

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

## Nobuyuki Tsujii: Beethoven, Liszt, Ravel, Kapustin

Sunday 6 November 2022, 7pm  
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Welcome to Classical Music: Autumn/Winter 2022/23. This new edition, the first under my curatorship since arriving as Head of Classical Music, celebrates classical music in all its forms with artists and ensembles from the UK and around the world.

Having spent the majority of my life immersed in classical music, it is a tremendous honour to be leading the programme at the Southbank Centre, and flying the flag for this incredible art form.

We look forward to welcoming you to our spaces.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

### Repertoire

#### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonata in C sharp minor, Op.27 No.2  
(Quasi una fantasia - Moonlight) 16'

#### Franz Liszt (1811–86)

Consolation in E, S.172 No.2 (Un poco più mosso) 3'  
Années de pèlerinage (2nd year - Italy, Supplement), S.162 20'

### Interval

#### Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn 2'  
Pavane pour une infante défunte 6'  
Jeux d'eau 5'

#### Nikolai Kapustin (1937–2020)

8 Concert Etudes, Op.40 25'

### Performer

Nobuyuki Tsujii *piano*

Both of Beethoven's Op.27 Piano Sonatas were published in 1801 with the unusual subtitle 'quasi una Fantasia'. The C sharp minor Sonata, Op.27 No.2, is known as the *Moonlight* Sonata; Beethoven did not coin this nickname, but it became widespread after his death. Poet Ludwig Rellstab suggested that the work's slow, atmospheric first movement conjures up 'a boat, visiting, by moonlight, the primitive landscapes of Lake Lucerne'. Composer Czerny called it 'a night scene, in which the plaintive voice of a spirit is heard far in the distance'.

The first movement is prefaced by a specific instruction: *Si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordino* (The whole piece must be played with great delicacy, and without dampers). This last part indicates the liberal use of the sustain pedal during those famous ascending arpeggios and insistent dotted figures. In both the first and last movements, we are immersed in the dark, minor mode; the solemnity of the opening is contrasted with the breathless dramatic force of the finale, in which the first movement's triplets are expanded into wide-ranging arpeggios. A lilting central movement is lighter and in a major key, prompting Liszt to describe it as a 'flower between two abysses'.

The title of Liszt's six *Consolations* also had poetic origins, borrowed from Sainte-Beuve's poetry anthology *Les Consolations* (1830). Liszt produced two versions: the first, S.171a, in 1844–49; the revised version, S.172, in 1849–50. We hear the nostalgic *Consolation* No.2 in E from this later version. Its marking, *Un poco più mosso* (A little more movement) alludes to the slower tempo of the piece that precedes it.

Liszt's three-volume collection of piano pieces, the *Années de pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage), was inspired by travels in Italy and Switzerland with his then partner, Marie d'Agoult. Book II, 'Italy' (1837–49), consists of Liszt's homages to great works of Italian art and literature. 'Sposalizio' is a radiant tribute to Raphael's painting of *The Marriage of the Virgin*.

The austere simple 'Il penseroso' is a response to Michelangelo's sculpture, *The Thinker*, which surmounts the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence; the 'Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa' is brighter and is based on a tune by Bononcini, even though Rosa – a painter, actor and musician – is credited. Petrarch's sonnets about his unrequited love for a woman named Laura fascinated Liszt for many years. The ardent *Tri Sonetti del Petrarca* were originally composed for high voice and piano; in this piano version Liszt alters the order so that the final chord of the 'Canzonetta' is linked to that which opens the 'Sonetto 47'. Liszt's powerful 'Dante Sonata', inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, also underwent several incarnations, culminating in a work that pits devilish chromaticism against a heavenly chorale.

Like many innovators, Ravel had great respect for the precedents on which he was building, and his love of Haydn's music is palpable in the *Menuet sur le nom de Haydn* (1909), a piece written for a special edition of the *Revue musicale* celebrating Haydn's centenary. Alongside other French composers, Ravel was invited to write a piece based on a five-note motto designed to reflect the five letters of Haydn's surname. Ravel went further and, with a wit worthy of Haydn himself, created another motif that, in both rhythm and pitch, sounds like someone saying 'Joseph Haydn'. The origins of the *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* (Pavane for a Dead Princess, 1899) are more mysterious. Ravel veered between claiming that he had made up the title and admitting that it was 'an evocation of a pavane that a little princess might, in former times, have danced at the Spanish court.' Just as Liszt was inspired by works of art, so Ravel may have been thinking of the Infanta portraits by Velázquez. Musically it recalls his teacher Fauré's *Pavane*, and while Ravel was later dismissive of the piece, its bittersweet theme is deeply affecting.

Ravel also tired of *Jeux d'eau* (1901) eventually, perhaps because it started to overshadow later works. In the early 1900s in Paris, he had joined a band of artists called 'Les Apaches'. When Ravel played *Jeux d'eau* to them, one declared it 'a revelation'. The only obvious precedent would have been Liszt's 'Les Jeux d'eau a la Villa d'Este' from his *Années de pèlerinage Book III*; Ravel took Liszt's concept even further, emulating the physical sensations of water with an array of vivid textures and colours. The score includes a phrase from the poet Régnier's *Fête d'eau*: 'Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille' (River god laughing at the water that tickles him).

Composer-pianist Nikolai Kapustin was born in Ukraine in 1937, and his output frequently combines the jazz and classical traditions, from Duke Ellington, Chick Corea and George Gershwin on the one hand, to the established Western classical piano repertoire on the other. Kapustin's *Vosem' kontsertnikh étyudov* (Eight Concert Etudes), Op.40 (1984) filter Lisztian precedents through a kaleidoscope of jazz styles including Latin American music, 12-bar blues, ragtime, and Broadway musicals.

Programme note © Joanna Wyld

#### Find out more

- ▶ Nobuyuki Tsujii
- ▶ [southbankcentre.co.uk](https://southbankcentre.co.uk)

## You might also like...

### Matthias Goerne & Víkingur Ólafsson

Friday 9 December 2022, 7pm | Royal Festival Hall

Baritone Matthias Goerne meets pianist Víkingur Ólafsson for the music – from Schumann, Schubert and Brahms – that Goerne does better than any other.

### Eric Lu: Chopin, Scriabin, Schubert

Sunday 15 January 2023, 3pm | Queen Elizabeth Hall

Eric Lu contextualises the impassioned mysteries of Scriabin's *Gothic* Sonata with melancholic Schubert and crystalline Chopin.