

DipABRSM (Performing - Piano)

29 August 2005

| | <u>Timing</u> |
|---|----------------|
| Prelude and Fugue in A flat major BWV 886 J.S.Bach (1685 - 1750) | 6' 16" |
| Sonata in D Major, K311 <i>Allegro con spirito</i> <i>Andantino con espressione</i> <i>Allegro</i> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) | 16' 25" |
| Nocturne in E, Op.62 no.2. Frederic Chopin (1810 - 1849) | 6' 28" |
| '6 Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm' No.153 from 'Mikrokosmos' Vol 6 Bela Bartok (1881 - 1945) | 1' 47" |
| Total time | 32' |
| Word count for Programme Notes: 1090 | |

Candidate No. 1947449

Programme Notes

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## Prelude and Fugue in A flat major BWV 886 J.S.Bach (1685-1750)

J.S Bach was a choir-boy, violinist, organist, and chief musician in the Anhalt-Cothen court. He played many instruments and composed for almost every type of composition except for the opera. The *Well-Tempered Clavier* contains twenty-four preludes and fugues in all the major and minor keys, following the order of the chromatic scale. These pieces are well known to pianists as 'The Forty-eight' and they were completed in 1744.

This A flat major BWV 886 prelude is one of the largest and possibly the latest prelude in Book II. The irregular opening section provides the main components of the piece and is subsequently re-run with variations and developments. The simultaneous projection of the dotted rhythms and continuous running notes, give a flowing and breath-taking feel.

The fugue has a subject of varied rhythms and wide intervals and it is being 'sung' out in all the four voices respectively. It has an Adagio character, sounds solemn, and despite a couple of aggressive phrases, the flow of the music is even and soothing. In addition to that, the greatest contrapuntal refinement shapes the music.

The prelude and the fugue have a similar ending of a strong Neapolitan (a chromatic chord) harmony that makes them unique.

## **Sonata in D Major, K.311**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)**

*Allegro con spirito*

*Andantino con espressione*

*Allegro*

Mozart was one of the most prodigiously gifted musicians in history. He was a composer, pianist, conductor and organist, all in equally abundant proportions. He possessed a phenomenal aural memory and perhaps it was this rare ability that enabled him to produce over 600 compositions during his short life of 35 years. The D major Sonata K.311, was written during Mozart's stay in Mannheim or even earlier in Munich, where he had met Josepha Freysinger, daughter of one of his father's friends, whom he promised a sonata. This could very well be that sonata. It was completed by late 1777.

The *Allegro con spirito* is bursting with the gaiety that comes with life. The main subject's rising jumpy motif becomes a descending smooth melody in the lyrical second theme. The little descending motif at the end of exposition seems to be an afterthought, but becomes the only material dealt in the development. Unlike most sonatas, the second subject is recapitulated first where the first subject reappears at the end, like a coda.

The form of the *Andante con espressione* is such that, there are frequent returns to the opening melody, both simple and decorated. Its romantic but sad mood engages with passion into one singing movement.

The finale is similar to a concerto, where its substantial musical ideas are in a six-eight rhythm of a type used in concerti. The brief cadenza further enhances the concerto-like flavour. The main theme is greatly decorated and it reappears in several occasions. This joyful and lively theme never ceases to delight the audience.

## Nocturne in E, Op.62 no.2 Frederic Chopin (1810 - 1849)

Of half Polish and half French descent, Chopin spent about half of his life each in both Warsaw and Paris. As a pianist, he showed qualities of both delicacy and fire. In his short career, he had produced numerous etudes, preludes, nocturnes, waltzes, and impromptus. He expressed his love of Poland in his polonaises and mazurkas. Alongside Schumann and Mendelssohn, he stands as one of the greatest leaders in the Romantic period.

The two nocturnes, Op.62, were composed and published in 1846. In Op.62 no.2, repetition and variation are well balanced in the long thirty-two bar melodic paragraph and that forms the opening section of the nocturne. It provides essentially a theme and three variations.

The middle section of this nocturne belongs very definitely in style to the later Romantic period, as seen by the freedom with which the theme moves over a bass of running notes and the use of syncopation. This section is in a slightly faster tempo, but it shows no decrease in lyrical fancy. It then gradually returns to the more tranquil feel of the opening where the first theme reappears for a while and the piece ends with part of the central portion slightly modified.

This nocturne has several striking similarities with one of Chopin's most famous etudes, Op.10 No.3. They both are in ternary ABA form where the former and latter sections A are slow and soft while the B section is loud and agitated. They are both in E major and have similar syncopated bass at times. Since the etude was composed much earlier than this nocturne, many disregard the artistic value of the nocturne. This could explain why composer Hugo Leichtentritt described this nocturne as 'lacking the features of great artistry' and author Frederick Niecks considered it as 'not worth dwelling upon'. Nevertheless, this beautiful nocturne remains well liked by many.

**'6 Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm' No.153, from 'Mikrokosmos' Vol 6.  
Bela Bartok (1881 - 1945)**

Bartok was an ardent admirer successively of Brahms, Liszt, Wagner and Strauss. He was a collector of Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian folk songs and later of Arab music. These folk melodies turned out to become his greatest inspiration in composing. His progress as a composer was at first made difficult by lack of appreciation, but in time this died down and he gained fame and recognition internationally.

Bartok wrote the *Mikrokosmos* with the purpose of covering all the technical work of the beginning student. It begins with the easiest pieces and advances to the more difficult concert works. Bartok believed that the teaching of Bulgarian rhythms should be part of every child's musical education, beginning ideally at an early age. Although titled as 'Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm', they are no Bulgarian folk melodies in them. They are merely based on Bulgarian rhythms. These dances are dedicated to the British pianist Harriet Cohen.

The final dance No. 153 is the most vigorous of the set. It is 'noisy' most of the time and the pounding syncopated rhythms lead to a magnificent finale. The loudness portrays Bartok's frustration and grief as Europe march toward war and his preparations to leave his homeland Hungary.

The harmony can be unpleasantly dissonant. Polytonality is a main characteristic in Bartok's works, but despite an occasional leaning towards atonality, he never completely ignored the importance of key. Melody has been freed from the bar-lines and the use of contrasts and sequences are the vital factors in this piece. This dance should be declaimed from the highest mountain, and is a joy to perform!