

Programming Revelations

Paul Lewis continues his critically acclaimed Haydn-Beethoven-Brahms project with two life-affirming programmes charged with wit and ingenuity, poetry and passion

'Lewis's way with these pieces is masterly,' *The Independent*, June 2018



Time and tradition, not always wise judges, routinely decide which composers sit happily together and which do not. Paul Lewis challenged repertoire conventions last season with two beguiling programmes that placed Haydn's piano sonatas in company with later masterworks by Beethoven and Brahms. He is set to continue his revelatory recital series this season with two further surveys of the trio's compositions, each certain to open new perspectives on familiar works and encourage audiences to listen with fresh ears. The pianist's 2018-19 diary also includes debut concerts with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Bernard Haitink and with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Manfred Honeck, recitals with tenor Mark Padmore, concerto dates with the Hallé, the BBC Philharmonic, the Scottish Chamber and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, and the release next spring of his second album of Haydn piano sonatas for Harmonia Mundi.

In October, Lewis presents the third programme in his international Haydn-Beethoven-Brahms recital series, a combination of Brahms's Seven Fantasies Op.116 and Haydn's Piano Sonata in C minor Hob.XVII/20 in the opening half, and Beethoven's Seven Bagatelles Op.33 and Haydn's Piano Sonata in E flat major Hob.XVI/52 after the interval. UK venues where he will perform the programme this autumn include the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, Saffron Hall, St George's Bristol and the Royal Festival Hall (15 & 21 October, 7 & 13 November) the latter as part of the prestigious International Piano Series.

"This is a big-boned programme," Paul Lewis observes. "It's been really enjoyable to work at Brahms's Op.116 for the first time. This is challenging music, yet I'm loving every moment that I spend with it. It's easy to pigeonhole Brahms as a conservative but the deeper you go into his music, the less conventional he becomes. The fifth of the Op.116 pieces, for instance, is incredibly strange. There's a feeling that because Brahms is conventional, his music should be easy to understand. That's not the case at all with this piece. The thing to do is to let that strangeness speak for itself."

While Haydn had long held a place in Lewis's pantheon of favourite composers, Brahms stood outside his repertoire radar until recent years. The experience of performing the latter's mature works, he notes, has transformed his view of the composer. "I always felt that there was this incredibly passionate soul desperately trying to break free from the shackles of classical restraint" he recalls. "Of course it's not restraint at all; rather, Brahms adheres to his own rules. I now find this conflict between passion and formality is what makes him so fascinating – it's what makes Brahms who he is. Feeling your way around the music physically, as Brahms must have felt it, gives you an idea of the kind of pianist he probably was. He writes in pianistic blocks, which can be physically very satisfying – if you don't fight against it!"

Paul Lewis's fourth and final programme in the series pairs Haydn's Piano Sonata in E minor Hob XVI/34 with Brahms's Three Intermezzi Op.117, a collection of works marked by their haunting introspection. The concert's second half is devoted exclusively to Beethoven's 33 Variations in C on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli Op.120. Lewis begins his full immersion in these works at Dublin's National Concert Hall on 6 February 2019 before repeating the programme in Bristol, Edinburgh and Saffron Walden (8, 11 & 24 February). "There's a logic that underpins the work of each of these three composers," he notes. "Haydn and Beethoven write their own rules and then break them, which means you become most aware of the logic when they subvert it. They create expectations only to do something different. I would say with Brahms the sense of logic is more consistent and more fundamental to how he expresses himself."

Mozart's Piano Concerto No.27 in B flat major K595, the composer's final statement in the genre, provides another focal point for Paul Lewis's 2018-19 season. He will join Bernard Haitink, soon after the conductor's ninetieth birthday, for three performances of the work with the Berliner Philharmoniker (9, 10 & 11 May 2019). It is also on the bill for dates with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra at St David's Hall in Cardiff (20 March), and in Montreal, Brisbane and Stockholm. "I adore this multi-layered piece, which I find in many ways is very Schubertian. It's full of nostalgia and sad smiles. Mozart doesn't write in primary colours here: everything is just a little ambiguous, which is what makes it so fascinating. I can't think of another Mozart concerto like it. It's impossible not to speculate about where he would have gone from there, had he lived." Also in the pianist's repertoire for 2018-19 is Mozart's Piano Concerto No.25 in C major K503, which he will perform with the BBC Philharmonic and Ben Gernon on 26 January.

Over the coming season, Lewis is set to explore a rich and diverse diet of Classical and Romantic masterworks. He will perform Grieg's Piano Concerto with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Kerem Hasan (30 & 31 May 2019), having returned to the piece at last year's Edinburgh Festival after a twenty-year gap. "I greatly enjoyed playing it in Edinburgh with the Bergen Philharmonic, who know the piece inside out," he recalls. "It felt afterwards like there was unfinished business there for me, which is why I'm looking forward to performing it again in Liverpool next May. It's simply beautiful music. Sometimes it's necessary to have a long break from a piece to remove yourself from default ways of doing it." Paul Lewis's UK schedule also includes performances of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.2 with the Hallé and Kazushi Ono at Bridgewater Hall (15 November) and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Joseph Swensen at Edinburgh's Usher Hall and City Halls Glasgow (14 & 15 March 2019). Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.3 is on the programme for his debut with Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Manfred Honeck (13, 14 & 15 December).

Paul Lewis's partnership with the tenor Mark Padmore continues with a series of international concerts, crowned on 21 and 24 July with dates at Birmingham Town Hall and Wigmore Hall. Their captivating programme includes a selection of Brahms songs, Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. Reviewing their latest Lincoln Center recital, the *New York Times* wrote: 'When musical soloists at the top of their respective fields join forces, it can make for a formidable meeting of sensibilities, a fascinating friction, or both. With the British tenor Mark Padmore and his compatriot pianist Paul Lewis [...] it was mostly a meeting of minds, and fine ones.' 'It's impossible to overstate the value of strong artistic partnerships,' Lewis notes. "I learn something every time I work with artists such as Mark and Bernard Haitink. It's healthy for a pianist, who could opt for the apparent safety of solo recitals, to develop in company with other musicians. To be musically sociable, in the right context, is incredibly important. It's such a privilege to perform *Dichterliebe* with Mark, for example, and to return to it with him. Some of the play-outs, especially in the last song, are so challenging, with so many things going on that are incredibly subtle and not the least bit obvious. That will always keep the music fresh, no matter how many times you come back to it."

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HAYDN-BEETHOVEN-BRAHMS RECITAL CYCLE

Recital Programme 3

Brahms Seven Fantasies Op.116

Haydn Piano Sonata in C minor Hob.XVI/20

Beethoven Seven Bagatelles, Op.33

Haydn Piano Sonata in E flat major Hob XVI/52

Recital Programme 4

Haydn Piano Sonata in E minor Hob XVI/34

Brahms Three Intermezzi Op.117

Beethoven 33 Variations in C on a Waltz by Diabelli Op.120

Monday 15 October 2018

The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 7.45pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 3

Sunday 21 October 2018

Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, 3pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 3

Wednesday 7 November 2018

St. George's Bristol, 7.30pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 3

Tuesday 13 November 2018

Royal Festival Hall, 7.30pm

INTERNATIONAL PIANO SERIES

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 3

Thursday 15 November 2018

Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 7.30pm

Paul Lewis piano | **Kazushi Ono** conductor | **Hallé**

Beethoven Concerto for piano and orchestra No.2 in B flat, Op.19

Wednesday 6 February 2019

National Concert Hall, Dublin, 7.30pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 4

Friday 8 February 2019

St. George's Bristol, 7.30pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 4

Monday 11 February 2019
The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 7.45pm

Haydn-Brahms-Beethoven recital – Programme 4

Thursday 14 March 2019 Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 7.30pm
Friday 15 March 2019 Glasgow City Halls, 7.30pm

Paul Lewis piano | **Joseph Swensen** conductor | **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**

Beethoven Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No.2 in B flat, Op.19

Wednesday 20 March 2019
St David's Hall, Cardiff, 7.30pm

Paul Lewis piano | **Tomáš Hanus** conductor | **WNO Orchestra**

Mozart Piano Concerto No.27 in B flat major K595

Thursday 30 May 2019, 7.30pm
Friday 31 May 2019, 1.30pm
Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool

Paul Lewis piano | **Kerem Hasan** conductor | **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**

Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.16

Sunday 21 July 2019 Birmingham Town Hall, 7.30pm
Wednesday 24 July 2019 Wigmore Hall, 7.30pm

Paul Lewis piano | **Mark Padmore** tenor

Brahms *Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze*, Op.71 No.1

Brahms *Sommerabend* Op.85 No.1

Brahms *Es schauen die Blumen alle*, Op.96 No.3

Brahms *Meerfahrt* Op.96 No.4

Brahms *Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht*, Op.96 No.1

Mahler *Rückert-Lieder*

Schumann *Dichterliebe*, Op.48