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A “virtual” Coffee Concert recorded at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford

Sunday May 9, 2021 at 11:15

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Virtual Coffee Concerts are pre-recorded at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford and are streamed from our YouTube channel at 11:15 on Sunday mornings. (These recordings are available for a limited time after release but, of course, there will be more to come.)

Tim Horton (piano)

- **Mozart: Fantasia no 2 in C minor, K 396/385f**
- **Chopin: Ballade no 1 in G minor, op 23**
- **Chopin: Ballade no 2 in F major, op 38**
- **Szymanowski: Masques, op 34 (i. Scheherazade and ii Tantris le Bouffon)**
- **Chopin: Ballade no 3 in A flat major, op 47**
- **Chopin: Ballade no 4 in F minor, op 52**

One of the leading chamber pianists of his generation, Tim Horton studied at Chetham's School of Music with Charles Hopkins and Heather Slade-Lipkin and graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1995. In the same year he replaced Alfred Brendel at short notice in two performances of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto with the CBSO and Sir Simon Rattle at Symphony Hall, Birmingham and at the Royal Festival Hall, London. Since then he has played with the RLPO, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Trondheim Symphony Orchestra.

In 2005 Tim was chosen as the scholar of the Klavier Festival Ruhr at the

recommendation of Alfred Brendel, an honour that included a recital at the Festival and a bursary. Tim has a duo partnership with cellist Adrian Brendel with whom he has given tours of Spain, Germany, Italy and the UK, including concerts at the Wigmore Hall, London. In 2011 they made their debut at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. He has played regularly at the Plush, Aldeburgh, Bath and Elverum Festivals and has collaborated with many leading chamber musicians including Paul Lewis, Peter Cropper, the Elias Quartet, the Vertavo Quartet and the members of the Kungsbacka Piano Trio.

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Tim has been playing with violist Robin Ireland since 2008 and they have toured Britain extensively. Their Nimbus Alliance disc of works by Shostakovich and Prokofiev was highly acclaimed on its release. They have also released a disc of the Brahms Sonatas and the Schubert

Arpeggione Sonata. Along with violinist Benjamin Nabarro and cellist Gemma Rosefield, Tim is a founder member of the acclaimed Leonore Piano Trio as well as Ensemble 360, and has been a regular guest pianist with the Nash Ensemble.

More information:

<http://www.timhortonpianist.co.uk/>

**Fantasia no 2 in C minor, K 396/385f
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791),
edited and completed by Maximilian Stadler**

One of the works Mozart left unfinished in manuscript is a 27-bar fragment for solo keyboard thought to date from around 1782, and evidently intended as the first part of a work in two sections. The last five bars also include an added violin part, and it seems possible that Mozart intended to go back and compose the rest of it leading up to that point, but then abandoned the piece.

It was completed as a solo keyboard work by composer, performer and scholar Maximilian Stadler (who appears to be no relation to the clarinettist Anton Stadler for whom Mozart wrote his Clarinet Quintet and Clarinet Concerto), taking his material from what Mozart had already composed. An adviser to Constanze Mozart after her husband's death, Stadler put his manuscripts in order and worked up a number of fragments and

sketches into completed works. The Fantasia was published in Vienna in 1802.

There is no variation in the overall slow tempo, but the keyboard writing takes in a remarkable expressive variety, suggesting the kind of thing Mozart may have played when improvising. It begins with a C minor arpeggio rising through three and a half octaves, and this returns several times during the course of the piece. The first time it appears in C major marks the start of the second section, the point at which Stadler takes over. Both Mozart and Stadler explore just about all the space from top to bottom available on the piano of Mozart's day. Stadler also includes some passages of virtuoso hand-crossing. He changes key from C minor to C major for the final bars, drawing the piece to a quiet, thoughtful conclusion.

**Ballade no 1 in G minor, op 23
by Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)**

The popular image of Chopin as the archetypal Romantic composer conceals more of the truth than it reveals. If we accept an overt association with other arts,

particularly literature and painting, as one of the defining characteristics of 19th-century Romantic music, Chopin emerges as one of the least romantic composers of his

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generation. Unlike Schumann or Liszt, he never spelled out any connection between his music and non-musical sources. Fanciful titles like the 'Raindrop' Prelude, or the 'Winter Wind' Study were added after the event by publishers, or by commentators wanting to convey their experience of the music in a poetic image.

Chopin's use of the title 'Ballade' clouds the issue slightly. It seems to suggest links with the narrative poems set to music by Schubert and others, even hinting at a storyline behind Chopin's own music. Folk ballads, particularly from the Scottish border region, were enormously popular throughout Europe at the

time, and Schumann suggested that Chopin's Ballades were prompted by the work of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. The extent of the connection has been a subject of debate ever since.

The First Ballade – dedicated to Baron Nathaniel von Stockhausen, the Hanoverian ambassador to Paris – is difficult to date accurately, but such evidence as there is suggests it was written in 1834 or 1835, a year or two before it was published. It packs a wealth of experience into its compact frame, from its two song-like main themes, its stormy transitional passages, the almost skittish waltz episode in the middle, and the fiery virtuosity of the ending, which hints at both tragedy and defiance.

Ballade no 2 in F major, op 38 by Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Composed in 1839 and dedicated to Robert Schumann, Ballade no 2 is the shortest of the four, and the most turbulent. It begins innocently enough, with a gentle dance – or song, rather, since the swaying rhythm suggests a Venetian barcarolle, or gondolier's song. But the mood is violently shattered by a vehement torrent of energy. As this burns

itself out the song returns, rising to a pitch of grandeur that enables the presto theme to return without the abrupt jolt of its first appearance. The work ends with a brief glance back at the opening, but in the key of the presto, A minor, not the F major in which we started.

Szymanowski: Masques, op 34 by Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937)

1. Shéhérazade; 2. Tantris le Bouffon.

As the leading Polish composer of his generation, Szymanowski was, naturally, influenced in his early piano music by Chopin, and also Skryabin, while contemporary German romantic composers like Strauss and Reger made the strongest impression on his orchestral works.

By 1913 his outlook had changed considerably. He discovered the music of Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky, whom he declared a genius, and his extensive travels brought him into contact with the cultures of the Mediterranean. Visits to Sicily and north Africa in 1911 and 1914 made a particularly

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strong impact on him, and he developed a profound understanding of Eastern civilizations. The next few years were to be one of his most prolific periods. The three pieces comprising *Masques*, composed in 1915 and 1916, show all these new influences clearly. Today we are hearing the first two.

'*Shéhérazade*' portrays the storyteller of 1,001 Nights, beginning with a slow, languid theme, gradually becoming more animated, and twice rising to a tumultuous climax, before the opening theme returns for a gentle fade-out conclusion.

'*Tantris le Bouffon*' (*Tantris the Clown*) takes its cue from the play *Tantris der Narr*, a spoof of the *Tristan and Isolde* story by German writer Ernst Hardt. *Tristan* disguises himself as a clown ("*Tantris* is an anagram of '*Tristan*') and tries to get into *Isolde's* apartment. He succeeds only in rousing the guard-dogs, who wake the entire household. *Szymanowski* makes no direct reference to *Wagner's* opera, though *Wagner* devotees may recognise something vaguely familiar a little over one minute in. Amid the generally comic-grotesque tone there is room for a quietly mysterious central episode. As in '*Shéhérazade*', the music finally breaks up in a slow, quiet ending.

Ballade no 3 in A flat major, op 47 by Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Ballade no 3 dates from 1841, towards the end of that productive phase of his career which coincided with the time when his relationship with novelist *George Sand* (pseudonym for *Baroness Aurore Dudevant*) was at its happiest. Dedicated to *Pauline de Noailles*, a member of a French aristocratic

family, it is, to start with at least, the most relaxed and genial of the four. The first two of its three main themes are deceptively easy-going, but the third steers the music into more turbulent waters, while the final pages bring out a heroic quality in the first, which originally seemed so unassuming.

Ballade no 4 in F minor, op 52 by Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Ballade no 4 was written between 1842 and 1843, and dedicated *Chopin's* piano pupil *Baroness Charlotte de Rothschild*, whose family were among his most loyal supporters. It sums up his approach to the ballade form that he pioneered, combining a set of variations on the main theme with the statement, development and re-statement of a more formal sonata structure. The result creates a feeling of seamless movement, from the gentle introduction, through a lighter development section, to the stormy conclusion, with a magical few moments

of stillness before the torrent of energy breaks out again with renewed force at the end.

And that is as close as we can get to specific storylines for any of the *Ballades*. *Mickiewicz's* poems may well have given *Chopin's* inspiration a nudge in a particular direction, but *Chopin* leaves the music to stand or fall on its own merits, and allows his listeners to respond in their own way.

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