

Beyond Limits

Joseph Moog confronts life's big questions with performances of Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor and transcription of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony

Moog's 2019-20 season includes release of all-Liszt album on Onyx Classics, evening recital debut at Wigmore Hall and debut with Chicago Symphony Orchestra

'Moog imbues Ravel's "Ondine" with marvellous textural control throughout, even when playing full-out at the climax', *Gramophone* review of *Gaspard de la nuit*, February 2019



Unexpected companions, carefully chosen, can bring fresh perspectives to even the most familiar of compositions. Joseph Moog understands the value of building captivating contrasts and imaginative connections into his recital programmes and recordings. The 31-year-old German pianist is set to explore Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor and equally formidable keyboard transcription of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony in the coming season, each placed together with compositions drawn from the vast creative landscape of nineteenth-century Romanticism. His latest album for Onyx Classics, *Heaven and Hell*, trains the spotlight on Liszt alone. The recording, scheduled for release on 11 October 2019, charts the striking breadth of the Hungarian composer's music, embracing everything from his *Two Legends* and the *Csárdás obstinée*, a late work that anticipates the lean, muscular piano works of Bartók, to the Dante Sonata and Piano Sonata in B minor.

Joseph Moog's season includes debut appearances in Wigmore Hall's London Pianoforte Series (Friday 20 March) and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as soloist in Richard Strauss's *Burleske* (16-21 April). It also comprises recitals for the London Chopin Society at Westminster Cathedral Hall (Sunday 17 November) and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's Steinway International Series in Cardiff (Sunday 26 & Monday 27 January), the Salle Philharmonique de Liège (Sunday 8 March) and at Turner Sims Concert Hall in Southampton (Tuesday 17 March).

"I aim to bring my personal vision to every programme," comments Joseph Moog. "I was born into a musical family, my parents being orchestral musicians. Since my earliest memories, I can say the creative musical environment at home was so beneficial to me. I had the strongest fascination with the piano from the first second I saw it. I remember the moment 'the monster' – a 1920s Blüthner grand – entered our apartment. I was scared by the sight of three grown men struggling to lift the thing, but wanted to tame it." Two of his parents' friends introduced young Joseph to a regular diet of rare recordings and scores on their frequent visits to the Moog family home. "I got to know repertoire rarities at the same time as I was learning studying mainstream piano works," he recalls. "There were never any borders or limits, no dos or don'ts. That sense of curiosity and adventure has stayed with me always."

The desire to challenge convention occupied Moog's mind when it came to *Heaven and Hell*. The album, he says, spans four decades of Liszt's output to reveal eternal themes in the composer's work. "An album title can sound corny, but *Heaven and Hell* describes Liszt's personality very well," he observes. "When you consider his development as man and composer over so many years, it's quite breathtaking to see how he addressed the essential questions of life: who are we? where do we come from? why are we here?"

The Sonata in B minor contains joy and sorrow, darkness and light, the diabolic and the divine in its universe of emotions. Joseph Moog will close his Wigmore Hall programme with Liszt's epic work, one of the great landmarks of nineteenth-century music. It also crowns his recital for the London Chopin Society. For the latter, he has set Schubert's Adagio and Rondo in company with Chopin's Polonaises in C sharp minor Op.26, No.1

and A major Op.40, No.1, Tarantella in A flat major Op.43 and Scherzo No.1 in B minor Op.20. The programme recalls the salon's importance to musical life in Chopin's Paris through Gabriel Fauré's Barcarolles Nos.1 in A minor Op.26 and 3 in G-flat major Op.42.

Joseph Moog's lifelong fascination with the piano's potential to evoke orchestral sounds began in childhood. Liszt's B minor Sonata and transcription of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, he says, offer ideal scope for exploring the instrument's infinite tonal shadings and textural contrasts. "I've always been drawn to the sounds of the orchestra and some of my most intense musical experiences have occurred while I was attending my parents' orchestral rehearsals. I'm sure that has been a strong influence on me as a pianist. We should never become so caught up with the need to master different technical tasks and skills as players that we forget about the sounds we can give to each of the voices in a piano composition. The art is for one player to create the illusion of two or more people making music. The challenge and the possibilities of doing this are what I love about playing the instrument. You can create a million different colours on the piano, far beyond what audiences are used to hearing."

His Wigmore Hall recital demands technical mastery, a symphonist's feeling for colour and great expressive sensitivity. Its programme opens with Schubert's Adagio and Rondo in E major, Op.145, contains room for two of Fauré's Barcarolles and Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*, and makes way for Liszt's B minor Sonata in its second half. "It's a fantastic opportunity for me to perform this music in such an intimate space, somewhere with such a rich history. Wigmore Hall is a wonderful venue – there are so few places like it and nowhere better to play this programme."

Liszt occupies centre stage in Joseph Moog's work throughout the coming season. The composer, he says, is poorly served by clichés that present his early works as vulgar showpieces while reserving praise for his late compositions. "That old-fashioned image has to be challenged." Moog has chosen to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth with Liszt's spellbinding transcription of the composer's Sixth Symphony. His selection of companion pieces – Fauré's Barcarolles and Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* – underlines his status as a master programme builder. He will take the programme to Cardiff, Liège and Southampton early next year.

"Liszt's version of the Sixth Symphony is not only spectacular but also incredibly well done," observes Joseph Moog. "He raised transcription, which was a way for people to discover orchestral and other ensemble works before the age of recording, to a high art. I wanted to celebrate the Beethoven anniversary next season with something other than his piano sonatas, and feel that this Liszt transcription is the perfect way to do that. Liszt somehow brings out the spirit of Beethoven's orchestral writing on the piano. If ever there was a time to programme something that's so rarely performed, it has to be for Beethoven's 250th birthday year."

<https://www.josephmoog.com>

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Heaven and Hell, worldwide release 11 October 2019

Onyx Classics

Liszt

Dante Sonata

Piano Sonata in B minor, S.178

Two Legends S.175

Csardás Obstinée S.225

PERFORMANCE DATES

Sunday 17 November 2019

Westminster Cathedral Hall, London, 4pm

Schubert Adagio and Rondo in E major Op.145 D506

Chopin Polonaise in C sharp minor Op.26 No.1

Chopin Tarantella in A flat major, Op.43

Chopin Polonaise in A major, Op.40, No.1

Chopin Scherzo No.1 In B minor Op.20

Fauré Barcarolle No.1 In A minor Op.26

Fauré Barcarolle No.3 In G flat major Op.42

Liszt Piano Sonata in B minor, S.178

Sunday 26 January 2020

Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff, 11am

Beethoven arr. Liszt Symphony No.6 'Pastoral'

Fauré Barcarolle No.1 in A minor Op.26

Fauré Barcarolle No.3 in G flat major Op.42

Ravel *Gaspard de la nuit*

Sunday 8 March 2020

Salle Philharmonique de Liège, Belgium, 4pm

Beethoven arr. Liszt Symphony No.6 'Pastoral'

Fauré Barcarolle No.1 in A Minor Op.26

Fauré Barcarolle No.3 in G Flat Major Op.42

Ravel *Gaspard de la nuit*

Tuesday 17 March 2020

Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton, 8pm

Beethoven arr. Liszt Symphony No.6 'Pastoral'

Fauré Barcarolle No.1 in A minor Op.26

Fauré Barcarolle No.3 in G Flat major Op.42

Ravel *Gaspard de la nuit*

Friday 20 March 2020

Wigmore Hall, London, 7.30pm

Schubert Adagio and Rondo in E major Op.145 D506

Liszt Piano Sonata in B Minor, S178

Fauré Barcarolle No.1 in A minor Op.26

Fauré Barcarolle No.3 in G flat major Op.42

Ravel *Gaspard de la nuit*

Thursday 16, Friday 17, Saturday 18 & Tuesday 21 April 2020

Symphony Center, Chicago, 8pm (Thursday & Saturday), 1.30pm (Friday) & 7.30pm (Tuesday)

Joseph Moog piano | **Emmanuel Krivine** conductor | **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

Strauss *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, Op.28

Strauss *Burleske* for Piano and Orchestra in D minor, Op.11

Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*