


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

ELISABETH LEONSKAJA

—

18 Aug 12pm & 2.30pm

OLD COLLEGE QUAD

The performance lasts approx. 1hr with no interval.

Supported by
Dunard Fund

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Elisabeth Leonskaja Piano

Schubert **Allegretto in E flat major
D946 No 2**

Schoenberg **Six Little Piano Pieces Op 19**

- 1 Leicht, zart
- 2 Langsam
- 3 Sehr langsame
- 4 Rasch, aber leicht
- 5 Etwas rasch
- 6 Sehr langsam

Brahms **Sonata in F minor Op 5**

- 1 Allegro maestoso
- 2 Andante espressivo
- 3 Scherzo: Allegro energico
- 4 Intermezzo (Rückblick): Andante molto
- 5 Finale: Allegro moderato ma rubato

PROGRAMME NOTES

Written in May 1828, just six months before his death, Schubert's Allegretto in E flat is the second of three late pieces only published 40 years later, in an edition by Brahms. It begins in the lilting style of a barcarolle, a Venetian gondolier's song, but two darker episodes later intrude, although they never seriously disrupt the composer's luminous lyricism.

There's little immediately lyrical about Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces*, though the composer achieves a breathtaking concentration of expression in them. He had made his name with big, opulent early pieces such as *Pelleas und Melisande* and *Verklärte Nacht*. In writing these keyboard miniatures in 1911, however, he aimed for music that was — in his words — 'short', 'lean', 'not built, but expressed' and which 'should be the expression of feeling'. He wrote the first five in a single day — 19 February 1911 — and added the sixth on 17 June that year, following the death of Gustav Mahler. Each is unique, follows no established formal pattern and entirely abandons the notion of key: it's as though what Schoenberg needs to say requires no such encumbrances. The entire set lasts for barely five minutes, the fourth piece not even 30 seconds.

As Schoenberg's pieces were pithy, so Brahms's Sonata is expansive. The F minor is his third and final piano sonata, written in 1853 when he was just 20. It's music on a grand scale and of almost symphonic proportions, and it pays overt homage to Brahms's predecessor Beethoven: the famous opening motif of his Fifth Symphony echoes throughout the work.

David Kettle

David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, who contributes regularly to the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He has also written for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Times*, *The Strad* and *Classical Music*, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne and Scottish Opera.

ELISABETH LEONSKAJA

Elisabeth Leonskaja has long been among the most celebrated pianists of our times. Born into a Russian family in Tbilisi, she gave her first concerts at the age of 11. While still a student at the Moscow Conservatory, she won prizes at major international piano competitions, including the Enescu Prize, the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition and the Queen Elisabeth Competition. Her musical development was decisively influenced by her collaboration with Sviatoslav Richter, who recognised her exceptional talent and encouraged her by inviting her to play duo concerts with him. This musical and personal friendship continued until Richter's death in 1997.

Leonskaja left the Soviet Union in 1978 and made Vienna her home. Since then, she has performed as soloist with the world's finest orchestras and has worked with many renowned conductors. Her name is also to be found among international recitalists in the most prominent piano series at major musical centres of the world, from Paris to Vienna to Melbourne.

In addition to her many solo engagements, chamber music remains an important part of her work.

She has performed many times with string quartets, including the Belcea, Borodin, Artemis and Jerusalem quartets. She also had a long-standing musical friendship with the Alban Berg Quartet, and their piano quintet recordings are legendary.

Elisabeth Leonskaja is an honorary member of the Vienna Konzerthaus, and in 2006 she was awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, first class, for her outstanding service to the culture of the country. In Georgia, she was named Priestess of Art in 2016, the country's highest artistic honour. In 2020 she received the International Classical Music (ICMA) Lifetime Achievement Award.

AUDIENCE SURVEY

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