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NACHTMUSIK

A Night Of Serenade Music By

KOTARO FUKUMA 福間洸太郎

PIANO RECITAL 2023 • SINGAPORE

“ *A fabulous artist... and a
prince among peers* ”

The Independent

24 MARCH 2023

FRIDAY 8PM

VICTORIA CONCERT HALL

PROGRAMMES

10 classical music from

- J.S Bach
- Chopin
- Mozart
- Fauré
- Clara Schumann
- Debussy
- Schumann
- Ravel
- Grünfeld
- Saint Saëns

PRESENTED BY :  **BECHSTEIN**
MUSIC WORLD

Photo by ©L-Cousin



KOTARO FUKUMA
福間洸太郎

Born in Tokyo, Kotaro Fukuma has displayed limitless potential, clinching prestigious awards in international competitions. His career flourished after winning the First Prize and the Chopin Prize at the 15th Cleveland International Piano Competition at the age of 20.

Currently, he tours five continents, including Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America.

Since Kotaro studied music in France and has mentors like Mitsuko Uchida, Richard Goode, Maria Joao Pires, he presents highly refined music. Kotaro performs in major concert venues, and works with the world's finest orchestras and conductors. Furthermore, he has released eighteen commercial CDs (several released by renowned labels like Naxos) and often appears in music magazines like Gramophone.

ABOUT THE RECITAL

Kotaro Fukuma's debut recital presents piano transcriptions and pieces from the Baroque period to the 20th century. Join him in exploring your most beloved classical repertoire while savouring the refreshing melodies produced by the C. Bechstein piano. Then, delve deep into Kotaro's world of impressionistic French music as he paints images through different colours and textures to give audiences a captivating listening experience.

Like a mesmerising prince, Kotaro will touch your soul with his outstanding musicality, paired with the pure C. Bechstein sound. Strap in for a splendid evening of serenade music that inspires and leaves an unforgettable impression, at least for some time.

PROGRAMME

NACHTMUSIK
PIANO RECITAL 2023 • SINGAPORE

J.S Bach

Air on the G string (transcription by Siloti)

Mozart

Eine kleine Nachtmusik (transcription by Fukuma)

Clara Schumann

Notturmo Op.6 No.2

Schumann

Träumerei (extracts from Scènes d'enfants)
In der Nacht, Traumes Wirren
(extracts from Fantasiestücke Op.12)

Grünfeld

Soirée de Vienne
(Concert Paraphrase on Johann Strauss' waltzes)

Chopin

Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op 9. No. 2, Nocturne in C minor, Op 48. No. 1

Fauré

Nocturne No.5 in B-flat Major, Op.37

Debussy

Clair de Lune (extracts from Suite Bergamasque)

Ravel

Ondine (extracts from Gaspard de la Nuit)

Saint Saens

Danse macabre Op. 40 (transcription by Liszt)

*Programme subject to change at the artist's discretion

KOTARO FUKUMA MEET & GREET SESSION @ FOYER

Open to all audiences with Kotaro Fukuma's CD only.



**JOHANN
SEBASTIAN BACH**
(1685 – 1750)



**WOLFGANG
AMADEUS MOZART**
(1756 – 1791)

Air on the G string *transcription by Siloti*

The *Air on the G string* transcription by Alexander Siloti originates from the second movement of J.S. Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068. The original suite was composed in the 18th century and consists of five movements. It was stated that J.S. Bach's son, C.P.E. Bach, and his student Johann Ludwig Krebs, contributed to parts of this suite.

One of the movements in the suite was titled "Air". Today, one of the most famous arrangements includes violinist August Wilhelmj's version, where the first violins were transposed down for the whole piece to be played only on one violin string, the G string. Hence, this gave rise to its nickname, Air on the G String.

Based on Wilhelmj's version, Russian virtuoso pianist Alexander Siloti arranged this piece for solo piano.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik *transcription by Fukuma*

Eine kleine Nachtmusik (Serenade No.13 for strings in G Major) is one of today's most iconic classical music pieces. The German title means "a little night music".

Completed in Vienna on 10 August 1787, this piece was written when Mozart composed the second act of his *Don Giovanni* opera. Although it was published posthumously, it remains a favourite work for many.

Written for two violins, viola, cello, and double bass, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* consists of four movements. They are: Allegro, Romanze: Andante; Menuetto: Allegretto and Finale; Allegro. The uplifting and humorous melodies resemble Mozart's personality. It was also the perfect music for social occasions during Mozart's time. To date, the opening motif of this piece has been used on different occasions.

Kotaro Fukuma will perform his version of this widely recognised work.



CLARA SCHUMANN
(1819 – 1896)

Notturmo Op.6 No.2

Born in 1819 in Leipzig, Clara Wieck Schumann was the wife of pianist Robert Schumann and the daughter of Friedrich Wieck, a music teacher. Clara displayed enormous musical talent and was considered a child prodigy. During her teens, her musical career began flourishing, and she performed across Europe, working with famous composers like Felix Mendelssohn.

However, as a female composer of her time, Clara faced societal pressure. Society would discourage women from composing and publishing music. Furthermore, Clara experienced much scrutiny for her musical choices, making it challenging to attain positive approval from the music community.

Nonetheless, she remained a successful artist, much more well-known than her husband. Since Clara frequently premieres Robert Schumann's work in her concerts, she also helped Robert to attain fame throughout Europe. Within compositions, the couple would also quote each other's musical themes to express their love for one another. For example, Robert quotes the theme within this Notturmo for the eighth piece of his *Novelletten*, Op. 21.

Written in 1836, the *Notturmo* Op.6 No.2 was one of Clara's most popular early works. This Notturmo is the second piece in Clara's *Soirées musicales*, and the title hints at some relevance to Frédéric Chopin. Chopin was a great influence on Clara. Not only did she include his repertoire in most of her concerts, but Clara's earlier compositional style also reflected Chopin's characteristics.

The piece opens with the key of F Major, and the mood feels gloomy. Clara utilises sweet and delicate melodies with left-hand arpeggiation as the accompaniment. Throughout the piece, the melodic lines are often embellished with extravagant ornamentations. However, the beginning feels slightly reserved. Nonetheless, more of the story unfolds ahead. As the piece pushes towards the climax, it becomes more technically challenging and emotionally intensifies with abrupt harmonic changes. Eventually, all these emotions are gathered, ending with a taste of nostalgia.



**ROBERT
SCHUMANN**
(1810 – 1856)

Des Abends, In der Nacht, Traumes Wirren
extracts from Fantasiestücke Op.12

Träumerei

Rêverie, extracts from Scènes d'enfants

Robert Schumann was always a fan of literature. In many of his works, Schumann would often quote the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann, a German writer whom Schumann most revered.

Undoubtedly, *Fantasiestücke Op.12* was influenced by Hoffmann too. Written in 1837 and dedicated to British pianist Anna Robena Laidlaw, *Fantasiestücke* consists of eight short pieces. His writings hinted that he might still be in love with Clara and could not bear their separation.

Fantasiestücke portrays a musical dialogue between Schumann's two fictitious characters that he has invented. These two characters, Florestan and Eusebius, were vital in Schumann's works, providing him with musical ideas and emotional support. The former portrays an extroverted character; Eusebius shows a reserved personality.

Kotaro selects three pieces from this set. These short pieces reflect the dual personality of Schumann.

Des Abends (In the evening) paints an image of dusk, where simple and delicate syncopated melodies weave seamlessly between the voices. *In der Nacht* (In the Night) displays a dark but passionate mood. Due to the rapid semiquaver figures in the left hand, this piece sounds almost like a virtuosic etude. Contrary to the previous piece, *Traumes Wirren* (Dream's Confusions) is humorous and buoyant, with a contrasting middle section that is slow and memorable.

Next, Kotaro links to *Träumerei* (Dreaming) from *Kinderszenen*. This set was written a year after *Fantasiestücke*, where Schumann still missed Clara dearly due to their continued separation. Schumann's letter to Clara stated, "You once said to me that I often seemed like a child, and I suddenly got inspired and knocked off around 30 quaint little pieces."

Thirteen pieces were selected for *Kinderszenen*, where Schumann depicts childhood feelings from an adult's perspective. To date, *Träumerei* remains an iconic piece.



Alfred Grünfeld
(1852-1942)

Soirée de Vienne

Concert Paraphrase on Johann Strauss' waltzes

Born in 1852, Austrian pianist and composer Alfred Grünfeld studied music in Prague and Berlin. One of his mentors includes renowned pedagogue Theodore Kullak. Besides being a professor at the Vienna Conservatory, he was also a court pianist to Wilhelm I of Germany.

Grünfeld led an exciting piano career, performing and recording works of famous composers, including Bach, Chopin, and Schumann. Grünfeld was also a prolific composer, composing songs and music for piano and chamber. He also wrote refreshing transcriptions and paraphrases based on Strauss' music, of which Strauss was also his friend.

The *Soirée de Vienne*, includes catchy motifs and melodies. Like a ballroom waltz in a Viennese salon, it offers listeners a virtuosic and exotic sound. With sparkling scales and romantic touches that lighten up the mood, this music is the perfect spirit for gatherings and celebrations. It was even said that Grünfeld recorded his interpretation of this transcription.



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN
(1810 – 1849)

i. Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op 9. No. 2
ii. Nocturne in C minor, Op 48. No. 1

Originated by Irish composer John Field, a nocturne is a piece evocative of the night.

During the earlier days, Frédéric Chopin loved 19th-century French songs and Italian bel-canto opera. He was also an admirer of Field. Under his influence, Chopin wrote twenty-one nocturnes between 1827 and 1846. Throughout his lifetime, eighteen of them were published, while three of them were published posthumously.

Dedicated to French/Belgian pianist Madame Marie Pleyel, the *Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op 9. No. 2* is the second piece from Chopin's first set of nocturnes. This nocturne is Chopin's most famous piece due to its romantic and sophisticated qualities that appeal to the audience.

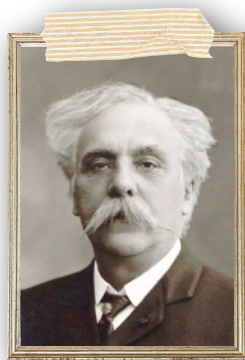
Composed around twenty years old, this piece features rich melodies embellished with extensive ornamentations and crystal-like trills. With the waltz-like left-hand figures as the accompaniment, the player is given much freedom of time to shape the music. The main melody is also varied numerous times, each time being more passionate than before. Finally, the oneiric nocturne melts away, evoking melancholy, yearning, and love.

Nocturne in C minor, Op 48. No. 1 is an emotional rollercoaster. Composed in 1841 and dedicated to one of Chopin's favourite students, Laure Duperré, this nocturne is one of Chopin's most technically demanding nocturnes.

Written in ternary form, the opening harmonies and mood resemble *Chopin's Prelude Op. 28 No. 20*. Both consist of heavy bass notes in the key of C minor and a sense of anguish and solemnity. However, this nocturne begins quietly and slowly with cantabile melodies in the right hand.

Afterwards, Chopin introduces a new idea, "*Poco Più Lento*", which is a chorale-like section. Starting in C Major, this section sounds slightly more optimistic than before, where Chopin introduces arpeggiated chords and triplet-like octave figures in the right hand. Nonetheless, this seems to be a preparation for a more dramatic section ahead as the triplet figures occur more frequently and increase in volume for each reappearance.

This nocturne gradually intensifies in the third section, "*Doppio movimento*". Here, thick harmonies and interweaving melodies gradually drive the mysterious opening into an increasingly turbulent state, where Chopin instructs one to accelerate, execute loud dynamics and balance the voicings. Eventually, this emotional turmoil subsides near the end before three repeated pianissimo chords mark the conclusion of this tragic piece.



**GABRIEL
FAURÉ**
(1845 – 1924)

Nocturne No.5 in B-flat Major, Op.37

Gabriel Fauré was a highly respected French composer and pianist of his generation, and his musical style remained influential on 20th-century composers. When Fauré was fifteen, Camille Saint-Saëns taught him composition. Fauré composed different genres of music, but the nocturnes remain one of his greatest works.

Judging from how Fauré titles his pieces, there was a possibility that Frédéric Chopin had influenced him. Besides writing nocturnes, Fauré had composed waltzes, preludes, and more. Such titling immediately reminds one of Chopin. Furthermore, Fauré's earlier nocturnes display long lyrical melodic lines, unhurried tempos, and accompaniment patterns similar to Chopin. Nonetheless, Fauré's nocturnes still retained their unique characteristics. For example, he excluded the usage of ornamentation.

Nocturne No.5 in B-flat Major, Op.37 is exquisite. Unlike the previous nocturnes, Fauré seemed to have turned away from Chopin's compositional style. Although this nocturne starts lyrically and elegantly in B-flat Major, it bursts into the "Allegro" section, instantly becoming virtuosic. The unexpected shift into the key into B-flat minor, a key that Fauré rarely uses, is thrilling. The contrapuntal textures and swirling triplets are passionate and violent. There is also the usage of chromatism to drive the mood. Such excitement continues as the piece transits into the contrasting key of B Major, portraying a childlike and imaginative mood. Unfortunately, it does not return to



CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862 – 1918)

Clair de Lune

extracts from Suite Bergamasque

Written in 1890, *Clair de Lune*, which translates as ‘Moonlight’, is the third piece of Claude Debussy’s *Suite Bergamasque*. This piece features Debussy’s impressionistic qualities, where he breaks away from conventional harmonic and rhythmic rules. Instead, he asserted that the sole purpose of French music was to “provide pleasure”.

Hence, Debussy experiments with a kaleidoscope of instrumental sounds and textures, utilising wide ranges of dynamics from as soft as *pianississimo* (*ppp*). He also moved towards exploring whole-tone scales, dissonant chords, and indistinct rhythms.

The original title for this piece was “Promenade sentimentale” (Sentimental stroll). Debussy was inspired by a poem titled *Fêtes Galantes*, a work by French poet Paul Verlaine. Therefore, this may have led Debussy to paint such beautiful images.

In the key of D-flat major, the tranquil opening sets the mood, reminding one of the gentle breezes at night. As these meditative melodies sustain, it becomes harder to decipher the tonality. Nonetheless, such ambiguity contributes to the intriguing quality of Debussy’s music.

Next, the introduction of higher-register chords creates a sense of lightness. One can close their eyes and feel the moon shining subtly under the night sky. However, as the piece becomes increasingly animated, more complex harmonies emerge. Nevertheless, the fluidity of the music sustains.

One can also hear the varied motifs reappearing, each time becoming more dreamlike and sorrowful than before. Ultimately, Debussy closes the piece with “*morendo jusqu’à la fin*”, directing the player to gradually decrease in speed and volume before inserting an arpeggiated chord in the home key.

Debussy once said, “Piano music should only be written for the Bechstein”. Performing *Clair de Lune* on a Bechstein will be a match made in heaven.



**JOSEPH
MAURICE RAVEL**
(1875 – 1937)

Ondine

extracts from Gaspard de la Nuit

Composed in 1908, *Ondine* originated from Maurice Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Ravel wrote this suite based on a poem by French poet Aloysius Bertrand, which premiered in France by Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes. It brings to mind other “water” music pieces by Ravel, like *Jeux d'eau* and *Une Barque sur l'Océan*. Although this suite is considered one of the most demanding solo piano repertoires, it is also filled with pulsating surprises.

Starting in the key of C-sharp Major, Ravel paints a scene of a water nymph attempting to seduce men into her world, which is situated deep below a lake. In the opening, one can hear the stillness of the water and picture the moonlight shining on the water's surface. The change of keys and tonalities are gorgeous. Specifically, the cascading arpeggios are magical and certainly a place to look out for. However, some climaxes capture one by surprise. Nonetheless, it fully immerses listeners into Ravel's mystical world by utilising the entire keyboard to create colours and nuances.

Ravel once wrote, “My ambition is to say with notes what a poet expresses with words”. Keep in mind this statement as you experience the *Ondine*.



CAMILLE
SAINT SAËNS
(1835 – 1921)

Danse macabre Op. 40
transcription by Liszt

Danse macabre, Op. 40 is among the four tone poems that French composer Saint-Saëns composed during the 1870s. Originally, this piece was an art song for voice and piano, with a French text by poet Henri Cazalis. However, the reception of this piece did not go well. Numerous performers stated that the melody was unsingable. Therefore, Saint-Saëns reworked it into a tone poem for orchestra.

This piece portrays an eerie and morbid atmosphere. According to a French legend, skeletons in the cemetery crawl out for a dance party at midnight every Halloween. The repeated single notes in the beginning represent the twelve strokes of midnight, where the skeletons seem to be summoned awake and ready to dance the waltz.

When composing this piece, Saint-Saëns was inspired by the works and compositional styles of Hungarian pianist and composer Franz Liszt, which also happened to be a close friend of Saint-Saëns. After the premiere of the original *Danse macabre*, Liszt was attracted to the devilish nature of this piece and composed a transcription of it. He expanded the original tone poem, such as inserting more lyrical sections and extending the coda.

Since Liszt had also composed famous virtuosic transcriptions of works like Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Bellini's *Norma*, etc., his version of the *Danse macabre* naturally rose to greater popularity.

Today, different arrangements of this piece are still widely performed, including the arrangement of pianist Vladimir Horowitz on Liszt's version. *Danse macabre* is also heard in films, video games, and more.

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Victoria Concert Hall, Singapore now!*



J.S Bach
Piano Transcription



France Romance

*CD Autograph Session
with Kotaro Fukuma*

24 March 2023

Victoria Concert Hall

(Foyer, Level 2)

To be held after Kotaro Fukuma
Piano Recital





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BERLIN, 1853

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