

# JOHN FIELD AND HIS LEGACY



HAYDN  
Sonata Hob XVI: 50 in C major (17')

FIELD  
Nocturnes, Nos. 2, 4 and 6 (14')

SCRIABIN  
Prelude and Nocturne for the left hand,  
Op. 9 (9')

INTERVAL

CHOPIN  
Nocturnes Op. 9 (16')

MENDELSSOHN  
Songs Without Words, Op. 67 (12')

LISZT  
'Vallée d'Obermann' from *Les Années de  
Pèlerinage*, Book I (14')

Encore:  
HAMILTON HARTY  
'Spring Fancy' (3')

*"It seemed that he did not strike the keys but his  
fingers fell on them as large raindrops and  
scattered like pearls on velvet"*

Glinka, describing John Field's playing

This programme explores the life of Irish composer John Field and his musical legacy.

Born in Dublin in 1782, Field showed early promise and secured an apprenticeship in London with Muzio Clementi at the age of eleven. Two years later, in 1795, Haydn heard him perform a concerto by Dussek and recorded the event in his London Notebook, stating that Field "plays the piano extremely well".

Field traveled to Paris and to St Petersburg with Clementi and, in 1803, decided to stay in Russia for some time. He was received enthusiastically, toured the Baltic States, and performed in Moscow. In 1812 he published the first three of his Nocturnes in St Petersburg, the works for which he was to become most famous. These signaled a new development in writing for the piano and ushered in the characteristically Romantic texture of a chromatically decorated, ornamental melodic line accompanied by a resonant left hand and pedal.

The Nocturnes were to become tremendously influential and were the primary models for Chopin's celebrated volumes. Their influence can also be seen in the short, melodic pieces that proliferated during the nineteenth century, including Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* and salon pieces by Scriabin. Liszt was another composer who was strongly influenced by Field. He prepared an edition of the nocturnes, and wrote an extensive eulogy to them in the 'Preface'.

The encore, 'Spring Fancy', by Irish composer Hamilton Harty, is in this tradition of a short, melodic, salon piece. Only discovered in 2011, it was premiered by Clare Hammond in the Hamilton Harty room at Queen's University Belfast.

*"'Spring Fancy' has a Schumann-like turn of phrase and sentiment, with twirls of Chopin filigree in the piano writing. Hammond's account of both pieces are charming."*

Terry Blain, **Culture Northern Ireland**

*"In Ravel's Tombeau de Couperin, the pianist was likewise in full expressive command of her fingers, conveying the swirling shimmer and sweet melancholy of a work that veers between elegance and emotion."*

Conrad Wilson, **Herald Scotland**