

## ANAM RECITAL: FRANCIS ATKINS (PIANO) **Metamorphosis**

TUESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 11AM  
ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

<b>Michael Kieran HARVEY (b. 1961)</b> <i>Elektra</i> (1992)	9'
<b>Franz LISZT (1811-1886)</b> Ballade No. 2 in B Minor, S. 171 (1853)	14'
<b>Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)</b> Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, op. 53, 'Waldstein' (1804)	25'
<i>i. Allegro con brio</i>	
<i>ii. Introduzione. Adagio molto</i>	
<i>iii. Rondo. Allegretto moderato – Prestissimo</i>	

**Francis Atkins** (NSW) piano  
**Nathan Ellul** electronics

*Approximate duration: 50 minutes*

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### ABOUT FRANCIS ATKINS

Francis Atkins is a fiery and passionate Australian musician. His steadily flourishing career as a pianist has seen him onstage in music festivals and recitals in Japan and throughout Australia.

In 2025, Francis feels privileged to be in his second year at ANAM, studying under Timothy Young. Driven by the fear of ever having to specialise, he was drawn to ANAM's mission for creating young musicians with multifaceted skillsets. A highlight for him was collaborating with Australian composers Brett Dean and Michael Kieran Harvey on performances of their piano works and giving the Australian premiere of Brett Dean's work "Faustian Pact (Hommage à Liszt)".

As a regular human being, Francis hails from the beach town of Byron Bay on the north coast of NSW. He often forgets to water his houseplants but loves swimming in the ocean and a good Tempranillo.

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*Francis is supported by ANAM Syndicate donors Elizabeth Butcher AM, Sieglind D'Arcy, Mark Debeljak and Daniel Lehrer, Andrea Goldsmith, Mike and Jane Hall, Neil and Hunter Moore, Hilary Newman, Ralph and Margaret Plarre.*

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# METAMORPHOSIS

Noun

/ˌmetəˈmɔːfəsis/ or /ˌmetəˈmɔːfəʊsis/

A change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one.

*Elektra* is an experiment in extending the sound of the acoustic piano, using live electronics to augment the piano in an otherworldly way. The first performance of *Elektra* was a collaboration between pianist **Michael Kieran Harvey** and sound engineer Michael Hewes.

“...our first collaboration, grew out of my interest in dealing with the question of computer versus human performance... and led me to wonder what were the compelling aspects of the live performance versus the perfect execution achievable on the new computer instruments.”

Harvey's inspiration to compose *Elektra* was kindled during a collaboration with the Sydney Dance Company, where he was fascinated with how an audience would perceive a piece of music differently through a multimodal approach:

“The computer processing is an early attempt to morph overtones as a means of changing the nature of the piano sound, in much the same way as dance changes the perception of music both for the onlooker and the dancer.”

In the nineteenth century, **Franz Liszt** made a name for himself as an unstoppable pianistic force. During his tours of Europe in the 1830s and 40s, Liszt demanded the attention of the entire continent with his incredible prowess at the piano and extraordinary sex appeal. The term “Lisztomania” has been adopted by musicologists, as there is no other way to describe the absolute hysteria with which his audiences responded.

Liszt was a composer of great influence and was a prominent member of the New German School, a collective of progressive composers passionate about challenging the boundaries of music. The hallmarks of his compositional style were thematic metamorphosis (the dramatic transformation of melodies) and programmatic music (music with the express purpose of delivering a narrative).

The *Ballade* S. 171 is widely considered to tell the Greek myth of Hero and Leander. While there are many epic retellings of this story, Wikipedia offers a lovely condensed version:

“Leander falls in love with the priestess Hero, and after meeting as friends for a while, they begin a passionate love affair. Each night, Leander swims across the Hellespont strait to meet with Hero. She lights a lamp in the top of her tower to guide his way. As the seasons change, the seas roughen, and a harsh winter storm blows out Hero's lamp and drowns Leander. Seeing his dead body washed up on the shore, she leaps from her tower to join him in death.”

Although Liszt never explicitly illustrates the events of the myth in his score, his expressive language showcases the erotic nature of their relationship underscored by treacherous roar of the Aegean Sea. His use of thematic metamorphosis as an expressive vehicle intensifies the material in parallel with the changes in the romantic relationship and the seasons.

While **Ludwig van Beethoven** was often considered outrageous in his time for his crazy use of modulation as a tool to shock the listener, he was extremely well grounded in his roots of classical compositional form. His middle period, in which he composed the op. 53 sonata, was a time in which he was incredibly efficient with his thematic development.

In the cold clinical world of music theory, his approach to the *allegro con brio* is that of a “germ motive”; etymologically coming from plants and germination (the idea that from a small seed grows a beautiful plant). In this epic ten-minute-long movement, there are only three or four distinct ideas which provide the foundation for the entire work to flourish upon. At the risk of being long winded in an already enormous sonata, Beethoven famously replaced the entire second movement with a very brief *introduzione* as a bridging passage to the *rondo*.

In 1803, Beethoven was gifted a new piano from the Erard piano manufacturers, who were responsible for much of the evolution of the instrument during this time. This particular model had four pedals! In the opening of the third movement, you can hear Beethoven having fun with his new toys, as he quite deliberately indicates the blurring of harmonies with his new pedals. These extensions in the piano's sound were so evocative that to some they conjured images of a sunrise, inspiring one of the sonata's affectionate nicknames: *L'Aurora*, the dawn sonata.

Words by Francis Atkins