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Summer at Snape 2025

Wednesday 13 August 7.30pm
Snape Maltings Concert Hall

Duration: 115'
including an interval of 20'

Jaeden Izik-Dzurko

Jaeden Izik-Dzurko piano

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Partita No.4 in D, BWV 828 (1728) *26'*

i. Ouverture
ii. Allemande
iii. Courante
iv. Aria
v. Sarabande
vi. Menuet
vii. Gigue

Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)
Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58 (1844) *25'*

i. Allegro maestoso
ii. Scherzo: Molto vivace
iii. Largo
iv. Finale: Presto non tanto

INTERVAL

Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)
Fantaisie in B minor, Op.28 (1900) *9'*

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Ten Preludes, Op.23 (1901–3) *32'*

1. F sharp minor: Largo
2. B flat major: Maestoso
3. D minor: Tempo di minuetto
4. D major: Andante cantabile
5. G minor: Alla marcia
6. E flat major: Andante
7. C minor: Allegro
8. A flat major: Allegro vivace
9. E flat minor: Presto
10. G flat major: Largo

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A piano recital featuring composers from a broad sweep of history (with pieces dating from the 1730s to the early 1900s) traces not only the fascinating development of musical language, but also the story of the instrument itself. Bach's Six Partitas were published together as *Clavier-Übung I* in 1731: 'clavier' referred broadly to any keyboard instrument, which at the time would have been either the clavichord or harpsichord. The fortepiano that followed was quickly superseded by the pianoforte, gaining two more octaves (expanding from five to seven) and, depending on the make, the ability to resonate in larger rooms – thus enabling a move from the domestic to the concert hall. By Chopin's era, piano manufacturing had become a major industry. Chopin himself became associated with the French Pleyel pianos, to the extent that while he was establishing himself as a recitalist in Paris it was the make and model of his piano that was the draw for audiences as much as the performer. Celebrity endorsement was also one of the reasons for the piano craze in Russia. It became a symbol of popular entertainment in the mid-1800s; on a tour in the 1840s Liszt performed to some 3,000 people in St Petersburg. Both Scriabin and Rachmaninoff were born into a Russia in which pianos were considered essential to any civilised household. As composer-performers, furthermore, they exploited the dynamic range and expressive capabilities of the modern concert piano to their fullest extent.

J.S. Bach's Partitas (suites) were not written for public performance, but for the edification of the performer. The title page of the collection – *Clavier-Übung I* ('Keyboard practice') – announced them as 'For those who love delights of the soul'. They were, incredibly, the first pieces Bach published. Partita No.4 is in the lively key of D major and has an air of barely-contained high spirits. The first movement is a French Overture, grand in style and with appropriate levels of decoration across the intertwining melodic lines. An Allemande follows, flowing over a serene walking bass, yet startlingly dissonant at times. The purely joyful Courante comes next, then a brisk and bracing Aria. The Sarabande, with its slow-moving lines and occasional pauses for thought, is the most intimate and contemplative of the Partita, periodically roaming into a more sombre minor mode. An elegant Menuet recalls the decorative flourishes of the opening, while the concluding Gigue is sparkling and vigorous: a delight of the soul indeed.

Fryderyk Chopin composed his Sonata No.3 in B minor in 1844 while staying in Nohant, central France, the family home of George Sand (his lover until their relationship broke down in 1847). Although generally favouring the looser-limbed forms of piano works (such as Nocturnes or Etudes), Chopin bends the more conventional form of Sonata to his will. While it does conform to a certain extent to the standard theme/development/reprise model, the almost ecstatic unfolding of melody-upon-further-melody is very much Chopin's own. In the 'Allegro maestoso', the gorgeously rhapsodic second theme dominates, and this mood permeates the rest of the movement.

The tiny Scherzo dazzles across its forty(ish) seconds of running time, sandwiching a soft, lyrical Trio. After a stern opening to the slow movement, the music relaxes into a kind of piano 'aria'; its 'singing' quality would have been eminently suited to Chopin's beloved Pleyel. It evolves into more dreamlike territory, resembling one of the composer's nocturnes, before anchoring itself back in the 'aria'. The finale is turbulent, with cascading flows of semiquavers alternating with low, ominous rumbles, segueing into a dervish-like dance. It is utterly exhilarating.

Alexander Scriabin's music is notoriously difficult to play, especially with regard to the dense complexity of the left-hand writing. Over-practising and advised by a doctor to stop using his right hand, Scriabin developed higher than usual levels of virtuosity in his left, something that is evident in the growling octaves throughout the *Fantaisie*. The piece overall is rich, at times feverish, and almost operatic in scope. The chromatic build-up of the main melody in the centre of the piece is a kind of Wagnerian drama in miniature. A gentler mood, heralded by a beautifully lyrical theme, seems determined to take over in the latter stages, but cannot ultimately withstand the surging, impassioned quality of the rest of the *Fantaisie*. In the final stages the two hands combat each other in ferocious contrary motion up until the final, thunderous chords.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's set of Ten Preludes was composed between 1901 and 1903, a period of great productivity following the success of his Piano Concerto No.2. The dark romance and lyrical invention of that famous work can be found across this sequence of smaller-scale pieces. David Fanning has pointed out that the first three establish the three modes that then cycle throughout the set: No.1 is gentle and song-like, No.2 is tempestuous and heroic, and No.3 conceals great complexity behind a seemingly conventional 'classical' style. Other preludes belonging to the first type are 4, 6 and 10. Along with No.1 they are, partly by virtue of their leisurely tempi, 'simpler' to play, but they are not 'simple' musically. Rachmaninoff's trademark intensity and skilfully-wrought patterns of tension and release are manifest across all four.

Of the 'tempestuous' type, the militaristic No.5 is perhaps the best-known. Punchy chords and increasingly wide leaps for the right hand dominate the outer sections, while the middle is thrillingly ardent, very much channelling the mood of the second piano concerto. No.9 is one of those preludes that looks, to the mere mortal, utterly impossible on the page. Oscillating chords in the right hand are asked to hover effortlessly over rapid figures in the left. Yet in the hands of a virtuoso the whole thing sounds as light as a feather. It is followed by the gentle No.10, a remarkably modest conclusion to the set. The remaining group comprises Nos.3, 7 and 8, the first an innocent-seeming minuet, hiding depths of chromatic invention. No.7 is a Bach-like toccata characterised by right-hand fireworks over tolling bass figures. No.8 resembles a Bach Prelude – only with the addition of a couple of extra octaves, and vividly demonstrating a century and a half of extraordinary musical development.