



Debussy Prelude 6
Paysage triste et glacé. Sad and frozen landscape

|quartz|

OLWEN MORRIS

piano

BEETHOVEN BARTÓK SCHUBERT LISZT DEBUSSY CHOPIN

OLWEN MORRIS

CD
1

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Sonata in D minor Op.31 No.2

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|------|
| 1 | Largo – Allegro | 8'32 |
| 2 | Adagio | 6'39 |
| 3 | Allegretto | 7'15 |

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

Suite Op.14 (1916)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 4 | <i>i</i> Allegretto | 2'08 |
| 5 | <i>ii</i> Scherzo | 2'06 |
| 6 | <i>iii</i> Allegro molto | 2'45 |
| 7 | <i>iv</i> Sostenuto | 3'11 |

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Sonata in B-flat major D.960

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|----|-----------------------|-------|
| 8 | Molto moderato | 18'37 |
| 9 | Andante sostenuto | 8'26 |
| 10 | Scherzo | 4'07 |
| 11 | Allegro ma non troppo | 8'09 |

Total playing time: **72'00**

CD
2

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | Legend, No.2, St François de Paule marchant sur les flots | 9'25 |
| 2 | Transcendental Étude No.12, "Chasse-neige" | 6'27 |

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

- | | | |
|---|-------------|------|
| 3 | Prelude I | 3'27 |
| 4 | Prelude VI | 3'42 |
| 5 | Prelude VII | 3'37 |
| 6 | Prelude X | 6'40 |

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

- | | | |
|---|-----------|------|
| 7 | In Smyrna | 3'31 |
| 8 | Skizze | 1'12 |

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 9 | Fantasia Op.49 | 12'51 |
| 10 | Fantasia-Impromptu in C-sharp minor Op.66 | 5'22 |
| 11 | Barcarolle Op.60 | 9'25 |

FRANZ SCHUBERT

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|-------|
| 12 | Valses Nobles Op.77 No.1 | 00'35 |
| 13 | Ländler Op.18 No.1 | 00'35 |
| 14 | Ländler Op.18 No.2 | 00'56 |
| 15 | Ländler Op.18 No.3 | 00'36 |
| 16 | Ländler Op.18 No.7 | 00'37 |
| 17 | Walzer Op.9 No.1 | 00'37 |
| 18 | Walzer Op.9 No.2 | 00'41 |
| 19 | Walzer Op.9 No.3 | 00'38 |
| 20 | Walzer Op.9 No.6 | 00'40 |
| 21 | Walzer Op.9 No.12 | 00'39 |
| 22 | Walzer Op.9 No.13 | 1'18 |

Total playing time: **73'39**

BEETHOVEN

Sonata 17 in D minor Op.31 No.2

Sonata in D minor Op.31 No.2 was written 1801–02 when Beethoven was 31, the seventeenth of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas. Its suggestive title 'Tempest' was not given or ever used by Beethoven, but it does reflect the tempestuous mood, especially of the first movement. The opening phrases seem to be asking questions, and it is only after 20 bars that the home key D minor is asserted in dramatic style. Thereafter, the movement drives forward, only twice interrupted by the *Largo* phrases and recitative bars (143 and 158), in Beethoven's own words: "Like a voice from a tomb vault".

The second movement is an outpouring of lyrical beauty, superbly balanced – perfect piano writing.

The third movement is unrelenting and unceasing in its circular *moto perpetuo* style.

Although there are key struggles and unexpected *sforzandos* later, it finds no way out. After a dramatic chromatic descent it ends simply as it had begun.

BARTÓK

Suite Op.14 (1916)

- i* Allegretto
- ii* Scherzo
- iii* Allegro molto
- iv* Sostenuto

Between the two sonatas, Bartók's **Suite** (1914) of four short movements offers the liveliness of rhythmic and harmonic invention characteristic of the first

decades of the twentieth century, while retaining its Hungarian roots. The fourth movement has been referred to typically as Bartók's 'Night Music'

SCHUBERT

Sonata in B flat major D

This long and amazing sonata was written in 1828, the year after Beethoven's death, and the year Schubert died – aged 31.

1827–28 were traumatic years in which Schubert wrote some of his greatest works, including the last three piano sonatas, the song cycles *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang*, and the String Quintet – his last chamber composition. During this time his health was deteriorating rapidly from syphilis, and its mercury poisoning 'cure' and finally typhoid. His circle of friends supported him. He died at this brother's home.

It is perhaps inevitable to connect premonition of death with this B-flat Sonata; awareness of tragedy, sadness, death are acknowledged aspects of most writers, artists, composers works – alternating with love, hope, life and the recognition of all that humans experience: Schubert's many Dances reflect his love of life and fun. The short *Grazen Galop* D.925 names Graz which he revisited in summer 1827 (The famous song *Erl Konig* which was written age 18 and first performed at Graz.)

The four movements are cast in classical forms. Schubert's unparalleled qualities as a song writer are evident from the Sonata's opening bars; only an ominous bass trill disturbs the calmness of this theme (similarly a feature of the G flat *Impromptu*). The development of musical ideas enables the movement to flow forward with much variety of expression. It ends with the modified opening theme – again with its trill.

Schubert chose a somewhat unusual key – C-sharp minor – for the poignant *Adagio*, but with rays of sunshine in the central A major section.

The *Scherzo* conveys that lightness found in the Dances, which conclude the second disc, but the B-flat minor *Trio* is darker with its unexpected *fzps* resonating like the cello's *pizzicato* accompaniment from the Quintet.

A single octave on G announces the theme of the fourth movement. This is always repeated but the final three 'clarion' calls at the end, drop each time by a semitone before the brief *Presto Coda*.

LISZT

i **Legend No.2, St François de Paule marchant sur les flots** (1863)

ii **Transcendental Étude No.12, "Chasse-neige"**

As a solo instrument, the piano continued to be developed throughout the nineteenth century. Liszt was an extraordinary virtuoso pianist, and he exploited various piano techniques widely – chromatic runs, tremolos, both pedals, chords – all are effectively used in both these pieces.

They heighten climaxes and suggest the forces of nature – stormy waves and determined effort in St Francis, or the blizzard through which a heavy snow plough (Chasse Neige) must travel.

The legendary story of St François de Paule relates his miraculous crossing having been refused passage by the boatman.

Debussy

Preludes (1910) **Book 1 Nos. 1, 6, 7, 10**

Descriptive titles continued to be popular but in different ways. Debussy's **Preludes** of 1910 reflect the Impressionist movement in Art. His use of the whole-tone scale brings a new imaginative quality of sound to his music. The title of each Prelude was deliberately placed at the end.

ELGAR

i **In Smyrna** *ii* **Skizze**

Elgar's two short pieces written in 1905 and 1903 are improvisatory in style and in diatonic harmony.

Elgar was on a Mediterranean cruise when he wrote in his diary of his arrival in and delight for Smyrna: 'My first touch with Asia, and I was quite overcome.' Edwardian England was far away, but some of Elgar's nostalgia is here in this interesting piece.

Skizze (sketch – short piece) written around 1901 was dedicated to 'My dear friend Professor Julius Butths' Dusseldorf.

Chopin

Fantasia Op.49

Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor, Op.66

Barcarolle Op.60

These three pieces are all late works. Chopin's pieces always 'speak for themselves': Waltzes, Nocturnes, Impromptus, Études, have little need of more explanation.

The **Fantasia** (Op.49) is a passionate work reflecting the troubles and revolutionary times Chopin was living through.

Fantaisie-Improptu alternates between the mood of 'agitato' and the lyricism of the middle section, showing Chopin's piano writing in all its fluency and freedom of expression.

The **Barcarolle** has been described as Chopin's finest lyrical work.

From its opening rhythmic movement, we are taken on a journey through whatever waters we may personally have ever enjoyed ourselves – but with Chopin choosing the way!

SCHUBERT

Dances

This is a random collection, taken from Schubert's many short dances, (often only two lines long), waltzes, landlers, written for piano, at various times and over much of his life.

They invite us to share Schubert's love of dancing, its exuberance, carefreeness, sentiment – and even sadness.

Olwen Morris

OLWEN MORRIS

A performer's CV lists achievements and engagements, usually omitting personal details, which, I believe also have an impact on the career. I have decided to include some of these personal experiences.

My early childhood was spent in Breconshire, within the sound of two rivers – the Clydach and the Usk. My first hour-long piano lessons (notation, scales, Czerny, Bach) began when I was four, with Josef Gruenbaum, a lawyer and musician, who had fled Nazi Germany with his family to rural Wales. Dr Gruenbaum died when I was eleven, (he had already sent four violin students on scholarships to the Royal Academy). His death seemed to set a fateful pattern which continued throughout my student years.

I was enrolled at fourteen as the youngest student of Cardiff Castle College of Music and Drama (later to become the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama). I learnt with Dr Thomas Halford, a wonderful and inspiring teacher. In the same week that I was awarded ABRSM's Silver medal, I also received the devastating news that he had died suddenly aged thirty eight. Music now became the outlet for grief and determination. I performed Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms and the Grieg Concerto in Cardiff's City Hall, The Reardon Smith Theatre and on BBC Wales. I won scholarships to the Royal Academy of Music when I was sixteen.

After an exciting first term with my professor Claude Pollard, he suffered a severe stroke. His replacements were not a success, and finally I became a student of Leslie England.

I studied piano and composition at RAM for five years. I won various awards, but at that time (the 1950s), the RAM did not offer the opportunities for performers, which it now so well provides.



I was given bursaries by William Glock each year to go to the Dartington Summer School of Music. Dartington gave me the opportunity to meet and hear many international musicians such as The Amadeus Quartet, Julian Bream, Stravinsky and the renowned pianist Vlado Perlemuter. I played in the master classes and later I studied with Perlemuter.

I planned to go to Vienna, but aged twenty-two I met and married an artist, David Morris.

The pattern of life changed and by the time I was twenty-five we had two children. I had also given a successful Wigmore Hall debut, several solo BBC broadcasts, and various recitals through my agent Ibbs and Tillett.

My life as a pianist always continued, with recitals in Wigmore Hall, Fairfield Halls, Holywell Oxford, Manchester Bridgewater Hall, Bath Guildhall, St Martin-in-the-Fields and many music clubs, universities and BBC broadcasts. I continued to visit and play at Dartington.

I gave first performances of works by Rubbra, David Cox, Wynne and Matthew Taylor's "Piano Pieces".

We moved house eight times in seven years, including London, Coggeshall Essex, Oxford and France. Home was always a place of music, painting and children.

When I was forty, my husband's near fatal road accident changed our lives again. I decided to teach more and to examine for ABRSM – often worldwide.

I forged international links between students of UK and Russia, enabling them to enjoy working and playing together here and in Novgorod.



UK students with Olwen Morris in Arensky School of Music Novgorod

There was education to support for our four children – now entering university, medical college, Royal Academy of Art and Royal College of Music. Expensive lessons, instruments and bows to be bought were priorities.

I continued to maintain my solo playing, as well as giving chamber music concerts with professional colleagues. My natural gift for extemporisation and my interest in traditional church liturgy enabled me to work as a Director of Music and an organist.

I gave many charity concerts for causes – Chernobyl's Children's UK visit, Biafra Children, UNESCO, The Prince's Trust and Young Minds.

Teaching at all levels continues to be an important aspect of my life. Talent is not rare, but sometimes such hurdles as autism, sight impairment or deafness are overcome with remarkable results and successes.

In 2016 a double CD was released on Quartz – including late Beethoven sonatas, and works by French composers.

These current CDs were completed in 2021 – delayed by the pandemic.

Some of these works date back from early performances – others, Liszt, and Elgar and Debussy, were learnt during lockdown 2020–21.

Olwen Morris (Née Goodwin), January 2022

“In the garden with blue, red and violet colours, there flies a yellow and white butterfly.”

Onisaburo Deguchi

WHAT THE PRESS SAYS...

ON BEETHOVEN

“Remarkable for the urgency and drama.”

Oxford Times

“Perfect command of ornamental filigree and her wide range of dynamic nuances.”

The Times

“Intuitive response – she ran the whole gamut of human emotions bringing both strength and tenderness - considerable agility – a finale of particular brilliance.” (Fairfield Halls)

Croydon Advertiser

ON BARTOK

“A particularly good impression... incisive tone and crisp even fingerwork.” (Wigmore Hall)

Telegraph

“Vigour and energy, that breadth of expression which distinguishes her playing.” (Fairfield Halls)

ON SCHUBERT

“Her rhythmic ease and warmth held sway from the wonderful opening bars. If sheer musicianship means anything in Oxford her next recital should be packed.”

“She presented the Andante in all its muted poignancy.”

The Times

“A much applauded performance.”

CD 1 recorded: 1 – 2 November 2019

Venue: Henry Wood Hall

CD2 recorded: 2 – 3 June 2021

Venue: St George's Church, Harrow

Producer & Engineer: Michael Ponder

Mastering: Adaq Khan

Booklet cover image: *Birches* by David Morris

Inside booklet cover image: *Frozen Landscape* by Sarah Reddyhoff

Tray image: *The Palette* (detailed) – self portrait by David Morris