

Ryan Corbett - BBC New Generation Artist

Pittville Pump Rooms

Thursday 10 July

César Frank (arr. Corbett)	Chorale No. 2 in B minor
Johann Sebastian Bach (arr. Corbett)	Selection from The Well-Tempered Clavier
Vladislav Zolotaryov	Sonata No. 2
Sergei Rachmaninov (arr. Corbett)	<i>Vocalise</i>
Jindrich Feld	<i>Konzertstück</i>
Carl Maria von Weber (arr. Corbett)	<i>Konzertstück</i>

About the Programme – Notes by Ryan Corbett

César Franck (1822 – 1890) arr. Corbett

Chorale No. 2 in B minor

"If you only knew how I love this instrument... it is so supple beneath my fingers and so obedient to all my thoughts!" These were Franck's words when his church, the Basilique Ste-Clotilde, took delivery of a new instrument by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. With its vast colour pallet and tonal range, this instrument encouraged Franck to conceive his organ works on a symphonic scale. While this organ comprises 12,000 pipes, the accordion must make do with less than 900 aluminium reeds, but these can be manipulated with greater sensitivity than human or electric organ blowers – that's how I justify the arrangement anyway. The Trois Chorales were completed in September 1890, just two months before Franck's death. Of them Leon Vallas wrote: "Their beauty and importance are such that they may be properly considered as a kind of musical last will and testament."

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750) arr. Corbett

Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp major BWV 848 (The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I)

Prelude and Fugue in G-sharp minor BWV 887 (The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II)

Bach's idea of composing a collection of preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys was new and revolutionary in the second decade of the 18th Century, particularly when considering that the tuning in use up to then distributed pure and impure intervals irregularly throughout the keys. The result was that one could play very well in many keys, but not at all in others. After a few ephemeral attempts by various composers, Bach was the first to conquer the entire breadth of tonality in his *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* (The Well-Tempered Clavier), thus providing the musical world with a masterpiece of keyboard literature.

Vladislav Zolotaryov (1942 – 1975)

Sonata No. 2

I. Allegro ingenuo

II. Adagio tranquillo molto

III. Vivacissimo con spirito

Zolotaryov, born in Russia's far east soon after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, excelled as a virtuoso bayan (chromatic button accordion) player. After studying his instrument in the port city of Magadan, gateway to the Gulag prisons of Kolyma, he received private lessons in composition from Rodion Shchedrin in the late 1960s and subsequently studied (and clashed) with Tikhon Khrennikov at the Moscow Conservatory. Beset by depression and suicidal thoughts, he took his own life in 1975. Zolotaryov's compositions for bayan greatly extended the instrument's conventional technical limits, not least through enriching its polyphonic persona and experimenting with new sounds and effects. The second sonata, first published in 1971, bears witness to Zolotaryov's virtuosity as a player and the striking individuality of his voice as a composer.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 – 1943) arr. Corbett

Vocalise Op. 34 No. 14

The final of his 14 Romances for voice and piano, Vocalise was dedicated to soprano Antonina Nezhdanova. Rachmaninoff told her: "What need is there of words, when you will be able to convey everything better and more expressively... by your voice." Nezhdanova required some persuading to sing the entire piece using only one vowel, but it has become one of the composer's most performed and arranged pieces. There is an existing arrangement for accordion by Vyacheslav Semyonov, but finding myself disgruntled by many missing notes I decided to make my own instead, using Rachmaninoff's original voice and piano score, alongside his orchestral versions.

Jindřich Feld (1925 – 2007)

Konzertstück

Feld was born into a musical family in Czechoslovakia; his father was a well-known professor of violin at the Prague Conservatory. Feld's output can be divided into three periods. The first, up until the end of the 1950s, draws on the music of Martinu, Stravinsky and Bartók. In the second (1960s) Feld created an individual language by adopting new stimuli, including 12-tone techniques and aleatoricism. Finally, the 1970s saw a period of synthesis, characterized by brilliant technique and even greater individuality. Konzertstück was written in 1974 and it is perhaps the highlight of Feld's small but important contribution to accordion literature.

Carl Maria von Weber (1786 – 1826) arr. Corbett

Konzertstück in F minor for Piano and Orchestra Op. 79

I. Larghetto affettuoso

II. Allegro passionato

III. Tempo di Marcia

IV. Presto giocoso

On the 18th of June 1821, the day of the Berlin premiere of *Der Freischütz*, Weber played through a version of this piece to his wife, Caroline, and Julius Benedict, explaining (according to Benedict): "The lady sits in her tower: she gazes sadly into the distance. Her knight has been for years in the Holy Land: shall she ever see him again? Battles have been fought; but no news of him who is so dear to her. In vain have been all her prayers. A fearful vision rises to her mind — her knight is lying on the battlefield, deserted and alone; his heart's blood is ebbing fast away. Could she but be by his side, could she but die with him! She falls exhausted and senseless. But hark! What is that distant sound? What glimmers in the sunlight from the wood? What are those forms approaching? Knights and squires with the cross of the Crusades, banners waving, acclamations of the people; and there! — it is he! She sinks into his arms. Love is triumphant. Happiness without end. The very woods and waves sing the song of love; a thousand voices proclaim its victory." There is an existing accordion arrangement of *Konzertstück* by Alexander Dmitriev, who I had the pleasure of meeting some years ago at a competition in Germany. He kindly gave me one of his CDs then said "ten euro please." I used his arrangement as a guide, but in cross-examining with the orchestral score there was so much to fix that it might have been quicker to start from scratch.

Artist Biography

Ryan Corbett *accordion*

BBC New Generation artist, Royal Over-Seas League Gold medallist and Classic FM Rising Star, Ryan Corbett is an accordionist hailed by Sir James MacMillan as "one of the most astonishing and surprising newcomers in Scottish music." A leading exponent of his instrument, he has given over eight hours of radio broadcasts and a televised performance at the Scottish Coronation of HM King Charles III. Corbett has enlarged the repertoire by creating hundreds of new arrangements for accordion, but no matter how strong his passion for the instrument, it is his dedication to musical integrity that takes precedence.

Recent seasons have seen recitals across Europe at venues including the Berlin Philharmonie, he has also performed in the USA, Mexico, and China. In the UK Corbett frequents major festivals including Bath, Beaminster, Beaumaris, Budleigh, Buxton, Cambridge Summer Music, Chipping Campden, Cumnock Tryst, Deal, Edinburgh, Lake District, Lammermuir, Lichfield, St Magnus, Norfolk & Norwich, Oxford Song, Paxton, Perth, Ryedale, Southrepps, and the Keyboard Festival at St George's Bristol. He makes his debut at London's Wigmore Hall this year.

Passionate about collaboration, Corbett regularly performs with soloists and ensembles alike. He has performed with BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, Red Note Ensemble, Maxwell Quartet, singers Nicholas Mulroy, Ben Johnson and Lotte Betts-Dean, cellist Santiago Cañón-Valencia, violinist Geneva Lewis, and trumpeter Aaron Akugbo. Together with his accordion teacher Djordje Gajic, Corbett performs his own arrangements of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Bach's 'St Anne' Prelude and Fugue which was described as "musically unified and utterly compelling" (Seen and Heard International). He also works with composers to create new music for the accordion. This year he gave the premiere of Daniel Soley's accordion concerto with Britten Sinfonia, and he will give the UK premiere of Mikhail Pletnev's accordion concerto this August.

Ryan Corbett won first prize at the 2022 Bromsgrove International Musicians' competition and is a prize winner of international accordion competitions in Italy, Germany, and China. He was nominated in the Young Artist category of the 2024 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards and has been listed as 'one to watch' by BBC Music Magazine, Interlude HK, The Scotsman and Scala Radio. Corbett was a Tillett Trust and Munster Trust recital scheme artist and is the first accordionist to be part of the prestigious BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist scheme since its launch in 1999. He has also performed at private events for Sir Jackie Stewart and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

Born in Glasgow in 1999, Corbett studied at the Music School of Douglas Academy, St Mary's Music School, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He was introduced to the accordion aged eleven, when his grandmother bought a small instrument for him and his brother to try. As the instrument wasn't airtight, the only way to play it was like a piano, while the other pulled the bellows across the floor. It was soon fixed, and Corbett would spend hours playing Scottish folk music on it rather than practising the piano or violin on which he was receiving lessons. He continued to teach himself accordion until the age of fourteen, when he began studying with Djordje Gajic. These studies were supported by Cross Trust, Drake Calleja Trust, Countess of Munster Musical Trust, RCS Scholarship Fund and Help Musicians UK.

Ryan Corbett plays a Bugari Spectrum classical piano accordion made in Castelfidardo, Italy. This was made possible by private sponsors, the John Mather Trust, and Dewar Arts Awards.