

# **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CONCERT SERIES 2018 – 2019**

## **FIRST CONCERT: PIANO RECITAL BY YOUNG – CHOON PARK**

### **BUTCHART RECREATION HALL**

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

Why do we go to live concerts? Well, at Thursday's piano recital by the South-Korean born International Concert Pianist, Young – Choon Park, it turned out in order to be surprised (Mozart), astonished (Beethoven), satisfied (Haydn) and enraptured (Schubert).

Ms Park opened her recital with the Sonata No. 3 in B-flat Major KV. 281. What was it that surprised me? It was the amazing high speed opening Allegro in which Ms Park's hands fluttered freely over the keyboard producing a flurry of notes with a rhythmical sense of freedom that seemed almost to be trying to escape Mozart's score. In the second movement Andante Amoroso there was a gentle outpouring of notes which in the right hand suggested the marvellous trilling song of a high-flying bird. In the final Rondeau we were more down to earth and treated to a great variety of piano touch and expression. Was some of this achieved at the expense of more firmly anchored rhythmic phrasing? I am not sure, but as well as delighted, I was surprised because it was not what I had expected to hear.

The following piece was Beethoven's Sonata No. 23 in f minor Op. 57 the "Appassionata". This was a name given to the work not by the composer but in 1838 by the publisher of a four-hand arrangement of the Sonata. It is however a perfect name for the work in which critics have used words like "thrashing changes of mood", "manic jumble of themes" along with words like aggressive, angry, snarling and tempestuous. According to Peter Gutmann's *Classical Notes*, the Sonata was never performed in public during Beethoven's lifetime. The critics did not like it and it was very difficult. Why should I use the word 'astonished' about Ms Park's performance on Thursday? Well, especially in the opening movement, all the descriptions of the piece mentioned above were there but more dramatically, more variedly, more extremely than ever before. I liked the way Ms Park made motifs and melodies come roaring out of the piano, often more than one at a time. The motto theme that also occurs in the Fifth symphony rang out angrily, threateningly. The slow movement was much gentler with rich chording but Ms Park made the expressiveness of the music more than usually dramatic. Drama, motion and impetus drove the finale to a pinnacle of excitement. I think that in composing this piece Beethoven was a very angry man!

I suggested that I found Haydn's Sonata in G Major Hob. XVI:40 very satisfying. There was lightness, touches of good humour and above all elegance in this performance. The Presto was fast but did not leave us breathless as did the Mozart.

This takes us to the final piece in the official programme – Schubert's Sonata in a minor Op. 42, D.845. Here I have used the word 'enraptured'. The performance was precisely as I had hoped. The playing was beautifully clear and transparent full of variety of piano touch delivering so much colour. There were moments of drama too. A lovely Andante and a dynamic Scherzo leading to a Rondo finale lit up by fluency and freedom. If rubato does not always suit Mozart here it was used to marvellous expressive effect.

No wonder that Young – Choon Park got an explosive long ovation to which she responded with an encore that was also by Beethoven but with the composer in much happier and gentle mood. It was the first movement of the Sonata No. 14 in c # minor "Quasi una fantasia", better known as The Moonlight. Lovely!