



Jayson Gillham in Recital

Mon 30 May
Elder Hall

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

Perpetual Emotion

Season 2022



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Jayson Gillham
Piano

ASO Artist
in Association

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Elder Hall

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), transcribed Egon Petri (1881-1962)
From Cantata BWV208: *Sheep May Safely Graze*

Bach
Partita No.1 in B-flat major BWV825

Bach, transcribed Wilhelm Kempff (1895-1991)
Flute Sonata No.2 BWV1031: II. *Siciliano*

Bach, transcribed Myra Hess (1890-1965)
From Cantata BWV147: *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring*

Bach, transcribed Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)
Chorale Prelude BWV734: *Rejoice, beloved Christians*

Bach, transcribed Busoni
Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin BWV1004: V. Chaconne

INTERVAL

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Étude in A-flat major Op.25 No.1 *Aeolian Harp*

Étude in C-sharp minor Op.25 No.7 *Cello*

Fantaisie-Improvisation in C-sharp minor Op.66

Three Waltzes, Op.34

Nocturne in E-flat major, Op.55 No.2

Polonaise in A-flat major, Op.53 *Heroic*

Duration Approximately 2 hours, including a 20 minute interval

The ASO acknowledges that the land we make music on is the traditional country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that this is of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are with us for this performance today.

Welcome



This program began to take shape towards the end of the first Covid lockdown in 2020. I had taken a break and was having trouble finding any joy in playing during that time. At some point I started reading through repertoire that I knew I liked, and when I reached the Chaconne from Bach's D minor Partita, I knew it would be my road back to the enjoyment of playing. Normally I program and perform mainly with the audience in mind, but it all felt so pointless when there was no one to play for but myself. I had to shift my focus inward, and in the end, it was Bach that spoke to me.

I found a similar personal connection to Chopin's A minor waltz, Op.34 No.2, purported to be Chopin's favourite. Playing something melancholic can help me to process my emotions when I'm down, and this piece just hit that button.

Returning to the concert platform meant I had to implement a technical training regime, and what better way to do that than by working on Chopin Études, each a perfect tone poem. The program finally coalesced around my two 2020 online recitals *Romantic Bach* and *Chopin Favourites*, with a return to the grandeur of the stage with the Bach/Busoni Chaconne and the *Heroic* Polonaise.

Jayson Gillham

Biography

Australian-British pianist Jayson Gillham is recognised as one of the finest pianists of his generation. After receiving numerous prizes from some of the world's leading piano competitions including the Leeds and Van Cliburn, it was Jayson's win at the 2014 Montreal International Music Competition that brought him to international attention.

His many recordings for ABC Classic include a Beethoven Piano Concerto cycle with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Nicholas Carter, recorded live. The album received international recognition from iTunes and Spotify.

Jayson performs with the world's leading orchestras. Recent highlights include engagements with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Melbourne, West Australian and Queensland Symphony orchestras as well as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal.

In recital, Jayson has appeared such prestigious venues as Wigmore Hall, Royal Nottingham Concert Hall, Steinway Hall New York, Sydney's City Recital Hall and the Melbourne Recital Centre. Festival highlights include performances at the Verbier Festival, Edinburgh Fringe and Brighton Festival.

Chamber music forms an important part of Jayson Gillham's career. He frequently collaborates in performance with the Jerusalem, Carducci, Brentano, Ruysdael and Flinders String quartets. Last season Jayson made his recital debut at the Barbican Hall in London as part of the venue's acclaimed Sound Unbound Festival.

In 2022, Jayson Gillham is the ASO's Artist in Association.

A Language of Infinity

The Bohemian violinist Woyciech Żywny (1756–1842) was the first to introduce Chopin to the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Alongside Mozart and Bellini, Bach formed an indispensable part of Chopin's curriculum, and his music left an impression on the young Pole that was never forgotten. Bach's consummate mastery across the entire spectrum of instrumental and vocal genres is on vivid display in the first half of this program.

'**Sheep May Safely Graze**', the ninth movement from the *Hunting Cantata* is heard here in an arrangement by Egon Petri. The idyllic, pastoral atmosphere provides the perfect introduction to the **Partita** – the first of six revolutionary keyboard suites under that designation. In this example, a *Praeludium* prefaces a typical progression of movements inspired by French and Italian court dances.

Set in the relative key of G minor, a popular transcription by Wilhelm Kempff of the *Siciliano* from Bach's **Flute Sonata in B flat** flows effortlessly into G major in '**Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring**' from the ecclesiastical cantata *Heart and mind and deed and mouth*. The present transcription by Dame Myra Hess has vastly eclipsed the popularity of the original version.

The uplifting chorale prelude *Rejoice, beloved Christians* is transformed into a virtuosic showpiece by Ferruccio Busoni who effectively reallocates the cantus firmus of a Lutheran melody (played by the feet on the organ in Bach's original) into the two hands of the busy pianist. Transcendental virtuosity also defines Busoni's transcription of the extraordinary **Chaconne** from Bach's second violin **Partita in D minor**. Busoni distributes the challenges remarkably effectively amongst the two hands of the pianist, doubling octaves and adding new harmonic colours that create quasi-orchestral effects.

Although Chopin never transcribed any of Bach's works, the great German master's fingerprints were nevertheless infused into the DNA of many of Chopin's compositions. Alongside an enduring fascination with dance forms, Bach and Chopin were also united in their approach to pedagogy: with his *Études* Op.10 and 25, Chopin did for the piano what Bach had already done for the violin and cello.

The melodic and harmonic structure of the **Étude in A flat, Op.25 No.1** is illuminated with larger crotchet-like notation: deep bass sonorities radiate small ripples of

harmonic resonance, allowing a soprano cantilena (played by the fifth finger of the right hand) to float effortlessly above a texture of trickling semiquavers. The **Étude in C sharp minor, Op.25 No.7** conversely seeks to cultivate one's proficiency at voicing and phrasing the opposite hand. The elegiac left-hand melody invites immediate comparisons with the cello, although the presence of extended chromatic *fiorituras* also recalls the vocal range of Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794–1854) and the enduring influence of Bellini.

The swirling outbursts that bookend the eye-of-the-storm cantilena in the *Fantaisie-Improptu in C sharp minor, Op.66* have made it one of Chopin's most popular works.

The **Waltzes, Op.34** were published as a set of three in 1838. The first (in A flat) opens with fanfare-like gestures not dissimilar to the *Grand Polonaise Brillante, Op.22*. A plaintive, cello-like drone punctuates episodes of tender nostalgia in the second Waltz (1831, in A minor), and the set closes with a sparkling F major Waltz that harkens back to the *brillante* style of the Warsaw years.

The **Nocturne in E flat, Op.55 No.2** reveals how far Chopin had come from John Field. In place of Op.9 No.2's 'Oom-pa-pah' accompaniment, the left hand sculpts a line as intricate as a Bach Cello Suite, while the right hand gives us a vocal duet worthy of Maria Malibran (1808–1836) and Henriette Sontag (1806–1854).

The **Polonaise in A flat, Op.53** is a swashbuckling tale of resurrection and triumph. Listen for the seven resplendent horn calls that suggest the mustering of the Polish cavalry as they return to heroically reclaim their homeland. Horses' hooves clatter against the cobblestones in staccato octaves that build from a distant *pianissimo* to an eviscerating *fortissimo*. One imagines the Muscovites fleeing, or perhaps being trampled underfoot. An idealised vision of catharsis, it is a work of radical hope.

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Dylan Henderson is a pianist, writer, musicologist and arts administrator. He is currently completing a Doctorate on Chopin at the University of Adelaide.