

# barbican



## Classical Music

### Concert programme

**Louis Lortie:**  
**Chopin Études**

Thu 27 Feb 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.

# Louis Lortie: Chopin Études

Thu 27 Feb 7.30pm, Hall

## Louis Lortie piano

### Frédéric Chopin Études, Op 10

- No 1 in C major (Allegro)
- No 2 in A minor (Allegro)
- No 3 in E major (Lento ma non troppo)
- No 4 in C sharp minor (Presto)
- No 5 in G flat major (Vivace)
- No 6 in E flat minor (Andante)
- No 7 in C major (Vivace)
- No 8 in F major (Allegro)
- No 9 in F minor (Allegro molto agitato)
- No 10 in A flat major (Vivace assai)
- No 11 in E flat major (Allegretto)
- No 12 in C minor (Allegro con fuoco)

*Interval 20 minutes*

### Trois Nouvelles Études, B130

- No 1 in F minor (Andantino)
- No 2 in A flat major (Allegretto)
- No 3 in D flat major (Allegretto)

### Études, Op 25

- No 1 in A flat major (Allegro sostenuto)
- No 2 in F minor (Presto)
- No 3 in F major (Allegro)
- No 4 in A minor (Agitato)
- No 5 in E minor (Vivace)
- No 6 in G sharp minor (Allegro)
- No 7 in C sharp minor (Lento)
- No 8 in D flat major (Vivace)
- No 9 in G flat major (Assai allegro)
- No 10 in B minor (Allegro con fuoco)
- No 11 in A minor (Lento)
- No 12 in C minor (Molto allegro con fuoco)

Produced by the Barbican

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**Tonight we have a particular treat in store as French-Canadian pianist Louis Lortie presents Chopin's complete Études – works in which the composer took the humble study out of the practice room and thrust it into the public arena with music of pure inspiration.**

Chopin pianist *par excellence* Louis Lortie revisits the complete Chopin Études – a set of ground-breaking, multifaceted works which each conjure a distinct, self-contained world and express the breadth of human emotion from introspection, poignancy and soul-searching anguish to heroism and joy. All bristle with sparkling virtuosity, and to hear them all in a single evening confirms Chopin as a master of technical and musical innovation, with unparalleled imagination and flexibility in handling form and content, nuance and expression.

The piano study or Étude has long engaged and challenged pianists, and the practice of writing Études to provide material for developing a particular pianistic technique developed in the early 19th century alongside the growing popularity of the piano as a domestic instrument.

Chopin took this academic study and elevated it into a work of great artistry and poetry in music, turning humble student exercises into glittering concert pieces, which fully convey the range and sound of the modern piano. His Études remain among the most popular works written for the instrument. Each tests a particular aspect of technique – for example, scales and arpeggios, octaves and thirds, hand and finger independence, *cantabile* playing and sensitivity of touch – but in such a way that these glorious works never feel like exercises. They reveal Chopin's

profound understanding of the mechanics of the pianist's hand and the capabilities of the piano (by this time developing into what we would recognise as the 'modern piano'), and, although difficult, they are enormously satisfying to play.

What these Études did was to expand the technical possibilities of the piano, changing the course of piano playing – and writing – for ever, and shaping the development of Romantic piano music, and in turn inspiring composers as different as Liszt, Rachmaninov, Debussy, Scriabin and even Philip Glass.

The Op 10 Études were composed between 1829 and 1832 and this set contains some of Chopin's most famous and beloved music. No 3 in E major, nicknamed 'Tristesse', is a study in expression and *cantabile* playing, in which the right hand plays both the melody and part of the semiquaver accompaniment; the dramatically intense F minor Étude (No 9), or the heroic 'Black Key', No 10 in G flat major, in which a fleet triplet figuration is played by the right hand exclusively on the black keys, except for just one note, an F natural in bar 66. Perhaps the most famous of this set is the final one: in C minor, the so-called 'Revolutionary' is a highly dramatic work, with its torrent of semiquavers, and was composed in 1831 under the impression that Warsaw had been captured by the Russian army.

The Op 25 set, written between 1832 and 1836, builds on the innovations of Op 10, further refining the combination of technical mastery and expressive depth. Dedicated to Marie d'Agoult, Liszt's mistress, these 12

Études explore a wide range of pianistic challenges, each one demanding both virtuosity and musical sensitivity. It begins with the so-called 'Aeolian Harp' Étude, a masterpiece of texture and lyricism with its shimmering arpeggios, designed to test wrist flexibility and finger dexterity. The ferocious B minor Étude (No 10), a study in octaves, is followed by the brilliance of the A minor Étude (No 11), known as 'Winter Wind' for its stormy intensity and relentless cascades of notes. The set concludes with the dazzling C minor Étude, often called the 'Ocean' for its sweeping arpeggios that evoke the power and motion of the sea.

Between these two marvels of virtuoso pianism sit the *Trois Nouvelles Études*, composed in 1839 as a contribution to *La Méthode des méthodes de piano*, a piano instruction book by Ignaz Moscheles and François-Joseph Fétis. The first, an intimate affair in F minor, explores polyrhythms of three-against-four, a test of hand independence. The second, in a luminous A flat major, is all about sound, pedalling, melody voicing, chord precision and two-against-three polyrhythms. The third in D flat major is a study in touch and articulation, with staccato and legato pitched against each other within one hand, as well as between hands. These miniature studies – each is only around two pages long – are still less well-known than the Op 10 and 25 sets, yet they contain all the distinctive hallmarks of Chopin's music with their eloquent expression, understated sophistication and exquisite musical poetry.

© Frances Wilson



### Louis Lortie

Louis Lortie has earned an international reputation as a versatile musician, critically acclaimed for the fresh perspective and individuality he brings to the masterpieces of the piano repertoire. He performs with the most prestigious orchestras and in major concert halls around the world; he has also released more than 45 recordings for Chandos Records.

In the UK he enjoys long-standing relationship with the BBC Philharmonic and BBC Symphony Orchestra and has appeared at the BBC Proms more than 10 times. In his native Canada he has regularly played with the Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver Symphony orchestras and Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. He was a close collaborator with Kurt Masur, regularly appearing as soloist with the Orchestre National de France and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra during

the latter's tenure as Music Director. He has also performed with the Deutsche Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, Dresden and Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestras, Leipzig MDR Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra and the Adelaide, Dallas, New Jersey, St Louis, San Diego, São Paulo, Shanghai and Sydney Symphony orchestras. He has worked with leading conductors, including Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Edward Gardner, Andrew Davis, Jaap van Zweden, Simone Young, Antoni Wit and Thierry Fischer.

In recital and in chamber music, Louis Lortie regularly performs at Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie de Paris, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall, Chicago Symphony Hall and at the Beethovenfest Bonn and Liszt Festival Raiding. He is particularly renowned for his single-evening complete Liszt *Années de pèlerinage* and Chopin *Études*. For more than 20 years he had a piano duo with Hélène Mercier.

His discography includes seven volumes of Chopin and two of Fauré, a cycle of Beethoven's piano sonatas, the complete works of Ravel and Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage*, as well as concertos by Lutosławski, Saint-Saëns and Vaughan Williams.

Louis Lortie is co-founder and Artistic Director of the LacMus Festival, which has been held annually since 2017 on Lake Como. He continues to mentor outstanding young pianists.

He studied with Yvonne Hubert, Dieter Weber and later Leon Fleisher. He made his debut with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra at the age of 13, and later had success at the Busoni and Leeds competitions. He was honoured with the title of Officer of the Order of Canada in 1992 and Chevalier Ordre national du Québec in 1997, the same year that he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Laval.



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