



Sachin Chopra plays Chopin, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff

Leighton House, Holland Park Road

Wednesday 16th April 2025, 7pm



PROGRAMME

PART I

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

S144 No. 3 in D♭ Major: *Un Sospiro* (“A Sigh”) (6”)

S541 No. 3 in A♭ Major: *Liebestraum* (“Love Dream”) (5”)



Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

L. 75 No. 3 in D♭ Major: *Clair de Lune* (“Moonlight”) (5”)



Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Waltz in A Minor (Rediscovered 2024) (2”)

Op. 9 No. 2: *Nocturne in E♭ Major* (5”)

Op. 23: *Ballade No. 1 in G Minor* (10”)



PART II

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Op. 11 No. 24: *Prélude in D Minor* (1”)

Op. 11 No. 11: *Prélude in B Major* (2”)

Op. 38: *Waltz No. 4 in A♭ Major* (7”)



Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Op. 3 No. 2: *Prélude in C♯ Minor* (4”)

Op. 32 No. 12: *Prélude in G♯ Minor* (2”)

Op. 23 No. 4: *Prélude in D Major* (5”)

Op. 23 No. 7: *Prélude in C Minor* (3”)



Welcome to Leighton House, and thank you for joining me this evening. I hope you look forward to this concert, which promises to showcase many well-known favourites, as well as other thrilling pieces that may be new to you.

To provide some context, music as we know it starts with Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), who laid the foundation for all those that followed him. After him were the Classical composers, such as Mozart and Haydn, who perfected the art of beautiful and well-crafted music. Then, in the 1800's, Beethoven, Chopin, and other composers of the Romantic era transformed the piano, using it to express their deepest emotions ranging from joy and love to sorrow and passion.

Tonight, you will hear how the artists of the Romantic era pushed the limits of the piano, using innovative techniques to evoke the sounds of a full orchestra, and to pour out their emotions in ways that had never been done before.

Franz Liszt

Liszt was extremely popular in his lifetime as a charismatic performer who captivated audiences across Europe. Famously, he could even play all 24 of Chopin's fiendishly difficult Études better than Chopin himself. Liszt's compositions expanded the technical and expressive possibilities of the piano, and often take the listener on an epic journey - especially his half-hour long Sonata in B minor, and his "Dante Sonata," inspired by Dante's Inferno.

Un Sospiro ("A Sigh") creates a flowing soundscape, reminiscent of a harp, and has a pleasant and tuneful melody. The peaceful introduction slowly grows more turbulent, and eventually simmers down to a calm ending.

Liebestraum No. 3 is the last of a set of 3 pieces that represent different forms of love. No. 3 was inspired by Ferdinand Freiligrath's poem "O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst" ("Love as long as you can love") and was originally a song, before being written for solo piano. It consists of 3 sections, in which the sweet and melancholic melody takes 3 different forms.

Claude Debussy

Debussy is the best-known of the French impressionists, alongside Ravel, Poulenc, and Satie, and his pieces showcase how impressionism in music reflects impressionism in art: the pieces paint a blurry picture of what the artist is imagining. This can be seen in many of his pieces, especially in Reflets dans l'Eau ("Reflections in the Water") and La Cathédrale Engloutie ("The Submerged Cathedral"). In **Clair de Lune**, the third movement of his four-movement "Suite Bergamasque", the soundscape evokes soft rays of moonlight on a peaceful night.

Frédéric Chopin

Chopin is known for countless beautiful and instantly recognisable piano pieces, including many Nocturnes, Waltzes, Études, and Mazurkas, as well as 2 very lyrical Piano Concertos (pieces for piano and orchestra). His innovative, delicate, and expressive composition style inspired the great Russian composers Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin, as well as almost everyone else in the Romantic era and afterwards.

His **Waltz in A minor** is a very short but powerful piece, written in his late 20's, but was never released until it was discovered in a library in New York in 2024, a full 175 years after his death.

Nocturne in E♭ Major is probably his best-known piece, with a slow waltz-like rhythm and an iconic song-like melody which appears 4 times with subtle changes and additions each time.

Ballade No. 1 in G Minor is often considered Chopin's masterpiece, and is the most emotionally loaded piece so far this evening. In fact, all 4 of Chopin's Ballades are the best representation of Chopin's genius and his ability to take the listener on an emotional journey. In Ballade No. 1, the heavy introduction leads to a foreboding and repetitive theme in a minor key, which then gathers momentum before breaking out into a happy and flowing theme. Both of these themes come back in different forms throughout the piece, interspersed with sections of fear and excitement, and eventually the piece has a drop into its merciless Coda (ending) in which no expense is spared.

Alexander Scriabin

Scriabin's earlier works (such as those you will hear tonight) are of a very Chopinesque style, and are generally very listenable. However, they do not fully represent the depths of Scriabin's exploration into the spiritual side of music, and his theosophical belief that music can help us reach a plane of existence higher than our own. He reinvented harmony and experimented with dark, twisted, themes, all masterfully intertwined to represent ideas such as winged flight, the afterlife, Satan, and ecstasy.

A listen through his Sonatas 2-10 show his progression from a refined Romantic composer (with Sonata 2 representing the waves of the ocean on a calm night and then the agitation of the deep sea) to a mystic and visionary (with Sonata 7 "White Mass" whose violent contrasts act as an exorcism for his Sonata 6, which he became too scared to play as he believed it was corrupted by demonic forces).

Out of his set of 24 Preludes, Op. 11, his **Prelude in D minor** is one of the most thrilling of the set, whereas his **Prelude in B major** is one of the most nuanced, with a pleasant melody supported by meandering chords that only find comfort and stability towards the end of the short piece. His joyful **Waltz in A♭ Major** shows two themes (one tuneful, and one sighing beneath it) carefully woven together, and venturing towards ecstatic heights throughout the piece. Leo Tolstoy described Scriabin's music as "a sincere expression of genius." I especially agree with "sincere" - the emotions in his pieces feel real and honest.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninoff (referred to as Rachman by his friends) was a legendary pianist, always mesmerising his audience with his ability to bring out the clarity and beauty in his most complex and passionate works. At over 2 metres tall and with huge hands, he wrote larger-than-life pieces, with deep harmonies and iconic melodies. If there is one piece of music you listen to after this concert, make it Rachman's Piano Concerto No. 2. He is also famous for his 24 Preludes, in which every piece sets a unique mood and showcases different pianistic techniques.

His **Prelude in C♯ Minor** is by far his best-known short piece, and he claimed "Many, many times I wish I had never written it," as it would pull attention away from his later and more developed masterpieces. His **Prelude in G♯ Minor** is like a dreamscape, with a low-pitched melody pulling you from one place to another, and you finally wake up as the tune evaporates into a gentle higher-pitched flurry. The **Prelude in D Major** is a grand and epic poem, full of longing and hope, and the thrilling **Prelude in C Minor** has long buildups of emotion, all to come crashing down into a glorious, somewhat jazz-inspired, ending.