

## Welcome Kathryn McDowell



Welcome to tonight's concert with pianist Yuja Wang – the third in her UBS Soundscapes: LSO Artist Portrait. One of the most dynamic pianists in the world today, the LSO is delighted to be also returning with Yuja to her native China next month.

This evening she performs a solo recital featuring the music of Chopin, set alongside works by Russian masters Prokofiev and Stravinsky plus Ukrainian-Russian Nikolai Kapustin.

I would like to thank UBS who support this series of concerts as part of UBS Soundscapes, and for their continued commitment to the Orchestra. Thanks also to BBC Radio 3 who are presenting this live on air, one of many performances with the LSO broadcast from the Barbican every year.

Please join us again on Thursday 20 February when LSO Principal Guest Conductor Daniel Harding conducts the original orchestral version of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, and Yuja Wang plays Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto with the Orchestra.

*Kathryn McDowell*

**Kathryn McDowell CBE DL**  
**Managing Director**

**INTERVAL (20 MINUTES) FOLLOWS**  
**CHOPIN SONATA NO 3 IN B MINOR**

**TONIGHT'S CONCERT**  
**FINISHES APPROX 9.15PM**

## Living Music In Brief

### 2014/15 SEASON LAUNCH

We're delighted to announce details of the LSO's brand new season of music-making, taking place at the Barbican between September 2014 and July 2015. The concerts are available to browse on [Iso.co.uk](http://Iso.co.uk); online booking is now open, and telephone booking is available from 1 March.

[Iso.co.uk/201415season](http://Iso.co.uk/201415season)

### PIANISTS GALORE!

Pianists appearing at LSO St Luke's as part of our BBC Radio 3 Thursday Lunchtime Concerts over the next ten weeks include duo Cédric Tiberghien and Christian Ihle Hadland, Alexei Grynuk, Nikolai Demidenko, Yevgeny Sudbin, Boris Giltburg and Denis Kozhukin.

[Iso.co.uk/lunchtimeconcerts](http://Iso.co.uk/lunchtimeconcerts)

### JOIN 1,000 VOICES – CROWD OUT

Summer 2014 will see three major European epicentres for culture alive with the sound of *Crowd Out*. In London, Birmingham and Berlin, a 1,000-strong choir will take a stage. In East London the group will surround the iconic bandstand in Arnold Circus to perform David Lang's specially composed work as the final event in the Spitalfields Music Summer Festival on 21 June 2014. With groups made up of people from all walks of life, you don't need any singing experience to take part. To register your interest, email [kate.gardner@Iso.co.uk](mailto:kate.gardner@Iso.co.uk).

[Iso.co.uk/crowdout](http://Iso.co.uk/crowdout)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)  
**Piano Sonata No 3 in A minor Op 28**  
 ('From Old Notebooks') (1917)

ALLEGRO TEMPESTOSO – MODERATO – ALLEGRO TEMPESTOSO – MODERATO –  
 PIÙ LENTO – PIÙ ANIMATO – ALLEGRO I – POCO PIÙ MOSSO

When Prokofiev graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1909, aged 18, he had already completed seven piano sonatas. He soon rejected these as juvenilia, following his instinct to take a more progressive path, but he returned to some of them in his 'mature' early piano sonatas: Nos 3 and 4, for example, both bear the subtitle 'From Old Notebooks', acknowledging such borrowings.

By the time of his Third Sonata (1917) Prokofiev had found a radical, percussive keyboard style, bearing out Glazunov's observations on his playing: 'He is trying to produce effects which are often beyond the piano's abilities, often at the expense of beauty of the sound.'

The sonata opens abruptly with a driving, continuously motoric section – a hallmark of Prokofiev's piano-writing, figuring in his earlier Toccata (1912) as well as, later, in the finale of the Sonata No 7 (1939–42). This eventually yields, via a long, mysterious rising chromatic scale, to a delicate lyrical theme, marked 'semplice e dolce' (simply and sweetly), which – also typical for the composer – combines childlike naïvety with poignant nostalgia. Once this comes to rest it's a return to the opening, brutalistic music in a development section that climaxes in thunderous rising left-hand chords and fast-repeated notes in the right-hand thumb. The coda builds up from hushed insect-like chromatic buzzing, spreading over the entire range of the keyboard and gathering in pace during a technical *tour de force* that drives to a muscular conclusion.

**PROKOFIEV** was born in the Ukraine and from an early age showed great ability both as composer and pianist. He gained a place at the St Petersburg Conservatory and shortly after acquired a reputation for the uncompromising nature of his music. He left Russia after the 1917 Revolution, but returned to Moscow 19 years later, apparently unaware of Stalin's regime. Before he left for exile, he completed his 'Classical' Symphony, a bold and appealing work that revived aspects of 18th-century form, clarity and elegance. 'The Fifth Symphony was intended as a hymn to free and happy Man', Prokofiev's comments, written in 1944 as the Russian army began to march towards Berlin, reflected his sense of hope in the future. Sadly, his later years were overshadowed by illness and the denunciation of his works as 'formalist' by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1948.

Frédéric Chopin (1810–49)  
**Piano Sonata No 3 in B minor Op 58** (1844)

- 1 ALLEGRO MAESTOSO
- 2 SCHERZO: MOLTO VIVACE
- 3 LARGO
- 4 FINALE: PRESTO, MA NON TANTO

Chopin completed the last of his three piano sonatas in the autumn of 1844, at the country house he was sharing with his partner, the novelist George Sand (pseudonym of Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin). Though he had established a pattern of composing in the country during the summer, and teaching and playing in Paris during the winter season, this was nevertheless a tense time: composition was slow; Chopin's father had died in May that year; and his relationship with Sand was beginning to fray.

The Sonata No 3 opens with a big-boned Allegro maestoso, whose first theme is shot through with heroic grandeur. The descending four-note motif at the very beginning continually feeds the ensuing material, including the second theme, an inspired long cantilena typical of Chopin's *bel canto* melodic style, unfolding above a triplet accompaniment.

As in the Sonata No 2, the Scherzo is placed second. The sparkling rushing cascades of its opening are followed by a darker, more ruminative central section, before the return of the spirited opening.

The bold, dotted-rhythm figure that launches the slow-movement Largo suggests we're in for a turbulent ride, but it immediately melts into a rapturous new melody, a Nocturne-like reverie, beneath which that opening dotted rhythm is echoed in a gently pulsing accompaniment. The flowing middle section has a chorale-like, devotional quality and strays into increasingly remote regions – creating a tension that makes the return of the Nocturne-like first theme all the more comforting.

While the finale of the Second Sonata runs like a continuous gust of wind, that of the Third is an ebullient rondo, taking as its first theme a swirling tarantella. This alternates with a second idea incorporating fast pearl-necklace runs in the right hand. The coda is a breathlessly exciting ratcheting-up of those fast runs, underpinned by a rousing display of sheer bravura.

Nikolai Kapustin (*b 1937*)

## Variations for Piano Op 41 (*1984*)

Nikolai Kapustin continues the long line of composer-pianists that includes Prokofiev and Chopin, but he is unusual in incorporating jazz idioms into classical structures. Classical forms are the mainstay of his output, which amounts to over 150 opuses, among them 20 piano sonatas, six piano concertos, two cello concertos and separate concertos for violin, cello, saxophone and double bass. Only in the past 15 years or so has his music been taken up by pianists in the West.

Kapustin studied from the age of 14 in Moscow with a grand-pupil of Vladimir Horowitz and, after graduating, spent 20 years playing in bands before turning to composition full-time in the early 1980s.

His Variations Op 41 are cheekily based on the iconic opening bassoon solo from Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*. The piece begins in a slow groove but presents a smorgasbord of styles and techniques along the way, including swing, blues, ragtime and boogie-woogie. Towards the end, a Larghetto section with a cocktail-bar feel undergoes a classical-style development, leading to a final Presto which lets its hair down in flying right-hand runs and a jumping bass, perhaps recalling Kapustin's fondness for jazz pianist and composer Oscar Peterson.

**KAPUSTIN** was born in Horlivka, Ukraine, in 1937. He studied piano with Avrelian Rubakh and subsequently with Alexander Goldenweiser at the Moscow Conservatory. During the 1950s, he became well-known as a jazz pianist, arranger and composer. Kapustin fuses his classical upbringing and knowledge with his love of jazz in his works, using classical form and structure with jazz harmony. He regards himself as a composer rather than a jazz musician: 'I was never a jazz musician. I never tried to be a real jazz pianist, but I had to do it because of the composing. I'm not interested in improvisation – and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? All my improvisation is written, of course, and they became much better'. Among his works are 20 piano sonatas, six concertos, sets of piano variations, études and studies.

Frédéric Chopin (*1810–49*)

## Nocturne in C minor Op 48 No 1 (*1841*)

Though Chopin cannot be said to have invented the Nocturne as a form – that distinction goes to the Irish composer John Field (1782–1837), who began writing pieces in this style a decade before Chopin's birth – he nevertheless raised it to a new level. Still essentially an atmospheric mood-piece suggestive of the night, in Chopin's hands the Nocturne nevertheless grew in emotional range as well as in the sophistication of its phrasing and form. He wrote 21 Nocturnes altogether, mostly published in sets of two or three.

The first Nocturne of the Op 48 pair opens with an extended bel canto-style melody, offset by the slow, deep tread of the left hand. The brooding middle section emerges by stealth, growing quickly in fervour, and soon becoming punctured by rolling double octaves, whose triplet rhythm spills over into the repeat of the first section, lending it a restless air.

**CHOPIN** was born near Warsaw and grew up at a time when the piano was becoming the predominant solo instrument. Largely self-taught, He was soon in demand to perform in the salons of Warsaw's upper classes, giving his first public concert at the age of eight. He enrolled at the Warsaw Conservatory where he was encouraged to follow his improvisatory, rhapsodic style of composition. Tours to Vienna, Germany and Italy prefaced his move to Paris in 1831 where he quickly became a favourite in society. He gradually withdrew from performance to concentrate on composition, with many of his works published and distributed widely during his lifetime. Following a love affair lasting eleven years, the Paris revolution caused Chopin to accept a tour to England. His last concert was in London's Guildhall before he returned to Paris to die. His funeral attracted almost 3,000 mourners.

Frédéric Chopin (1810–49)

### Ballade No 3 in A-flat major Op 47 (1841)

In his Ballades Chopin turned to a narrative poetic form favoured by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the 18th century, often featuring a character drawn from folk literature. Transferred to a musical dimension, they are akin to the orchestral symphonic poem (which Liszt would invent later the same decade), in which form is dictated by the unfolding drama. Perhaps more than any of his works, it is the Ballades that allowed Chopin to achieve new heights of both musical imagination and technical challenge. Certainly it is where the two are most seamlessly integrated.

The Third Ballade is sometimes said to have been inspired by Adam Mickiewicz's poem *Ondine*, based on the story of the water nymph who becomes human after attracting a mortal lover. Chopin played down the influence of specific narratives on his works but it's just possible to hear a rapturous exchange between Ondine and her lover in the Third Ballade's brief introduction, and there may be a sense of lapping waves in the lilting second theme. What is clear though, is that, from the opening (which blooms outwards from a single note) to the exuberant and impassioned coda, a wide terrain has been travelled, whose secrets could never have been conveyed in words.

**STRAVINSKY** was son of the Principal Bass player at the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg. Through his father he met many leading musicians and came into close contact with musical theatre. In 1903 he became a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, allowing him to have his orchestral works performed, and bringing him to the attention of Sergei Diaghilev who later commissioned *The Firebird* ballet from him. Its success confirmed him as a leading young composer. Stravinsky settled in France in 1920 and became a French citizen in 1934. Personal tragedy (his daughter, wife and mother all died within eight months) and the onset of World War II persuaded him to move to the US where he lived until his death. His composition style across his career went from Russian-influenced, to 'Neo-classical' to serialism. He died in New York in 1971 and was buried in Venice.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

### Three Movements from 'Petrushka' (1910–11, arr 1921)

- 1 DANSE RUSSE (RUSSIAN DANCE): ALLEGRO GIUSTO
- 2 CHEZ PÉTROUCHKA (IN PETRUSHKA'S CELL)
- 3 LA SEMAINE GRASSE (THE SHROVETIDE FAIR):  
CON MOTO – ALLEGRETTO – TEMPO GIUSTO – AGITATO

Sergei Diaghilev, the shrewd impresario behind the Ballets Russes, wasted no time in securing a second ballet from Stravinsky following the success of the young composer's first original collaboration with the company, *The Firebird*, premiered on 25 June 1910. Before the end of the year Stravinsky had already begun sketching what was to become *The Rite of Spring* when he played to Diaghilev a piece for piano and orchestra that he was also working on, based on a character from Russian folk puppetry, the jester Petrushka. Diaghilev immediately saw its potential as a stage piece, and *The Rite of Spring* was duly moved to the back burner.

A decade after *Petrushka*'s premiere, Stravinsky arranged three excerpts from it for the pianist Arthur Rubinstein (who paid the composer 5,000 francs for his efforts). The 'Russian Dance' comes from the end of the first tableau, where the three puppets – Petrushka, the Ballerina and the Blackamoor – leap into colourful life. 'In Petrushka's Cell' is a portrait of the forlorn puppet pining for the Ballerina. For the final movement we're in the bustle of the Shrovetide Fair, witnessing a sequence of character pieces – for wet-nurses, a peasant and a bear, gypsies, and so on – mostly based on folk tunes.

A reviewer for *Le Matin* claimed that *Petrushka* conveyed 'equally well the amusing hubbub of the public festivities and the poignant anguish of the hero. It is at once burlesque and pathetic. Its rhythms have a vigour, an inexhaustible verve'. Rubinstein clearly agreed, though even he admitted to finding these piano arrangements 'very difficult to perform'.

#### Programme Notes © Edward Bhesania

Edward Bhesania is a writer and editor who reviews for *The Strad* and *The Stage*. He has also written for *The Observer*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *International Piano*, *The Tablet* and *Country Life*, and contributed to *1,001 Classical Recordings You Must Hear Before You Die*.