

## ANAM AT THE CONVENT: ÉLÉGIES HARMONIQUE

FRIDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 7PM

ROSINA AUDITORIUM, ABBOTSFORD CONVENT

**Jan Ladislav DUSSEK (1760-1812)** Piano Sonata in F-sharp Minor, op. 61 14'  
*Élégie harmonique* (1806)

i. *Lento patetico – Tempo agitato, non presto*

ii. *Tempo vivace e con fuoco quasi presto*

**Sarah Chick** \* (TAS) fortepiano

**Maria SZYMANOWSKA (1789-1831)** Selections from 24 Mazurkas (1826) 14'  
**Liam Furey** \* (NZ) fortepiano

**Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)** Allegro in A Minor, D. 947 'Lebensstürme' 13'  
(1828)

**Francis Atkins** \* (NSW) fortepiano

**Timothy Young** (ANAM Resident Faculty, Head of Piano) fortepiano / director

**INTERVAL** 20'

**DUSSEK** Piano Sonata in F Minor, op. 77 *L'invocation* (1812) 24'

i. *Allegro moderato ma energico*

ii. *Tempo di minuetto con moto*

iii. *Adagio non troppo ma solenne*

iv. *Rondo. Allegro moderato*

**Timothy O'Malley** \* (VIC) fortepiano

**SCHUBERT** Fantasia in F Minor, D. 940 (1828) 20'

**Po Goh** \* (VIC) fortepiano

**Timothy Young** (ANAM Resident Faculty, Head of Piano) fortepiano / director

*Approximate duration: 2 hours with a 20-minute interval.*

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*Timothy Young's position is supported by the Orthwein Foundation.*

*This concert features a John Broadwood & Sons 1825 Grand Pianoforte #10343 on loan to ANAM from Dr Julie Haskell.*

*\* Denotes ANAM musicians supported by ANAM Syndicate or foundations.*

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## THE SHOULDERS GIANTS STAND ON

The end of the eighteenth century saw the death of Mozart, the reign of Haydn and the rise of Beethoven. It's easy to simplify the history into a relay between these three composers (who share a direct connection in Haydn's mentorship of Mozart and Beethoven), but virtuoso performer-composers grew their own celebrity to similar dizzying heights, aided by the rapid development of the fortepiano between 1770 and 1820. Whilst Beethoven is anecdotally credited with "inspiring" the increases of range (an additional 2 octaves) and capacity for dynamics, especially in taking on his vigorous playing style, it is **Jan Ladislav Dussek** who requested London's Broadwood to add a sixth octave to their fortepianos — the very kind which the ANAM musicians perform on today.

Dussek's biography reads more a grifter and vagabond than a celebrated composer — fleeing St Petersburg after being implicated in a plot against Catherine II, then escaping France for England during the revolution, fearing for his own head due to close association with the aristocracy. His final escape, from England to Hamburg, came as his publishing business ran into deep debt, and after fleeing England he most likely never saw his wife or daughter again. Whilst I can't find any sources specifically naming him the 'bad boy' of piano playing in the late eighteenth century, the idea is a fun one to entertain. What academic research into Dussek consistently reiterates is how much of his successors' styles can be found within his works. A virtuoso pianist, his sonatas and concertos pre-empt both Schubert and Beethoven in their growing chromaticism and Romantic *innigkeit*. The virtuosos Chopin and Liszt are also foreshadowed in the scale work, hammered octaves and contrapuntal filigree. Dussek's two works on the program today are piano sonatas with aptly Romantic titles (*L'invocation* and *Élégie harmonique*) from late in his career, both beguilingly stretching the very idea of a sonata into the much later creatively rambling fantasies and rhapsodies. The treatment of harmony in both sonatas is more Brahms than Beethoven, signalling just how far this forgotten master innovated his craft.

Before Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann each too Europe by storm with their pianistic virtuosity, there was **Maria Szymanowska**. Making her concert debut the year Frédéric Chopin was born, she laid the ground for the Polish composer-virtuosos who would follow in her footsteps. Writing in the 'style brilliant' which served to showcase her own virtuosity, her late nocturnes, studies and preludes could be confused with Chopin, yet she developed her works years ahead of him. Today's selection of mazurkas are simpler in construction but are illustrative in her work capturing the folk tradition within her art music — a trend more fitting of the mid to late eighteenth century — and also evoking a lyrical *cantabile* ('singing') style, using the newer expressive capabilities of these fortepianos to mimic vocal music.

**Franz Schubert** is the one composer not lost to time in today's program, instead becoming the image of the Romantic artist in the decades after his short, difficult life. Schubert was no virtuoso performer, nor was he regarded as a symphonist, and operatic success evaded him — and any artistic input outside of this was seen as amateurish trifling. Chamber music and art songs were seen as a domestic craft for the salon, and his piano works were so obscure that, reportedly, Sergei Rachmaninov didn't know of their existence at all. One needn't know the biographical details to be moved by the emotional power behind these two works from the last year of his life, so keening against the boundaries of mortality, building in intensity, traversing to distant keys, and returning to bleakness.

The magic of Schubert is not in the tragedy but the rays of sunshine which place the tragedy in such bleak relief, yet always somewhere tinged with an echo of hope. In his great song cycles, of which both of these piano sonatas contain deeply lyrical passages evocative of his *Lieder*, the minor keys often represent the present day, and the major the past, made all the more tragic in the loss of the happiness that once was. Through his last year, this seems to change as a new optimism emerges: one of relief of soon finally being at peace, a new major key emotion that so bittersweetly encapsulates the storms of life Schubert battled through. Though I hesitate to encourage a programmatic reading of either works, what journey through life do Schubert's twists and turns take you on? Maybe we too can find light and hope in darker times.

*Words by Alex Owens, Music Librarian, Robert Salzer Foundation Library.*