



# **ST MARY'S PERIVALE**

## **BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATA FESTIVAL**

Programme for Session 4:

Sunday 4 October, 7pm–10pm

Programme notes by Julian Jacobson

St Mary's, a 12th-century church, is West London's foremost classical music venue. It has been live-streaming performances by world-class soloists and duos throughout the pandemic and will continue until we are able to open our doors to audiences once more



[www.st-marys-perivale.org.uk](http://www.st-marys-perivale.org.uk)

**The Friends of St Mary's Perivale is a  
registered charity no 281982**



**7.00pm Mark Viner**

## **Sonata in E minor Op 90**

**Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck — Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen**

One of a number of important transitional works between Beethoven's middle and late period style, along with the Op 96 Violin Sonata and the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, the E minor sonata shows the composer loosening the joints of classical sonata form in pursuit of an ever more fluid, seamless texture. A Beethoven sonata of extreme subtlety, Artur Schnabel once said it was the one he had least often played to his own satisfaction. It is also one of the select group of sonatas to have only two, strongly contrasted movements. The key word in Beethoven's expressive marking for the first movement is 'Empfindung' (Beethoven uses German, as he does in the other great 'transitional' sonata, Op 101), denoting sympathy or personal feeling. The movement is extremely concentrated, yet despite its brevity Beethoven dispenses with the customary exposition repeat: as in Op 101, he is working towards a continuously unfolding musical narrative – Wagner's 'endless melody'. The minor key is pervasive, yielding only to the major for short passages. According to Schindler, who probably embroidered the story, the sonata represents the love life of its dedicatee Count Lichnowsky who wished to marry an opera singer, hence beneath his social standing. The impassioned first movement represents 'Struggle between the Head and the Heart' and the second 'Conversation with the Beloved'. The songful second movement is in the major key almost throughout. A formally old-fashioned rondo, its musical language is of an extreme refinement, with magical harmonic perspectives that recall Mozart rather than Haydn or indeed most earlier Beethoven. Schubert's beautiful late Rondo for piano duet (D951) is clearly influenced by this wonderful movement.

*Hailed by International Piano Magazine as 'one of the most gifted pianists of his generation', Mark Viner is steadily gaining a reputation as one of Britain's leading concert pianists and is becoming increasingly well-known for his bold championing of unfamiliar pianistic terrain. Born in 1989, he began playing at the age of 11 and studied at the Purcell School of Music with Tessa Nicholson and later the Royal College of Music with Niel Immelman, graduating in 2011 with 1st class honours for his Bachelor of Music and a distinction in Master of Performance in 2013. In demand as recitalist and teacher, he is also a published composer and writer and his advocacy for the music of Charles-Valentin Alkan and Franz Liszt has led to his election as Chair of both the Alkan Society and the Liszt Society. He is often in the recording studio and his records of music by Thalberg, Liszt, Alkan and Chaminade on the Piano Classics label have garnered high critical acclaim. His 17-CD survey of the complete piano music of Alkan will be the first of its kind.*



Neda Nevaee

**7.20pm Yehuda Inbar**

## **Sonata in A major Op 101**

**Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung - Allegretto, ma non troppo — Lebhaft, marschmäßig - Vivace alla marcia — Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll - Adagio, ma non troppo, con affetto — Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit - Allegro**

The first of the five late sonatas, the A major is also the first full-scale sonata since the great 'middle period' peaks of the Waldstein and Appassionata: Beethoven had meanwhile focused his energies on orchestral and chamber music as well as the opera *Fidelio*, but was ready to return to his own instrument for these crowning achievements. Certain experimental features and more open forms led to the sonata becoming a favourite with the Romantics: Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt all paid more or less direct homage to it, and Wagner derived his principle of endless melody from the sonata's opening movement. Opening obliquely on the dominant, this singing, gentle Allegretto conceals its miniature but impregnable sonata structure beneath a seamless flow of graceful melody. The powerful second movement March is the inspiration for the similar movement in Schumann's C major *Fantasie* Op 17. The third movement, a 'slow and yearning' recitative, runs straight into the energetic and celebratory finale: its development section consists largely of a dense fugue, one of the earliest of Beethoven's visionary late fugues which culminated in the finale of the *Hammerklavier* and the string quartet *Grosse Fuge*.

*Pianist Yehuda Inbar is gaining international recognition as one of today's most intriguing and enterprising young artists. Inbar's debut album released in 2019 with Oehms Classics featuring Schubert unfinished sonatas and Schubert-inspired new music, has seen enthusiastic reviews worldwide, praising his Schubert interpretations as well as his innovative and adventurous approach to programming. Having curated various concert series including Levinsky 24, interacting figurative art and music in Tel Aviv (2012), and the Sherriff Centre Concert Series in London (2018), in 2020 Inbar became artistic director of the new Akko International Chamber Music and Jazz Festival. Selected by the Kirckman Concert Society for a Wigmore Hall debut, he has performed at the Royal Festival Hall, St John's Smith Square, St Martin's in the Fields (playing-directing Mozart with the Brandenburg Sinfonia), Tel Aviv Museum of Art, performed as soloist with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, Netanya-Kibutzim Chamber Orchestra, Ashdod symphony and the St John's chamber orchestra. He participated in the Beethovenfest in Bonn, Dartington Summer Festival, Aegean Arts Festival, Israel-Festival, Tibor Varga Festival, and others. He has played live on BBC Radio 4, Classic FM, and Kol Hamusica (Israel). A student of Joanna MacGregor, Inbar currently furthers his PhD at the Royal Academy of Music in London.*



7.50pm Julian Trevelyan

## Sonata in B flat major Op 106 'Hammerklavier'

Allegro — Scherzo: Assai vivace — Adagio sostenuto —  
Introduzione: Largo - Fuga: Allegro risoluto

The Hammerklavier is the mightiest of all Beethoven's sonatas and one of the mightiest ever written: whether it is the greatest depends on one's vantage point – perhaps the final sonata Op 111 is a more profoundly realised and complete work of art – but it is certain that nothing like it had ever been composed before and it remains unique, a vast peak of human musical experience. Beethoven muttered as he completed it that he had written something that would keep pianists busy for the next hundred years but in this he was being too modest: the sonata is proof against ever becoming 'easy' and remains a challenge forever, both to play and to listen to. A word about the title: basically it just means 'piano sonata' (keyboard with hammers) and it represents Beethoven's nationalistic wish at this time to get away from the Italian 'pianoforte'. In fact four of the last five sonatas are titled 'Hammerklavier'. But there is something about the title which is absolutely right for Op 106 in its massiveness and indeed in its opening 'hammering' chords! It is also the only sonata for which Beethoven gave metronome marks, providing one of the sonata's many controversies as they have generally been agreed to be considerably too fast, on the verge of unplayable in the first and last movements. I cannot possibly do justice to the vast four-movement structure in a short programme note. The first movement, 'unusually fast and fiery' as Carl Czerny styled it, contains another of the work's insoluble puzzles, a questionable note in the lead up to the recapitulation about which scholars are still arguing. The second movement Scherzo is a kind of parody of the first movement, still in the tonic key but with a brooding Trio in the minor and an extremely odd coda with Beethoven indulging in some violent, aphoristic musical punning. Two mysterious notes lead into the slow movement, in the remote key of F sharp minor. This the first fully worked, independent slow movement in the sonatas since Op 31 no 2, and it is certainly one of Beethoven's profoundest utterances, weighing in at over 15 minutes and conveying a sense of great desolation yet at the same time of great beauty. The Fugue that constitutes the finale is introduced by an extraordinary, visionary Largo that still looks on the printed page like contemporary music. Stravinsky said of the slightly later Grosse Fuge for string quartet that it was 'modern for ever', and the same can be said for Beethoven's fugue in Op 106. There seems to be a gigantic battle of wills going on between Beethoven, his (self-imposed) material and the piano. Naturally Beethoven wins but only after titanic struggles and a near-disintegration towards the end!

*(Pianist's biography on next page)*

*Julian Trevelyan is a British pianist who performs regularly throughout Europe and the UK. Performances in the 2019/20 season have included Prokofiev's 5th piano concerto with the Russian State Academy Symphony Orchestra, the Howard Blake piano concerto and Brahms' 1st piano concerto in the UK. He gave the first Russian performance of the Concertino for piano and orchestra by Lucas Debargue in the Zaryadye Hall in Moscow in December 2018. His solo recitals have included performances of Beethoven's Diabelli variations in London, Munich, Paris, and Switzerland. Over the past four years, Julian has studied piano with Rena Shereshevskaya at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris. Since 2018 he has also been studying Musicology at Oxford University. He composes, regularly performs chamber music on piano, violin and viola, and sings with an acappella group in Oxford. When the pandemic eased In the summer of 2020 he took part in the Vienna Summer School of the International Piano Foundation Theo and Petra Lieven of Hamburg, and was able to return to France to give a number of solo recitals.*



**8.40pm Amit Yahav**

## **Sonata in E major Op 109**

**Vivace ma non troppo - Adagio espressivo – Prestissimo –  
Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung - Andante molto cantabile ed  
espressivo**

With the E major sonata the 50-year old Beethoven opens his final great trilogy of sonatas Op 109, 110 and 111. The three sonatas share common motivic material yet are strongly differentiated in character. The first two are a relaxation after the Hammerklavier (anything would be); the E major, apart from the second movement, is predominantly lyrical. The innovation of the first movement is the hugely different tempo of the first subject, marked Vivace ma non troppo, and the second, marked Adagio espressivo. The Vivace sections are in running semiquavers and recall the texture of many of Bach's Preludes; the Adagio sections are like passionate recitatives. The coda has a deeply felt chorale-like passage before the exquisite ending where reminiscences of the main theme float up to the ether. Beethoven blows all this away with a short, violent Prestissimo, marked to follow on without a break. Its character is powerfully unique though it is hard to say exactly what the mood is: hardly humorous, perhaps a kind of exalted philosophical rage. The finale reveals one of Beethoven's most beautiful themes, a melody of which he alone had the secret in its depth and Innigkeit. Five strict variations follow, in widely differing moods and tempi, the fifth being elaborately contrapuntal, almost a miniature fugue. The sixth and final variation builds its excitement through a series of trills – that famous feature of Beethoven's late style – before the original theme returns to close the sonata quietly, seemingly after an immense journey.

*Multi-award-winning pianist Amit Yahav – recitalist, chamber musician and concerto soloist – has been praised for the passion and intellectual insight of his playing. His Chopin and Schumann performances in particular have received high praise. In 2018 he earned a Doctor of Music degree from the Royal College of Music for his thesis investigating interpretation in the music of Chopin. Amit's successes include the Anthony Lindsay Piano Prize and the György Solti Award for Professional Development. Amit also won the 1st International Israeli Music Competition in London and consequently performed Israeli composer Zvi Avni's *On the Verge of Time* in London's Southbank Centre in the presence of the composer. In 2014, Amit's CD *Amit Yahav Plays Chopin*, containing the four Ballades. This release followed Amit's tour showcasing the four Ballades in a lecture recital, which was also selected by the Royal College of Music as part of its Insight series of soirées. Amit's newest disc featuring Romantic piano fantasies by Mendelssohn, Schumann and Chopin appears on the Genuin label.*



## 9.05pm Konstantin Lapshin Sonata in A flat major Op 110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo — Allegro molto — Adagio  
ma non troppo. Allegro ma non troppo

Strangely, this sonata, the second in the final trilogy, carries no dedication. Perhaps Beethoven felt it was too personal – dealing with a ‘near death’ experience in the last movement – to feel comfortable dedicating it either to a patron or a favourite pupil as was his normal practice. It is interesting to note that as the sonatas progress the principal weight shifts from the first movement to the finale. This is the case with all the major sonatas from the Waldstein: Beethoven seems to have conceived his main works more and more as journeys towards a resolution, whether tragic, triumphant or transcendental. This inevitably gives them a greater stature, equivalent to the great novels or works of dramatic literature. Thus the first two movements of Op 110, wonderful as they are, are short, simple in structure, and merely set the scene for the great and complex finale. The richly singing Moderato cantabile molto espressivo opening movement, after a sarabande-like opening – Bach is never far from late Beethoven – opens to a long cantilena. Varied material follows, in a clear sonata form with an extraordinarily calm development section consisting merely of six repetitions of the same quiet phrase, wandering through different keys. The brief, grotesque Allegro molto, doing duty as a scherzo in duple time, has an even odder trio. The long finale alternates passages of recitative, a lament (Klagender Gesang) recalling Bach’s Es ist vollbracht from the St John Passion and a fully worked fugue. The lament returns, this time pathetic and broken, marked ‘losing force, grieving’. At the last moment ten major-key chords appear, crescendo, indicating a renewal of strength and hope. The fugue returns, in inversion and sprouting diminutions and a plethora of minute detail, like new shoots. The fugal theme finally becomes a tune, harmonised with rich pianistic figuration, there is a huge crescendo, and the sonata ends in fortissimo victory.

*‘An impressive technique, and the impulsive, Romantic expression that has been a hallmark of so many Russian pianists, including Rachmaninov and Horowitz’ said Fanfare magazine (USA) about Konstantin Lapshin, an award-winning concert pianist who has won over 15 international and national prizes. He moved to London in 2007 to study at the Royal College of Music, where he gained many prizes including the Chappell Gold Medal and the College’s highest prize, the Queen Elizabeth Rose Bowl. He has played for HRH The Prince of Wales and performed at various concert halls across Europe, Russia and America, including the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Cadogan Hall, Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, the Salle Cortot in Paris, Piano Salon Christophori in Berlin and Moscow Conservatoire’s Great Hall. In 2014 he played Rachmaninov’s Concerto no 3 with the Odessa Philharmonic under Mikhail Pletnev. Konstantin holds a Doctoral degree and teaches at the Royal College of Music, giving masterclasses and adjudicating international festivals and competitions.*



**9.30pm Alim Beisembayev**

**Sonata in C minor Op 111**

**Maestoso, Allegro con brio ed appassionato — Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile**

In the final C minor sonata – arguably the greatest sonata ever written – we can feel the immense distance Beethoven has travelled in the mere 23 years since the Pathétique. As Schnabel points out, the weighed-down, personally sorrowing Grave introduction of the earlier sonata is replaced in Op 111 by a powerful Maestoso introduction – majestic and Olympian, with all sense of personal tragedy transcended. The main Allegro con brio ed appassionato, echoing the tempo marking for Op 13 but going beyond it with a fearless appassionato, is Beethoven at his most forceful and combative. It ends in the major with a mysteriously murmuring coda (strangely anticipating the end of Chopin's Revolutionary Study), the battle spent. The finale of this two-movement work is an Arietta of profound simplicity and calm. The C major song is in a simple binary form, the second part moving to A minor before returning to the tonic. The Arietta is followed by four variations and an immense coda as long as the variations. These are in increasingly short note values, giving the impression of progressive animation though the speed and pulse remain constant. Famously in the third variation Beethoven appears to have invented boogie-woogie, complete with 'swing' rhythm, a hundred years too early, such is the leaping ecstasy of his figuration. The fourth variation, by contrast, descends into deepest darkness for the first part, alternating with twinkling stars for the second. All of this remains in C major, and using only four main chords. The fourth variation moves seamlessly into the immense coda in which Beethoven puts his material through a wide series of modulations and brings in his famous late-period trills. The main Arietta theme returns for one further complete variation (without repeats) before a further development leads to the movement's climax. The theme finally returns, now surrounded by a halo of trills, before ending in quiet serenity.

*Alim Beisembayev, born in Kazakhstan in 1998, began playing the piano at the age of 5. He studied first at the Central Music School in Moscow, then the Purcell School, where he was taught by Tessa Nicholson. Alim won several prizes while at the Purcell School including the Junior Cliburn International Competition in the USA. In 2016 Alim performed at the Royal Festival Hall with the Purcell orchestra. He continued his studies with Tessa Nicholson at the Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship. Alim has played many solo and chamber music concerts in the UK, Spain, Kazakhstan, USA, Barbados and Italy and made his Wigmore Hall debut in 2018 after winning the Jaques Samuel Intercollegiate Competition. Alim is now a postgraduate studying at the Royal College of Music in London with Vanessa Latarche and Dmitri Alexeev. He is supported by a ABRSM scholarship and an award from the Countess of Munster Trust.*