



Dmytro Choni

2018 Winner

XIX Paloma O'Shea

Santander International

Piano Competition

Piano Recital

DEBUSSY

GINASTERA

LIGETI

PROKOFIEV

Dmytro Choni: Piano Recital Debussy • Ginastera • Ligeti • Prokofiev

Claude DEBUSSY (1862–1918)
Images, Book 1 (1901–05)

The French composer Claude Debussy was to exercise a powerful influence over his successors, not least through his harmonic experiments and in his delicate handling of timbres. At the same time he wrote music that came to have a wide contemporary appeal, however novel its techniques. In his piano music, in particular, he seemed to continue the tradition of Chopin, a composer who, in his own day, was as adventurous as any.

Debussy was born in 1862 and started piano lessons at the age of seven, and two years later, improbable as it may sound, with Verlaine's mother-in-law, who claimed to have been a pupil of Chopin. In 1872 he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he eventually abandoned the plan, supported by parental ambition, of becoming a virtuoso pianist, turning his attention to composition. In 1880, at the age of 18, he was employed by Tchaikovsky's patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, as a tutor to her children and a house musician, returning to the Conservatoire to enter the class of Ernest Guiraud. In 1884 he won the Prix de Rome, and the following year took up obligatory residence, according to the terms of the prize, at the Villa Medici in Rome, where he met Liszt. By 1887 he was back in Paris, winning his first significant success in 1900 with *Nocturnes* for orchestra and going on, two years later, to a *succès de scandale* with his Maeterlinck opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the importance of which was soon widely acknowledged.

Debussy's personal life brought some unhappiness in his first marriage, in 1899, to a mannequin, Lilly Texier, and his association, from 1903, with Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker and an amateur singer, whom he eventually married in 1908. Debussy's final years were darkened by the war and by the cancer that brought about his death in March 1918. As a composer for the piano he had written much that was to become a standard element in recital repertoire, while his songs proved a significant addition to French *mélodies*. His death interrupted an intended series of works for varying chamber groups, three of the six

projected works being completed. For orchestra, his early *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, later used as a ballet score by Diaghilev, somewhat to the composer's dissatisfaction and to the horror of the Paris audience who saw what Nijinsky made of it, demonstrated his command of nuance, extended in the *Nocturnes* and in the three symphonic sketches, *La Mer*.

The two groups of pieces published in 1905 and in 1908 under the title *Images* are a very different matter. In the first set, *Reflets dans l'eau* is a gently poetic evocation of ripples in the water for which one might seek precedent in the later work of Liszt. *Hommage à Rameau* is a relatively free and contemporary tribute to the great French composer of the Enlightenment, and is followed by the capricious *Mouvement* with its near perpetual motion.

Alberto GINASTERA (1916–1983)
Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 22 (1952)

The Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera was born in 1916 in Buenos Aires, where he studied, completing his training at the National Conservatory in 1938, by which time his national reputation as a composer had already been established. His career, in spite of the interruptions resulting from political events at home, won him international recognition as a composer. His compositions in many genres – opera, orchestral and chamber music, vocal and solo works – are marked by his developing use of elements that suggest, at least, his native country, while he remains fully aware of contemporary international trends in music, from a relaxed form of serialism to uses of the aleatoric and micro-tonal.

Ginastera's *Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 22*, was written in 1952 to a commission from the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania College for Women for the 1952 Pittsburgh International Contemporary Music Festival. It was given its first performance in Pittsburgh by Johana Harris and is dedicated to her and to her husband, the American composer Roy Harris. The first movement, in sonata-allegro form, starts with a characteristically rhythmic subject, in

contrast to the second subject, marked *dolce e pastorale*, both subsequently returning in recapitulation after an eventful central development. The second movement, a form of *scherzo*, uses the twelve notes of the series in its framing principal thematic material, contrasted with episodes where the starker serial unison writing is replaced by a chordal element. The slowly vibrating notes of the *Adagio molto appassionato* suggest at first the tuning of the guitar, with moments of passionate intensity at the heart of the movement, before the initial calm is restored. The last movement is in the style of a toccata, impelled forward by its constant rhythm until the final bars, marked *tutta la forza, feroce*.

György LIGETI (1923–2006)
Études, Book 1 – No. 5. Arc-en-ciel (1985)

Andante molto rubato, con eleganza, with swing
Of Hungarian-Jewish origin, Ligeti made his career in Hungary until 1956, when he escaped to Vienna, there to be influenced by contact with more experimental Western techniques of composition, notably with work at the electronic studios in Cologne. From 1979 until his retirement in 1989 he taught at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg. In Western Europe his music achieved a wider international reputation, incorporating contemporary techniques and experiment in a musical idiom that has proved both influential and palatable.

Ligeti's piano *Études* increased in number over the years, a product, he modestly explained, of the inadequacy of his own piano technique, works that he described as neither avant-garde nor traditional, drawing allusively on a wide variety of sources. Some of the *Études* make extreme technical demands on the performer.

In the later 1970s and the 1980s Ligeti made a reassessment of his compositional techniques, writing in a style he described as 'post-tonal'. The first of his three collections of *Preludes*, reflecting these changes, was completed in 1985, to be followed by two further collections, each book containing six *Preludes*.

Arc-en-ciel ('Rainbow') has been described as the most Debussyian study, rising and falling in arcs which aptly evoke the rainbow of the title.

Sergey PROKOFIEV (1891–1953)
Piano Sonata No. 6 in A major, Op. 82 (1940)

Sergey Prokofiev was born in 1891 at Sontsovka in Ukraine, the son of a prosperous estate manager. An only child, his musical talents were fostered by his mother, a cultured amateur pianist, and he tried his hand at composition at the age of five, later being tutored at home by the composer Glière. In 1904, on the advice of Glazunov, his parents allowed him to enter the St Petersburg Conservatory, where he continued his studies as a pianist and composer until 1914, owing more to the influence of senior fellow-students Asafyev and Myaskovsky than to the older generation of teachers, represented by Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Even as a student Prokofiev had begun to make his mark as a composer, arousing enthusiasm and hostility in equal measure, and inducing Glazunov, now director of the Conservatory, to walk out of a performance of *The Scythian Suite*, fearing for his sense of hearing. During the war he gained exemption from military service by enrolling as an organ student and after the Revolution was given permission to travel abroad, at first to America, taking with him the scores of *The Scythian Suite*, arranged from a ballet originally commissioned by the impresario Diaghilev, the *'Classical' Symphony* and his first *Violin Concerto*.

Unlike Stravinsky and Rachmaninov, Prokofiev had left Russia with official permission and with the idea of returning home sooner or later. By 1920, when life in America was proving less immediately rewarding, he moved to Paris, where he re-established contact with Diaghilev, for whom he revised *The Tale of the Buffoon*, a ballet successfully staged in 1921. He spent much of the next 16 years in France, returning from time to time to Russia, where his music was still acceptable.

In 1936 Prokofiev decided to settle once more in his native country, taking up residence in Moscow in time for the first onslaught on music that did not suit the political and social aims of the government, falling, as Shostakovich is said to have remarked, 'like a chicken into the soup'. Twelve years later, after the difficult war years, his name was joined with those of Shostakovich and others in explicit official condemnation, now with particular reference to Prokofiev's opera *War and Peace*. He died in 1953 on the same day as

Stalin and thus never benefited from the subsequent partial relaxation of official policy on the arts.

Prokofiev's *Piano Sonatas* form an important element in piano repertoire. In style his music is often astringent in harmony, but with a characteristically Russian turn of melody and, in spite of the expressed opinion of Shostakovich, an idiosyncratic gift for orchestration. The *Sonata No. 6*, is the first of a group of three so-called 'War Sonatas', works that Prokofiev worked on simultaneously, the three *Sonatas* culminating in *Sonata No. 8*, dedicated to Mira Mendelssohn, to be officially recognised as his second wife. The *Sonata No. 6 in A major*, was first performed in April 1940. The first movement starts with an emphatic and rhythmically distinctive motto theme, with

contrasting major and minor thirds, and a calmer secondary section, suggesting Prokofiev's characteristic musical language. The jaunty second movement marches on, leading to a third-movement waltz theme that has been compared with a love theme from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. The final *Vivace* presses forward, driven on until the interruption of an *Andante* with a reminiscence of the motto theme. The impetus that presses the movement forward resumes, to be interrupted again, now marked *Più tranquillo*, before the resumption of the original forward motion and a conclusion that refers once more to the original motto theme.

Keith Anderson

Dmytro Choni

Dmytro Choni was born in Kyiv, Ukraine in 1993, and received his first piano lesson at the age of four. In 2018 he was awarded First Prize at the Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition in Spain. Choni has performed at the Salle Cortot (Paris), Wigmore Hall (London), Minato Mirai Hall (Yokohama), Auditorio Nacional de Música (Madrid), and the Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires). He has appeared at the Kissinger Sommer Festival and at the Stars and Rising Stars series (Germany), Verbier Festival (Switzerland), Dubrovnik Summer Festival (Croatia), Granada and Santander festivals (Spain) and the Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico). Choni regularly performs with renowned orchestras, such as The Phoenix Symphony, Ensemble Esperanza, RTVE Symphony Orchestra, Seongnam Philharmonic Orchestra, Real Filharmonía de Galicia, San Marino Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León and the National Symphony Orchestra of the Dominican Republic. He has worked with conductors Miguel Ángel Gómez Martínez, Matthew Kasper, Gum Nanse, Maximino Zumalave, Francesco Ommassini, José Antonio Molina and Rubén Gimeno.
www.dmytrochoni.com

The Ukrainian pianist Dmytro Choni, winner of the 2018 Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, has selected a programme that spans the 20th century. The first book of Debussy's *Images* offers poetic evocation and virtuoso caprice, whereas Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 6*, completed in 1940, is the first of his 'War Sonatas', characteristically contrasting rhythmic vitality with rich lyricism. Ginastera, too, supplies vivid intensity in his *Piano Sonata No. 1* suggesting the sound of the guitar, while Ligeti's *Étude* is a Debussyan evocation of a rainbow.

DMYTRO CHONI

Piano Recital

<p>Claude DEBUSSY (1862–1918) Images, Book 1, (1901–05) 16:17</p> <p>1 I. Reflets dans l'eau 5:42 2 II. Hommage à Rameau 7:02 3 III. Mouvement 3:27</p> <p>Alberto GINASTERA (1916–1983) Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 22 (1952) 14:47</p> <p>4 I. Allegro marcato 3:55 5 II. Presto misterioso 2:35 6 III. Adagio molto appassionato 5:29 7 IV. Ruvido ed ostinato 2:35</p>	<p>György LIGETI (1923–2006) 8 Études for Piano, Book 1 – No. 5. Arc-en-ciel (1985) 3:29</p> <p>Sergey PROKOFIEV (1891–1953) Piano Sonata No. 6 in A major, Op. 82 (1940) 31:26</p> <p>9 I. Allegro moderato 8:52 10 II. Allegretto 5:41 11 III. Tempo di valzer lentissimo 8:51 12 IV. Vivace 7:46</p>
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