

Lunchtime Recital Friday 4th September at 12.15 – Alan Dorn (piano)

Alan was last with us in May 2023 when the theme was Songs

‘Without Words’ and Alan played us pieces from Bach, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Gershwin.

This time the theme is ‘**Carillon up the Keyboard**’ - a programme of piano music inspired by bells



‘Carillon up the Keyboard’

A programme of piano music inspired by bells

Les cloches du soir (Evening Bells) (1889)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Abendglocken (Evening Bells)
from Walzermasken (1912))

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938)

Allegretto
from Quelques riens pour album (c. 1860))

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Cloches à travers les feuilles (Bells Through the Leaves) from Images, book 2 (1907)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

La fuente y la campana (The Fountain and the Bell) from Paisajes (1942)

Federico Mompou (1893-1987)

La cathédrale engloutie (The Sunken Cathedral)
from Préludes, book 1 (1910)

Debussy

Les cloches de Genève: Nocturne from
Première année de pèlerinage - Suisse (1855)

Franz Liszt (1811-1887)

Prelude in A flat major op. 28 no 17 (1839)

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

La campanella from Grandes études de Paganini
(1851)

Liszt

About the performer

Alan Dorn is a Hertfordshire-based piano performer and teacher who frequently performs in London and the south-east. He performs a wide range of music spanning many centuries, genres and composers and enjoys constructing themed recital programmes.

Alan studies classical piano with Dorian Lejjak and jazz with Marco Marconi. He has received advice from artists such as Leslie Howard, Charles Owen and Philip Fowke, and holds a Fellowship diploma in piano performance from the Royal Schools of Music.

Saint-Saëns: *Les cloches du soir*

Camille Saint-Saëns is best known today for relatively few works such as *The Carnival of the Animals* and *Danse macabre*. But in his long career he composed over 300 works covering most musical genres. Saint-Saëns made his debut as a concert pianist aged 10 and gave his last recital just before his death aged 86. He wrote dozens of short pieces for piano, but they are not often performed today. Framed by the distant pealing of bells, the theme of *Les cloches du soir* has a solemn, almost devotional quality, possibly influenced by the death of Saint-Saëns' mother the previous year.



Godowsky: *Abendglocken*

While his concert career never took off, partly due to stage fright, Leopold Godowsky was revered as a master technician. He is known for his creative transcriptions such as those of Chopin's Etudes, but he was also a prolific composer of original music. *Abendglocken* comes from his set *Walzermasken* of 24 pieces in waltz rhythm and was composed on the 25th anniversary of Liszt's death. There are four varied statements of the opening theme, clothed with a 'dominant pedal' of repeated E flats in various different registers of the piano. These are separated by a contrasting dramatic central section which returns briefly to conclude the piece.

Rossini: *Allegretto*

Rossini gave up his extraordinarily successful career as a composer of operas around 1830. He composed relatively little music after that. However, from 1855 when he settled in Paris, he established a series of Saturday evening *salons* which were among the 'hot tickets' for the great and good. For these gatherings Rossini composed many short pieces for piano, chamber groups or voice which he termed his *Péchés de vieillesse* or 'Sins of old age'. This *Allegretto* is typically light in character, with the powerful bell-like motif which starts the piece alternating with scampering waltz-style sections.

Debussy: *Cloches a travers les feuilles*

In 1889 a Universal Exposition was held in Paris to mark the centenary of the French Revolution. One of the attractions was a Javanese gamelan orchestra. Its sonority and hypnotic quality fascinated Debussy and influenced many of his later compositions. *Cloches* begins with a passage of intertwined melodic lines, all using the 'whole tone' scale. This gives an effect of stillness within movement which subverts traditional western tonality. The second main motif, a slow-moving melody over murmuring accompaniment to be played 'like an iridescent mist', gives way to a brighter central section using the five-note pentatonic scale. The first two ideas return as the sound of bells gradually dies away.

Mompou: *La fuente y la campana*

Federico Mompou's ancestors owned a bell foundry, and the sound of bells is often to be found in his music. While Mompou grew up in Barcelona, he spent around 20 years in Paris where his compositions enjoyed great popularity. Mompou's extreme shyness prevented him from pursuing a concert career, but most of his compositions are for solo piano. This piece demonstrates the sincerity and deceptive simplicity of much of his work. Two poignant melodies are framed by the deep tolling of bells, surrounding a central section featuring the gently dissonant shimmering of the fountain. The subtle use of extended, jazz-inspired harmonies gives the ending a haunting, ethereal quality.

Debussy: *La cathédrale engloutie*

One of the best-known of Debussy's 24 Preludes, the title of this piece refers to the Breton myth of the drowned city of Ys, whose cathedral spires occasionally appear through sea mists. Into the foggy

atmosphere of the opening, Debussy introduces hints of the parallel fourths and fifths of medieval plainchant and the faint sound of bells. With the musical indication ‘little by little, emerging from the mist’, a rising three-note phrase gradually develops into the main theme with its massive organ-like chords. As the cathedral sinks back into the sea, the organ theme is heard again quietly, before the music returns to the misty stillness of the opening.

Liszt: *Les cloches de Genève*

In 1835 Liszt left Paris for Switzerland with his lover Marie d'Agoult. Their stay inspired a set of nine pieces later published in 1855 as the first of Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage* ('Years of Pilgrimage'). Several of the pieces are prefaced by quotations from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in this case: "I live not in myself, but I become / Portion of that around me". The descending motif heard at the beginning becomes the accompaniment to the softly yearning first theme. This slides subtly into the second, more impassioned theme which is also decorated with descending arpeggios. Towards the end, the opening motif returns, alternating with the pealing of deep bells.

Chopin: Prelude in A flat major

Chopin's set of 24 Preludes in all major and minor keys covers a vast range of emotional landscapes compressed into miniature form. In the set, this prelude is placed between two tempestuous pieces in minor keys, where its serene melody and gently pulsing accompaniment provide a striking contrast. Chopin generally avoided any kind of programmatic description in his music. However, according to his pupil Camille Dubois, Chopin told her that the eleven low bass notes towards the end of this Prelude represent an old clock in the castle which strikes the eleventh hour.

Liszt: *La campanella*

Liszt saw the violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini perform in Paris in 1831 and was enthralled. He immediately began an intensive period of work on his already formidable technique in an attempt to do for the piano what Paganini's pyrotechnics had done for the violin. Among the works which followed was a set of six Etudes based on Paganini's compositions, including *La campanella*, based on a theme from Paganini's Violin Concerto no 2 in B minor. There are three statements of the theme embellished with many of Liszt's characteristic techniques such as wide leaps, fast repeated notes, rapid scale passages and interlocking octaves, all rounded off with a thunderous coda.

A Charity Lunch will follow the Recital - as usual!