

ANAM RECITAL: TIMOTHY O'MALLEY (PIANO) Wandering Wonderings

FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER 1.30PM
ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828) Piano Sonata No. 19 in C Minor, D. 958 (1828) 29'

- i. Allegro*
- ii. Adagio*
- iii. Menuetto. Allegro*
- iv. Allegro*

Alban BERG (1885-1935) Sieben frühe Lieder (Seven Early Songs) (1905-1907) 16'

- i. Nacht ('Night')*
- ii. Schilflied ('Song amidst the reeds')*
- iii. Die Nachtigall ('The Nightingale')*
- iv. Traumgekrönt ('Crowned with dreams')*
- v. Im Zimmer ('In the room')*
- vi. Liebesode ('Ode to Love')*
- vii. Sommertage ('Summer days')*

Rodion SHCHEDRIN (b. 1932) *Basso ostinato* (1961) 5'

Timothy O'Malley (VIC) piano
Breanna Stuart (guest) soprano

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

ABOUT TIMOTHY O'MALLEY

Born and raised in Naarm/Melbourne, Timothy O'Malley has always been avidly engaged with music making. After a brief and unfortunate attempt at learning the violin aged five, he was enrolled by his parents in piano lessons. Through his undergraduate studies in music at the University of Melbourne he had the privilege to learn with Jerry Wong at the piano and studied Continuo with Donald Nicolson. In 2024 he commenced his studies at ANAM learning under Timothy Young. Find out more at anam.com.au/musicians

Tim is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Min Jiang, Jeanne McMullin, Margaret Morey, Elizabeth Nye, Marie Rowland.



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PROGRAM NOTES

The vague and helpfully homophonic premise of wandering and wondering has allowed me (although you may debate how successfully) to draw together three works that I love into a cohesive recital. I ask you to suspend reality a little and take a windy journey down the rabbit-hole to explain how and why...

"I am a stranger everywhere," from **Franz Schubert's** 1822 song *The Wanderer* perhaps presents a forlorn confession of Schubert's own isolation. Schubert's relative lack of wealth, familial difficulties, or dalliances with Benvenuto Cellini's 'peacocks' (look it up) could have been factors for his own marginalisation. The image of the wanderer gained particular resonance after he fell ill with syphilis in 1823, as his more visible symptoms resulted in yet further ostracization. Both of Schubert's masterful song cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin* (1823) and *Winterreise* (1827), portray lonely outcasts on their wayward paths. The importance of this trope in much of his music shows his constant preoccupation with his own isolation.

After a period of five years in which Schubert's infection had become latent, his syphilis returned in 1828, and he again fell ill. Schubert's C minor sonata (D. 958) is the first of his final three piano sonatas written in a frenzied six-week period in the summer of 1828. His health eventually deteriorated further, and Schubert died at the age of 31 that November.

Renowned Schubert interpreter Alfred Brendel called the C minor sonata Schubert's most neurotic, and that "its classicism is undermined by anxiety." The first movement's opening presents an allusion to Beethoven's variations in C minor (WoO 80). This theme, termed by Brendel to be like a "rugged quarry," is followed by a tender and lyrical second theme, which breathes much like Lieder in the unmistakable hallmark of Schubert. Presenting them both, side by side, was perhaps a tribute to Schubert's self-professed hero, who had died the previous year.

The second movement Adagio is a vision of our lonely wanderer. After the hymnal opening, a questioning chord sequence stalls upwards to a fermata. This progression is a reference to *Frozen Tears* from *Winterreise*, and returns many times throughout the movement. Each time the pause draws an oppressive weight to the question: *"Have I, then, not noticed / that I have been weeping?"*

The third movement, Menuetto-Trio, provides a little relief with its sparkling filigree and dance rhythms, although a colouring of darker harmonies reminisces the path trodden in the movements before.

The final movement, Allegro, is both dizzying and obsessive, the moto perpetuo opening rollicks along with almost tarantella-like feverishness. It contrasts the home key, C minor, with frequent excursions into the "wanderer key" of C-sharp minor. In this piece, D-flat/C-sharp proves an interrupting and deterring force that attempts to prevent resolution, until a final fatalistic cadence knocks the wind from any resistance and stridently marks the end of a tumultuous sonata.

Alban Berg, like Schubert before him, was also a lieder-obsessed composer from Vienna. Studying counterpoint and harmony under Arnold Schönberg from 1904, the music from this period was the result of Schönberg's rigorous teaching in combination with Berg's overwhelming innate musicality. This included some 80 lieder as well as the magnificent Piano Sonata Op.1. Later in 1928, Berg set about orchestrating a selection of 7 from these earlier lieder – hence their published title, 'Seven Early Songs.' The texts selected by Berg for these Lieder include clandestine love affairs, nineteenth century Victorian flower code, and majestic visions of nature.

'A vast wonderland opens up / Silvery mountains soar dreamlike tall.' (from *Night*)

'That was the day of the white chrysanthemums – / Its brilliance almost frightened me ... And then, then you came to take my soul / at the dead of night.' (from *Crown of Dreams*)

'The Lord at night now garlands / star-chains with his blessed hand / across lands of wandering and wonder.' (from *Summer Days*)

Soviet Era Russian composer **Rodion Shchedrin** was in the audience in 1951 when pianist Tatianna Nikolayeva premiered Shostakovich's *Preludes and Fugues*. He was inspired both by Nikolayeva's brilliant musicianship as well as Shostakovich's deft combination of baroque form and modern harmony; the result of this inspiration was *Basso Ostinato*. This piece fuses ideas of medieval ground bass with an emerging Russian jazz aesthetic and the progeny is mildly terrifying. The bassline meanders conspiratorially around before a cataclysmic ending in Schubert's Wanderer Key of C-sharp minor; a coincidental bow tied around this program of wandering and wondering.

Written by Timothy O'Malley