



A piano recital by

Alexander Hanysz

music by Bach, Mozart,

Chopin, Debussy

& Ligeti

Tuesday 11th December, 7:30 p.m.

Flinders Street Baptist Church,

65 Flinders Street, Adelaide.

Admission \$20/\$10

Programme

Sonata in D, K576
Allegro
Adagio
Allegretto
W. A. Mozart

Partita no. 2 in C minor
Sinfonia
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Rondeau
Capriccio
J. S. Bach

--- interval (10 minutes) ---

Dance no. 1 in Bulgarian Rhythm
(*Mikrokosmos* no. 148)
Fanfares (study no. 4)
Béla Bartók
György Ligeti

Study in A flat, op. 25 no. 1
Interlacing (study no. 12)
F. Chopin
György Ligeti

Pagodas (from *Étampes*)
Open Strings (study no. 2)
C. Debussy
György Ligeti

Study in C minor, op 10 no. 12
Autumn in Warsaw (study no. 6)
F. Chopin
György Ligeti

Legend has it that the music of J. S. Bach languished, forgotten and neglected for nearly a century after his death, until it was “rediscovered” by Mendelssohn. Like many legends it contains a grain of truth: during those years, Bach’s music was not visible in the form of public concerts, but it was certainly known to a few connoisseurs and scholars. Among them was Mozart’s friend the Baron van Swieten, who introduced the composer to Bach’s music in the year 1782.

The encounter with the “learned style” of the High Baroque had a profound effect on Mozart’s composition. After many years of experimentation, he eventually reached a synthesis of the “old” and “new” in his music, most famously in the finale of the *Jupiter* symphony. We can also see the same elements in the D major piano sonata, his last major work for solo piano. The melodic contours, the rhythmic language, the formal structure, the lighthearted character of the whole, are all pure Mozart—but there is also a new contrapuntal richness, as the routine left hand accompaniments heard in many earlier piano sonatas are replaced by a wealth of counter melody.

Turning back now to the works of Bach himself: the six partitas belong to the small fraction of Bach's works that were published during the composer's lifetime. They were collected together as part I of the monumental *Clavierübung* ("keyboard practice"), printed in 1731. Bach is often typecast as a humble servant of music, quoted as saying "The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul." However, works such as the partitas suggest that this modest exterior concealed a formidable ego: the publication of the *Clavierübung* made a substantial contribution towards the glory of J. S. Bach!

The *Clavierübung* as a whole contains models for every type of keyboard composition: suites, concertos, variations, preludes, for harpsichord (single or double manual) and organ, in a wide variety of keys, and including works in the "French" and "Italian" styles. In the complexity of the compositions and the virtuosity demanded of the performers, the pieces represent a substantial advance on the earlier French Suites and English Suites. The second partita in particular is notable for its prelude (*Sinfonia*)—in three sections, ending with an exciting fugue—and the final capriccio, replacing the customary gigue, in which the wild leaps of the theme are cleverly incorporated into the strict three-part counterpoint.

Because Ligeti is strong stuff, possibly not to everybody's taste and possibly intoxicating, today's dose of Ligeti comes to you with mixers. I hope that the effect is of an exciting and slightly dangerous cocktail, not of a diluted cordial.

The first layer of our cocktail is called "Ostinato in Bulgarian Rhythm". Bartók's dance uses the "Bulgarian" technique of dividing the bar into beats of unequal length, and features a mostly repetitive accompaniment. Ligeti's *Fanfares* takes the repetition to the point of obsession, and the "Bulgarian" subdivisions of the bar gradually fall out of phase with the accompaniment. The first part of the piece is preparation for the triumphant entrance of the trumpets, which are then heard again repeatedly from different distances and different directions.

The second layer is called "Perpetual Motion and Period Doubling". Chopin's study in A flat, sometimes called "Aeolian Harp", features a continuous stream of rapid notes, some of them highlighted to form melodies, bass lines and occasional inner voices, as in Schumann's poetic description: "It would be an error to think that Chopin permitted every one of the small notes to be distinctly heard. It was rather an undulation of the A flat major chord, here and there thrown aloft anew by the pedal. Throughout all the harmonies one always heard in great tones a wondrous melody, while once only, in the middle of the piece, besides that chief song, a tenor voice became prominent in the midst of chords."

Ligeti's *Interlacing* uses the same idea in a way that is more highly structured and at the same time sounds more random. The piece begins with a perfectly regular pattern: every 13th note of the right hand, and every 17th note of the left hand, is highlighted.

As the music unfolds, new voices are picked out of the texture, with progressively faster rhythms cascading on top of each other. Ligeti was fascinated by the mathematics of chaos theory, and the overall effect of this piece is reminiscent of the period doubling cascade of the logistic map, as illustrated on the front cover of this programme.

The third layer is called “Fifths and Triplets”. Debussy’s *Pagodas* begins with the interval of a perfect fifth, and proceeds to use parallel fifths in ways that would have horrified his harmony teachers at the Paris Conservatoire. (Horrifying the teachers was one of the favourite pastimes of Debussy’s youth!) The work is also delicately sprinkled with two-against-three polyrhythms. Ligeti’s *Open Strings* begins with fifths stacked on top of each other in the manner of a violin tuning up, but rapidly exceeds the range of any orchestral string instrument. The piece is not just sprinkled, but infused, with the two-against-three motif, and features more “period doubling cascades”.

The final layer is called “Turmoil in Warsaw”: the connection here is more historical than musical, although both pieces do share the “perpetual motion” idea. Chopin’s study in C minor, sometimes called “Revolutionary”, is said to have been written after Chopin heard of the 1830 November Uprising in his native Warsaw. Ligeti never lived in Warsaw, but that city was the home of an annual new music festival every autumn since 1956, where many of Ligeti’s works were played. For those with a vivid imagination, both pieces might end with the sound of tanks rolling into the city, although both composers refused to be pinned down as to the “real meaning” of their music.

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