



An Ear For Music

with Alan Jacques



Wednesday 18th September 2019
7.30pm

St Andrew's & St George's West Church

In aid of:

Ménière's Society
for dizziness & balance disorders



MUSIC
IN HOSPITALS & CARE
Joy through live music

**This event is
kindly supported by:**



HOUSE OF HEARING



And

Norman Motion

Nettl of Edinburgh

In memory of Iain McGlashan,
a great supporter of Music in Hospitals & Care

Programme

Rondo in A minor, K511

Mozart

Sonata in F minor, Op 57 ('Appassionata')

Beethoven

Allegro assai

Andante con moto

Allegro ma non troppo - Presto

Interval

Préludes from Book 1

Debussy

Voiles (Sails or Veils)

La sérénade interrompue (The interrupted Serenade)

Le vent dans la plaine (The Wind in the Plain)

La fille aux cheveux de lin (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair)

Minstrels (Minstrels)

Please reserve any applause for the end of this group.

Ballade No 1 in G minor, Op 23

Chopin

Etude in E major, Op 10 No 3

Scherzo in D flat major, Op 31 No 2



Mozart

As Mozart's great operas (written at the same time as this Rondo) show, his elegant classical style can seem deceptively superficial. Rondos were often the last, light-hearted movement in a sonata or symphony. But here the mood is more contemplative or wistful. Each repetition of the main theme is subtly modified, giving it a slightly different colour.

Beethoven

Composing twenty years later than Mozart, Beethoven's music, though still in Classical style, is more obviously personal. At the time of writing this Sonata he was struggling with severe and increasing impairment of his hearing, and some of the turbulence of the sonata may reflect that. But he did not call it *Appassionata*. The name was coined ten years after his death, by a music publisher, doubtless with an eye to sales.

There is indeed plenty of passion here, but it is the range of feeling, rather than a particular one, that is striking. In the first movement the beginning is in turn tentative, turbulent and calm. A persistent motif of three repeated notes pervades the movement, reminiscent of the supposed 'fate knocking at the door' of the Fifth Symphony (also not Beethoven's description).

All the themes and this motif are treated in very different ways as the movement progresses. The second movement presents a simple hymn-like theme, which is then repeated in four variations. The overall atmosphere is much calmer. The final movement follows a brief dramatic transition. It is in a stream of perpetual motion, with fragments of melody bubbling up from time to time, ending in a torrent. So this sonata is more than just *Appassionata*.

Debussy

Debussy, composing at the beginning of the twentieth century, shows his interest in a wide variety of styles in this selection of short Preludes. In *Voiles* he is at his most impressionistic – the gentlest of winds is just enough to move the sails or veils (Debussy doesn't say which he was thinking of), while a few brief gusts hardly disturb the calm.

The whole-tone scale he uses drifts with no sense of a particular key. Then a Spanish serenader sneaks up to a girl's window and attempts to play a romantic tune, despite interruptions from the neighbours and from competing music which perhaps threatens to be more seductive. He angrily asserts his tune, and just manages a verse of his song before scuttling off as the window is banged shut. In *The Wind in the Plain* the wind scurries and dances along, for a while becoming decidedly gusty. *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair* refers to a romantic poem by the symbolist Leconte de Lisle in which the poet watches his girl sleeping in the grass. Each verse ends 'now love, in the clear summer sunlight, has soared with the lark and sung'. Finally, *Minstrels* is like a cubist collage, in which tiny snatches of all the different types of act in a Minstrel show - clowns, acrobats, drummers, and sentimental ballad singers are thrown together in a kaleidoscope of sounds.

Chopin

The Ballades of Chopin tell stories, like medieval minstrels' ballads of romance, daring and magic, but we are not told what those stories are. Chopin was probably influenced by his friend, the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, who described a poetic ballad as 'a tale spun from the incidents of everyday life or from chivalrous stories, animated by the strangeness of the Romantic world, sung in a melancholy tone, in a serious style, simple and natural in its expressions'. Rather than trying to create an actual story round Chopin's music, it is probably better to follow the *musical* narrative as two themes are presented and interact before a turbulent and presumably tragic finale, at the same time recalling all sorts of images from ballads past and present.

Chopin's Studies are in one sense technical exercises, in this case for melody and accompaniment, but they are also great music. Chopin is said to have regarded this particular tune as his finest melody, with good reason. A more lively, then troubled middle section emphasises the serene beauty of the main theme. A Scherzo was originally a musical 'joke', played in fast three time, and often the light relief in a Sonata or Symphony. Chopin's Scherzi, like the Mozart Rondo, are stand-alone pieces. He keeps the usual structure of a repeated main section interspersed with slower paced sections, but the mood is uncertain - ranging from the mysterious to the grand romantic, and altogether more dramatic - and he doesn't just repeat his sections, he lets them develop, to end in a welter of sound.



Alan Jacques

Alan Jacques is a retired Psychiatrist. He came to music through singing as a boy treble in the local church choir through the help of an enthusiastic, though disorganised, teacher in Belfast.

Much of his musical experience was through choral singing, in St Giles' Cathedral Choir and the Scottish Philharmonic Singers, among many, and for a short period he ran his own small group, singing mainly in the historic churches of South Scotland.

He developed an interest in accompaniment, mainly through attending summer schools under the guidance of two great Lieder musicians, Peter Gellhorn and Paul Hamburger, and when he retired, hoped that he could develop this interest further, together with his other great love, chamber music.

However, Ménière's Disease made this impossible, making it difficult to hear what singers or instrumentalists were doing, Alan therefore concentrated on solo playing for the first time in his life. He has performed many times in the past in St Andrew's and St George's West Church of Scotland, including the great song cycles of Schubert, Schumann and Wolf, and his particular interest, French songs, and in chamber music, ranging from Beethoven violin sonatas to Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time, but this is his debut solo recital.

Alan is immensely grateful for the guidance he has had from a number of teachers, including Colin Kingsley and Graeme McNaught, but recently and most especially Peter Bream, with additional advice from time to time from Philip Fowke and Susan Tones.

Alan's connection to Music in Hospitals & Care stretches back to 1992, and he is currently a Trustee for the charity. In his early days he helped the first Scottish Director, Nella Kerr, organise a conference on Music and Dementia, many years before this became a popular subject. He has performed as accompanist in residential care home settings a few times for the organisation, and has been on both sides of the auditioning process.

He became a Trustee of the Ménière's Society in 2007. Recently he has been encouraging research on the sometimes devastating effects of Ménière's disease on hearing musical pitch, and how far this might be helped by hearing aids.

Proceeds from tonight's recital will go to:



Music in Hospitals & Care brings live music sessions to people who are receiving care or treatment in healthcare settings across the UK, including hospitals, hospices, care homes, day centres, special schools and in the community. Delivered by professional musicians, each session is tailored to meet the needs of the audience group with the aim of humanising clinical settings, encouraging meaningful interactions and bringing 'Joy through live music'. Find out more at mihc.org.uk or follow us on social media [@MiHCUK](https://twitter.com/MiHCUK).



Ménière's Society provides valuable information and support for people with Ménière's and related vestibular (inner ear) disorders. Symptoms include severe dizziness (vertigo), tinnitus and hearing loss. The Society also provides vital funds for research into this group of conditions for which there is limited understanding. Ménière's disrupts many people's lives, but it doesn't hit the headlines. We need your help. Visit menieres.org.uk for more information or call us on **01306 876833** to talk to us.

With special thanks to:

St Andrew's & St George's West Church

Peter Bream

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