



Friday 30th June - 1:10pm
Yuki Negishi (piano)

L. V. Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Six Bagatelles Op. 126

Melanie Spanswick

*Enigma (2019, dedicated to
Yuki Negishi)*

Robert Mitchell
Infinite
Blooms),

Our Hearts Dance the
(As the Giant Puya
2020

Nikolai Kapustin
(1937-2020)

Sonata No 1 op 39 "Sonata-
Fantasy"

Presented in association with The Beethoven Piano Society of Europe.

Suggested donation £5



St James's Church would welcome a donation of £5, or any amount that you feel able to give. Donations can be made in cash in the basket on your way out, or by tap donation at the machines at our exits.

The Spanswick, Mitchell and Kapustin pieces from the programme on 26 May are all featured on Yuki Negishi's CD "Enigma", released last year and which received wonderful reviews. This will be on sale at the concert. You can also purchase it online: <https://quartzmusic.com/recording/enigma/>.

"Here is a pianist who uses a superlative technique to project performances that glow with an inner light of understanding."

"..Negishi's performance is mesmeric. Here, as everywhere, her innate musicality allows the music to shine."

~Colin Clarke, International Piano Magazine, Sept 2022

"Is there a more audacious way to commence your solo debut recording than by diving into Nikolai Kapustin's wildly rhapsodic First Piano Sonata? Especially if you've got Yuki Negishi's fast, well-oiled and supremely confident fingers. The totality of the sonata could be described as Oscar Peterson, Stephen Sondheim, Bill Evans and Astor Piazzolla collectively imbibing tequila spiked with LSD and steroids. Negishi plays the notes staggeringly well..."

"..pianistically ingenuous title selection by noted educator, writer and pianist Melanie Spanswick receives an ideal premiere performance, and clearly suits Negishi's strengths"

~Jed Distler, Gramophone July 2022

Programme Notes

Bagatelles, Op. 126 for solo piano were published late in Beethoven's career, in the year 1825. Beethoven dedicated them to his brother Nikolaus Johann van Beethoven (1776-1848), and wrote to his publisher, Schott Music, that the Opus 126 Bagatelles "are probably the best I've written". A Bagatelle, in Beethoven's usage, is a kind of brief character piece. The Op. 126 set comprises six short works, as follows:

Andante con moto, Cantabile e compiacevole, G major

Allegro, G minor

Andante, Cantabile e grazioso, E \flat major

Presto, B minor

Quasi allegretto, G major

Presto, cut time then Andante amabile e con moto, E \flat major

In prefatory remarks to his edition of the works, Otto von Irmer notes that Beethoven intended the six bagatelles be played in order as a single work, at least insofar as this can be inferred from a marginal annotation Beethoven made in the manuscript: "Ciclus von Kleinigkeiten" (cycle of little pieces). Another reason to regard the work as a unity rather than a collection, as suggested by Lewis Lockwood: starting with the second Bagatelle, the keys of the pieces fall in a regular succession of descending major thirds, a pattern Lockwood also notices in Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony and the String Quartet Op.127.

Melanie Spanswick (b.1969)- Enigma

“Composed in February 2019 especially for Japanese pianist Yuki Negishi, this miniature programmatic work inhabits an atmospheric, dreamy sound world. It employs the full range of the keyboard and seeks to showcase the enigmatic resonance of the instrument.

The essence of the enigma, which manifests itself in the melancholic mood, alludes to a tragic love affair, which might remain forever elusive. However, the sudden switch to the major key at the end of the piece offers some hope and a possible joyful conclusion.

After enjoying several performances given by Yuki, I noticed the virtuosity and ferocity of her left hand particularly; she possesses a fine technique with a direct, fresh approach to interpretation, and these qualities inspired and guided my composition. The speed, intricacy and patterned nature of the left-hand part, coupled with powerful ringing chords in the right-hand part, offer the yearning character found throughout this work. The performance on this recording captures this spirit admirably.

Yuki gave the premiere of Enigma in April 2019 at the Symphony Salon in Tokyo, Japan, as part of the International Festival and Piano Course, Piano Week, and she has played it on several occasions since, both in the UK and abroad.

Enigma is published by Schott Music in a volume entitled Simply Driven (ED 23222). This collection, published in the Edition Schott Composer Series, consists of five virtuoso piano pieces, all of which explore various piano techniques and sound worlds.

This recording marks the recorded premiere of the piece, and is also the first commercial release for myself as a composer.”

Written by Melanie Spanswick

Robert Mitchell (b.1971) - Our Hearts Dance The Infinite (As The Giant Puya Blooms) for the Left Hand

The Giant Puya blooms rarely. An astounding flower whose moment is more than worth the wait- the image came to mind once the composer had been given the backstory to the wonderful opportunity of a commission from the London Sinfonietta in 2020. A love story that had taken more than two decades to come to fruition - with no obvious guarantee that it would- a similar timescale to the Puya. Mitchell, one of the most prolific British jazz pianists of his generation, combined this with a musical love of his that had taken even longer to come forward - left hand only piano (composing, performing and improvising). A format that demands (and should get more limelight for) the revealing of a side of ourselves too often hidden behind convention (unless no other choice or sudden change of physical circumstance demands). A whole world of inspiration lies behind what is actually in pianistic terms - the illusion of one hand.

Nikolai Kapustin (1937-2020) Sonata No.1 Op.39 "Sonata-Fantasia"

Nikolai Girshevich Kapustin was born on 22nd November 1937 in the small Ukrainian town of Gorlovka. From the age of 18, he studied piano at the Moscow Conservatoire where his teacher was Alexander Goldenweiser, the professor of piano who had known nearly every Russian composer of the previous five decades and was able to bring them alive for his students in a way which could not have been achieved through books alone. On his own admission, although he found composition more interesting, Kapustin thought he was destined to be a classical player. But in his early 20s, he became captivated by jazz and knew that he had to combine both styles in his compositions.

Some examples of his fusion music are 24 Preludes in Jazz Style, Op.53, 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op.82 and the Sonatina, Op.100. Kapustin regarded himself as a composer rather than a jazz musician: 'I was never a jazz musician. I'm not interested in improvisation - and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? But I'm not interested, because it's not perfect. All my improvisations are written, of course, and they became much better; it improved them.'

Among his works are 20 piano sonatas (the first composed at the age of 13), 6 piano concertos, instrumental concertos, sets of piano variations, études and concert studies. Although Kapustin remains for many classical music enthusiasts a little-known composer, several CD recordings of his piano compositions, chamber works and concertos are now readily available and offer an excellent opportunity to further explore his music.

Composed in 1984, the Sonata-Fantasia was Kapustin's fourth work for solo piano. There are four movements, with the first three movements acting as the first part and the jazzy Scriabineque fourth movement, like an independent Sonata in itself.