



Liang Ray-Heng

Programme Notes

Joshua Ray-Heng Liang is a 22-year-old pianist and violist from Taiwan. He is currently pursuing a double major in piano and viola at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, under the guidance of Professor Albert Tiu.

A recipient of multiple awards and scholarships, Joshua has performed across Asia and actively participates in community outreach and collaborative projects.

Tonight's programme presents a musical journey from the Baroque elegance of Bach to the passionate intensity of Beethoven, with stops along the way for Liszt's virtuosic homage and Prokofiev's dynamic modernism.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Präludium und Fuge in cis-Moll, BWV 873

(The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II)

Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier stands as a cornerstone of keyboard literature, exploring the possibilities of equal temperament. The Präludium in C-sharp minor from Book II immediately establishes a mood of profound introspection and gentle melancholy.

Its character is defined by the elegant and continuous flow of arpeggiated figures, which unfold with a searching quality, hinting at deeper harmonic complexities to come.

This contemplative opening serves as a poignant introduction to the subsequent Fuge. The Fuge subject enters with a quiet insistence, and its intricate lines weave through the texture with both elegance and intellectual rigor.

The interplay of voices creates a rich harmonic tapestry, showcasing Bach's unparalleled command of musical architecture. Interestingly, Bach dedicated this collection "for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study," highlighting its pedagogical as well as artistic value.

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Fantasie und Fuge über das Thema B-A-C-H, S.529

Liszt's *Fantasie und Fuge über das Thema B-A-C-H* is a monumental work that pays homage to Johann Sebastian Bach through the iconic musical motif B-A-C-H (B flat – A – C – B natural).

This piece is a tour de force of Romantic virtuosity and compositional ingenuity.

The *Fantasie* section is dramatic and improvisatory in character, exploring the B-A-C-H theme in various guises, from lyrical passages to thunderous climaxes. The subsequent *Fuge* is a complex and powerful contrapuntal structure, building in intensity and showcasing Liszt's mastery of keyboard technique and his deep admiration for Bach's legacy. Liszt often included works based on the B-A-C-H motif in his recitals, demonstrating his intellectual engagement with musical history and his ability to transform existing material into something uniquely his own.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Sonate Nr. 3 in a-Moll, op. 28

Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28, is a concise yet powerful work that showcases the composer's signature blend of percussive rhythms, lyrical melodies, and sardonic wit. Originally composed in 1917, drawing on material from earlier student works, this single-movement sonata is full of dramatic contrasts and virtuosic demands. It moves through various episodes, from energetic and driving sections to more introspective and lyrical moments. Prokofiev himself was a formidable pianist, and this sonata clearly reflects his own virtuosic capabilities and his penchant for dynamic and often provocative musical expression. The work's concise form allows for a concentrated expression of its dynamic and often volatile character, making it a thrilling and impactful conclusion to the first half of this recital.

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonate in f-Moll Nr. 23, Op. 57 „Appassionata“

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57, known as the Appassionata, is one of the composer's most dramatic and emotionally charged works. Its nickname, though not given by Beethoven himself (it was attributed later due to its passionate nature), perfectly captures its turbulent character. Reportedly, when Beethoven was asked about the meaning of this sonata, he simply replied, "Read Shakespeare's The Tempest." This anecdote hints at the dramatic and almost theatrical scope of the work. The first movement, Allegro assai, is driven by a relentless rhythmic motif and explores a wide range of intense emotions, from brooding darkness to fiery outbursts.

The serene and introspective second movement, Andante con moto, provides a moment of respite before the explosive energy of the final movement, Allegro ma non troppo – Presto. This concluding movement is a whirlwind of relentless energy, culminating in a dramatic and powerful conclusion.