

Alim Beisembayev

piano

Pittville Pump Room

Thursday 11 July

Claude Debussy	Images Book 2	14'
Clara Schumann	Romance Op 21 No 1	5'
Frédéric Chopin	12 Études op. 25	30'

About the Programme

Claude Debussy Images, Book 2

Cloches Ã travers les feuilles
La lune descend sur le temple qui fut
Poissons d'or

The world of the sonata was not for Debussy! He regarded the sonata structure as cramping and unyielding and the tonality of the major-minor scales, and their implied harmony, as outworn and sterile. His interest lay in piano sound *per se* – the poetry of sound rather than the discipline of structure. Free, imaginative form allowed him to seek inspiration in moods and impressions taken from nature or from abstract sources. Dreams and mind-wanderings are the stuff of his creative style, leaving listeners to bring their own imagination to bear on the sound-world he creates.

Book 1 of *Images* appeared in 1905 and astonished the musical world by its daring originality. Two years later, Book 2 was published, and produced much the same kind of bafflement and fierce discussion amongst critics and academic experts.

No. 1, *Bells heard through the leaves* is an enchanting experience of leaf-shimmer and bell-chime sonorities. It is full of unexpected contrasts of sound, its texture is light and transparent, and its appeal is poetic and fragrant.

No. 2, *The Moon Sets Above the Ruined Temple* again reveals the magic of the 'tone alchemist' for subtle and delicate effects abound in this musical landscape. Its modal melody has the ring almost of an English folksong and shifting harmony produced by moving parallel chords might remind one a little of the style of Vaughan Williams. The general atmosphere is one of sadness and one is reminded of the eternal truth of Nature and the limited endurance of Man's creations, for the moon sets in limpid beauty but the temple is in ruins.

No. 3, *Gold-fish* This is perhaps the best-known of Debussy's piano music. It has intrigued performers and listeners since its first appearance. The music evokes the interplay of sunlight, gold and water, and one needs little imagination to appreciate the capricious and delicate finning, the smooth fast glide, the rapid impulse and the iridescence of sunlight as it glances on the scales of the fish. As true a piece of piano magic as was ever dreamed up by this great dreamer of the keyboard.

Clara Schumann Romance Op 21 No 1

Clara Schumann was born Clara Wieck in 1819 to parents both of whom were musicians. She famously fell in love with Robert Schumann but her father forbade their marriage; nonetheless they married the day before her 21st birthday.

She proved to be a gifted pianist at a young age and was known as one of the most distinguished pianists of the 19th century and an ardent champion of her husband's compositions. She was taught composition by her father. In 1853 she wrote two sets of Romances: the op.21 set for solo piano, from which today's piece is taken, and op.22 for violin and piano. They were among her last compositions; thereafter, and especially after Robert's death three years later, she concentrated on performing

Frédéric Chopin 12 Études op. 25

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| <i>No. 1 in A flat major (Allegro sostenuto) 'Aeolian Harp'</i> | <i>No. 7 in C sharp minor (Lento) 'Cello'</i> |
| <i>No. 2 in F minor (Presto) 'The Bees'</i> | <i>No. 8 in D flat major (Allegro assai) 'Sixths'</i> |
| <i>No. 3 in F major (Allegro) 'The Horseman'</i> | <i>No. 9 in G flat major (Allegro assai) 'Butterfly'</i> |
| <i>No. 4 in A minor (Agitato) 'Paganini'</i> | <i>No. 10 in B minor (Allegro con fuoco) 'Octave'</i> |
| <i>No. 5 in E minor (Vivace) 'Wrong Note'</i> | <i>No. 11 in A minor (Lento Allegro con brio) 'Winter Wind'</i> |
| <i>No. 6 in G sharp minor (Allegro) 'Double Thirds'</i> | <i>No. 12 in C minor (Allegro molto e con fuoco) 'Ocean'</i> |

At an early stage in his career Chopin realized that the old type piano exercises were inappropriate to the new piano style and so there came about this remarkable series of studies in which material for technical use became the vehicle for deeper musical expression. The Op. 10 set had been written between 1829 and 1832, while this later, Op. 25, set dates from 1832-6, after Chopin's arrival in Paris. Each study is concerned with a single pianistic problem, which is explored to the full.

Names were not given to the Études by Chopin but several have acquired suitable descriptions in the intervening years. The first is often referred to as Aeolian Harp, where the use of the sustaining pedal creates delicate waves of sound, described by Schumann as "an undulation of the A flat major chord ... exquisitely entangled in the harmony". Chopin often played the second, a soft piece with great fluidity. No. 3 has an unusual construction, modulating from F major to B major, and back again. No. 4, marked Agitato, is in A minor, and No. 5, in E minor, is headed Vivace – scherzando e leggiero.

No. 6 is a study in thirds, No. 8 in sixths, and No. 10 in octaves, where Chopin transformed insignificant material into music of sheer grace. With great dramatic content, the seventh is a study for the left hand, while the ninth is aptly named Butterfly, for the swift and graceful flight of the melody. No.11, Winter Wind, virile, energetic and boisterous, forms the climax of the Op. 25 set while the spirited mood is carried over to the final Étude, a stately tune over which flow waves of arpeggios.

Programme notes adapted from notes in Making Music's music bank.

Artist Biography

Alim Beisembayev *piano*

Alim Beisembayev won First Prize at The Leeds International Piano Competition in 2021, performing Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Andrew Manze. He also took home the medici.tv Audience Prize and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society Prize for contemporary performance.

Announced as a BBC New Generation Artist 2023-25, Alim made his Royal Albert Hall BBC Proms debut in 2023. Further highlights this season include debuts with the BBC Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony and Enescu Philharmonic, as well as returning to the BBC Symphony and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic to perform the World Premiere of a new concerto by Eleanor Alberga.

Notable recital highlights include debuts at the BBC Proms at Truro, the Chopin Institute in Warsaw, Oxford Piano Festival, Foundation Louis Vuitton (Paris) and Cliburn Concerts, in addition to a tour of Europe in association with the Steinway Prizewinner Concerts Network and of Korea with the World Culture Network.