



MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

CONCERT SERIES

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2022

For the second concert of our 81st season ... a piano recital tinged with nostalgia and longing, we welcome **Isata Kanneh-Mason to the Memorial Hall on Sunday, October 09, at 19:30.**

One of seven brothers and sisters, Isata was born into a family rich in musical heritage. Although neither parent chose a career in music, they both play instruments to a high standard. So, it is little surprise that in a family immersed with music, all the children should take-up one of either violin, piano or cello. Now, practically a household name, the Kanneh-Mason family has appeared in numerous television shows and documentaries.

Isata graduated from the Royal College of Music two years ago having studied with pianists Hamish Milne and Carole Presland. In addition to an MA in Performance, the Academy conferred upon her the diploma award for *outstanding postgraduate final recital performance*. A recipient also, of the 2021 Leonard Bernstein Award, she continues her studies at the *Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin* with the Russian-American pianist Kirill Gerstein.

Her debut album on Decca Classics, *Romance – the Piano Music of Clara Schumann* garnered much critical acclaim, entering the UK classical charts at No.1 in July 2019. Her follow-up disc, *Summertime* is a sampler of 20th century American piano repertoire, featuring works such as the Piano Sonata by Samuel Barber, and a world première recording of the Impromptu in B minor by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

Isata begins the recital with **Twelve Variations on 'Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman,'**

Piano evening for soothing the soul

imbued with a mood of childhood longing

(K.265) by **Mozart** – a set of piano variations based on a traditional French folk melody. The song of the same name (translation: 'Ah, Mother, if I could tell you') dates from the 1740s, and first appeared in print in 1761. Instantly recognisable, the melody is certain to evoke memories from childhood.

Taking us to the interval is another piece with a nostalgic mood – the sweet and tender **Coin des Enfants (L.113)** by **Claude Debussy**. It's a suite for piano in six movements. Dedicated to the composer's daughter, Claude-Emma, Chou-Chou in her father's affections ... the music is a study of his child's lived

experience. Each movement takes an English name and refers to her early life and toys.

The first movement, named after a popular book of piano exercises, is followed by three childhood references: a lullaby for Chou Chou and her stuffed elephant; a serenade for her porcelain

Between the two, Isata performs the **Easter Sonata in A major** by **Fanny Mendelssohn**. This, a four-movement sonata depicts the final events of Christ's life (the 'Passion of Christ'). As with many of her compositions, it remained unpublished during her lifetime. And when the lost manuscript came to light in 1970, it was incorrectly attributed to her brother Felix. However, authorship references to the sonata are found in her diary and personal letters from 1829, and in 2010 the music scholar Angela Mace Christian confirmed that Fanny was indeed the composer.

After the interval, the concert resumes with the **Scherzo No.2 in C minor (Op.14)** by **Clara Schumann**.

Clara Schumann (née Wieck) was tutored from very early childhood, devoting many hours of daily practice to piano, violin and singing, while also receiving lessons in composition and harmony. By the age of 9 years, she was already composing virtuoso piano pieces to showcase her mastery of the instrument, while two years later she was giving recitals across Europe.

The Op.14 was composed in 1845 and reveals her admiration for Chopin. It's a lively piece with a calm centre, and if you search YouTube, you can preview a recording of Isata performing.

The penultimate piece on the programme, **Ballade No.2 in F major (Op.38)** by **Frédéric Chopin** is another short solo for piano. Composed between 1836 and 1838, it remained unfinished until Chopin's Winter retreat with George Sands in Mallorca. It carries a dedication to Robert Schumann – a reciprocation for the latter's dedication of Kreisleriana (Op.16), completed the same year.

Finally, comes **Scenes from Childhood 'Kinderszenen' (Op.15)** by **Robert Schumann** – 13 movements, mostly of one or two minutes duration. A melancholy mist rises from much of the collection, perhaps because the inspiration was a casual remark by Clara that her husband seemed at times 'like a child'. The deeply reflective closing strand will send you home in thoughtful mood. ■



Isata Kanneh-Mason
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Matt Ford 'The King of Swing' & Ensemble
Sunday 06 November 2022
Memorial Hall ~ 7.30pm

doll; and a memory of watching snow falling outside the window. The final two movements, tinged with a wistful nostalgia for childhood, are the imagining of a pastoral dream, and the lively dancing of her ragdoll.