



## Worlds of Wonder

**Esther Yoo returns to Wigmore Hall with a beguiling lunchtime recital of works by Debussy, Grieg, Rachmaninov and Vieuxtemps**

**Acclaimed American-Korean violinist launches new duo partnership with Busoni Piano Competition winner Jae Hong Park**

“Esther Yoo is the model of a violin soloist in the modern age. Intelligent, articulate and self-possessed, she is so much more than a technical virtuoso,” *The Strad*, July 2021



Realms of fantasy and wonder course through the first of Esther Yoo's two appearances at Wigmore Hall next season. Her BBC Radio 3 lunchtime recital, at 1pm on Monday 6 November 2023, opens with the ideal pairing of Debussy's Sonata for violin and piano in G minor and Grieg's Sonata No.3 for violin and piano in C minor Op.45. It also embraces the heartfelt lyricism of Rachmaninov's *Vocalise* Op.34 No.14 and the playful brio of *Souvenir d'Amérique* Op.17 'Yankee Doodle' by Henri Vieuxtemps. For this recital, Yoo will be joined by Jae Hong Park, winner of the 2021 Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition. Yoo will return to Wigmore Hall for an evening recital on Wednesday 3 July 2024, with the details of her programme yet to be announced.

“I'm especially looking forward to coming back to Wigmore Hall in November as it will be the first time I've performed with Jae Hong Park in the UK,” notes Esther Yoo. “He's an exciting young pianist. We met in Korea, where I've spent a lot of time in the past two years. We got together to play through some repertoire, and there was something about his energy, musicality and sensibility that really spoke to me. I was impressed by his maturity and deep reflection on music, so we decided to play some recitals together. We will perform not only at the Wigmore but also in Korea and elsewhere. It's a new musical relationship that I'm really excited about.”

The duo's recital repertoire embraces a wealth of musical ideas and styles. It also forms a generous and approachable programme, ideal for its early afternoon audience. “Because this is a lunchtime concert, I wanted to make sure that its programme was not too heavy,” Yoo observes. “Debussy's Violin Sonata is so magical. I always enjoy opening a recital with it because it contains so much fantasy. Debussy was suffering from the cancer that would eventually kill him when he began composing it in 1916. There are times where his piece feels like a hallucination or a fantasy of a better world. There are so many colours and shades in this imaginary atmosphere: for instance, you can't help but notice, as so often with Debussy, a sense of the sea and images of waves. I feel those images live so vividly in this work, which is relatively short for a sonata but in which so much happens.”

Esther Yoo points to the passionate opening of Grieg's Third Violin Sonata and the lyricism that develops from it to take hold as the work unfolds. “The Grieg, like the Debussy, also occupies this realm of fantasy and magic. But it's very distinctive in the way it uses Norwegian folk elements. It's rich in ideas, again like the Debussy, but there's so much naïvete and, especially in the beautiful second movement, such purity in the music. You can imagine the forests with all those trolls in parts of the first and third movements. It's very evocative of fairytale imagery. I like to pair the Debussy and Grieg sonatas because they both take you into magical universes that happen to be very different.”

Yoo and Park intend to pay homage to Rachmaninov in the 150th year since his birth. They will perform the Russian composer's *Vocalise*, originally published as the last of his 14 Romances Op.34, in an arrangement for violin and piano by M. Press and newly-edited by Josef Gingold. “I've always played the piece in another transcription with the Z.E.N. Trio, but had never performed the version for violin and piano,” notes Esther Yoo. “It's such a beautiful composition, in whichever of the many versions you happen to hear it. I think it sits well with the two sonatas. The Debussy and Grieg tell their own stories, while I think the *Vocalise* gives room for the listener to create their own narrative journey. After the first two works, the Rachmaninov opens a little space for personal reflection.”

Rachmaninov's timeless song-without-words serves as the meditative preface to the recital's closing piece, a set of variations on an instantly recognisable theme. Henri Vieuxtemps wrote his short 'Caprice burlesque' on the theme of 'Yankee Doodle' in New Orleans in 1843. The French violin virtuoso and composer added it to the repertoire for the first of three extensive tours he made of the United States and subsequently orchestrated its piano part. "The Vieuxtemps is great fun," notes Esther Yoo. "I recorded the *Souvenir d'Amérique* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko for Deutsche Grammophon last year. I love how Vieuxtemps decorates the 'Yankee Doodle' melody with each of the seven variations and I know that people really enjoy listening to what he does with it. It's a great way to make your audience smile and leave on a high."

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**Monday 6 November 2023, 1pm**

**Wigmore Hall, London**

[Event link](#)

**Esther Yoo** violin | **Jae Hong Park** piano

**Debussy** Violin Sonata in G minor

**Grieg** Violin Sonata No.3 in C minor, Op.45

**Rachmaninov** *Vocalise* Op.34 No.14

**Vieuxtemps** *Souvenir d'Amérique* on 'Yankee Doodle', Op.17