the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet.

As an author, his most recent book is the memoir *Enough: Scenes from Childhood*, published in 2023. It follows his 2019 collection of essays *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More* which received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and was named one of the *Financial Times'* Books of the Year. His novel *The Final Retreat* was published in 2018.

Stephen Hough is an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple, an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society, an Honorary Fellow of Cambridge University's Girton College, the International Chair of Piano Studies and a Companion of the Royal Northern College of Music, and is on the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York.

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9 Dec–12 Jun, Hall



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Louis Lortie
Thu 27 Feb, Hall



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