

barbican



Classical Music

Concert programme



**Khatia and Gvantsa
Buniatishvili**

Wed 2 Apr 7.30pm

Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.00pm, with no interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

Khatia and Gvantsa Buniatishvili

Part of Khatia Buniatishvili Artist Spotlight

Wed 2 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Khatia Buniatishvili piano
Gvantsa Buniatishvili piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (arr Ferruccio Busoni) *The Magic Flute Overture*

Johannes Brahms *Hungarian Dances*

Franz Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody No 2*

George Gershwin (arr Percy Grainger) *Porgy and Bess Fantasy*

- 1 Introduction
- 2 My Man's Gone Now
- 3 It Ain't Necessarily So
- 4 Clara, Don't You Be Downhearted
- 5 Strawberry Call
- 6 Summertime
- 7 Oh, I Can't Sit Down
- 8 Bess, You Is My Woman Now
- 9 I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'
- 10 Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way

Maurice Ravel *La valse*

There will be no interval

Produced by the Barbican

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Khatia Buniatishvili continues her Artist Spotlight here at the Barbican with a concert with her pianist sister Gvantsa. They offer a stunning array of music that takes us from the opera house, courtesy of Mozart and Gershwin, to the Hungarian-inflected dances of Brahms and Liszt, finishing with Ravel's glittering, highly virtuoso *La valse*.

Khatia and Gvantsa Buniatishvili begin their duo recital with a transcription of the exhilarating Overture to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's fantastical *singspiel* *The Magic Flute* ('*Die Zauberflöte*'). It was made by the Italian composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), whose own music seems to occupy territory light years away from the Enlightenment ideals of the original, yet who held a long devotion to 18th-century music, reflected also in his piano transcriptions of works by JS Bach. The Overture begins with a slow introductory section before the second part ensues – a brilliant, bubbling fugato. The format mirrors the two sides of the opera, one profound and searching, the other humorous and irrepressible – perhaps even two aspects of Mozart himself.

Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* were inspired by a very different world again: the 'Gypsy' orchestras in the cafés of Vienna and Budapest, which the young German composer experienced while touring as a pianist with the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi. Subsequently Brahms (1833–97) worked with Joseph Joachim, who became one of the most influential violinists of his day. In 1860 Joachim dedicated his own Violin Concerto 'in the Hungarian Style' to Brahms, who frequently used Hungarian idioms in music that he wrote for Joachim, including his Violin Concerto.



The first book of his *Hungarian Dances* dates from 1868, the second from 1880. They rapidly achieved runaway popularity in various formats – 21 piano duets, 10 for solo piano, three for full orchestra. Joachim then made his own transcriptions for violin and piano. Unfortunately, Brahms had assumed that the café bands played traditional music that he could reuse freely. The Hungarian bandmaster Béla Kéler, however, accused him effectively of plagiarising his works in Nos 5 and 6, two of the best loved. Today the dances, most of which are in the slow–fast *csárdás* pattern, remain as irresistible as ever.

If Brahms had been enchanted by the Hungarian *csárdás*, then Franz Liszt (1811–86), himself Hungarian, virtually owned it. A groundbreaking virtuoso who had modelled his image on that of the violinist Niccolò Paganini, he decided in 1847 to retire (aged 35) from concert tours, settling in Weimar to concentrate on composing and teaching. That year he created his *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 2. It exists in versions for solo piano, piano duo and full orchestra – and its popularity surged in the 20th century with its use in *Tom and Jerry* and *Bugs Bunny* cartoons. The opening section is replete with swagger and pride. But the razzle-dazzle virtuosity that later ensues is probably more than half the point.

The Australian pianist-composer Percy Grainger (1882–1961) created hundreds of transcriptions across his more than slightly eccentric career. His take on the opera *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin (1898–1937) presents the two pianists with a kaleidoscope of atmospheres and emotions to evoke, drawn from different parts of the love story set in an impoverished Deep South community, Catfish Row. In it, Porgy, a beggar, falls in love with the glamorous Bess, who is attempting to escape a violent boyfriend. The 10 numbers are arranged in Grainger's preferred order rather than Gershwin's. After the strident opening music, associated with Bess's former lover, Crown, it moves into the heartfelt lament 'My Man's Gone Now',

then works through the chromatic slithers of 'It Ain't Necessarily So', the tragedy in 'Clara, Don't You Be Downhearted'; the morning magic of 'Strawberry Call'; the lullaby 'Summertime'; an up-tempo dance, 'Oh, I Can't Sit Down'; the love duet 'Bess, You Is My Woman Now'; Porgy's joyous 'Oh, I Got Plenty O'Nuttin'; and the grand finale, 'Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way'.

When Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) visited New York in 1928, Gershwin took him out to the jazz clubs of Harlem, which left an unmistakable impact on the French composer's G major Piano Concerto. *La valse*, however, occupies a contrasting sphere. Ravel had first imagined a tribute to Johann Strauss II in 1906, describing '... a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, with which is mingled in my mind the idea of the fantastic whirl of destiny'. When the impresario Sergei Diaghilev commissioned him to write a ballet score in 1919, Ravel started work on that idea – but the First World War recontextualised it. He had been traumatised by his experiences driving supplies to the front; and the death of his mother in 1917 had compounded the issue.

Ravel created three versions between 1919 and 1920: full orchestra, solo piano and two pianos. It was in this last arrangement that its premiere took place at the home of the philanthropist Misia Sert, with the composer at one of the pianos and an audience including Diaghilev, Stravinsky and Poulenc. Diaghilev, however, turned the score down. Ravel eventually published it as a 'choreographic poem for orchestra'.

Despite the widespread quasi-apocalyptic interpretation of the piece, the composer provided a relatively sanguine scenario: 'Swirling clouds afford glimpses, through rifts, of waltzing couples. The clouds scatter little by little; one can distinguish an immense hall with a whirling crowd. The scene grows progressively brighter. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the *fortissimo*. An imperial court, about 1855.'

© Jessica Duchon



Khatia Buniatishvili

French-Georgian pianist Khatia Buniatishvili is one of the most prominent classical artists of today. She has been blessed with impressive ability and discovered the piano at the age of three thanks to her mother, who used to leave a new musical score on her piano each day for her to devour. She gave her first concert with the Chamber Orchestra of Tbilisi at the age of six. She studied with Tengiz Amiredjibi in Tbilisi and went on to work with Oleg Maisenberg in Vienna.

She is a fixture at the most prestigious venues around the world, and has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Berliner Philharmonie, Royal Festival Hall, Vienna's Musikverein and Konzerthaus, Philharmonie de Paris, and Suntory Hall, as well as at the Salzburg, Verbier, BBC Proms, Progetto Martha Argerich and Hollywood Bowl festivals. Notable collaborations include performances with the Israel, Los Angeles and Munich Philharmonic orchestras, London, NHK and San Francisco Symphony orchestras, Philadelphia Orchestra and Orchestre National de Paris, and working with prominent conductors, among them Zubin Mehta, Gustavo Dudamel, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Paavo Järvi, Jaap Van Zweden, Gianandrea Noseda, Myung-Whun Chung and Leonard Slatkin.

The audience she inspires with her artistry is not limited to traditional classical music lovers. Her charisma attracts a younger generation and those who would not usually listen to classical music. Her deeply humanistic qualities, piercing intellect, mastery of five languages, involvement in diverse areas of art and in several cultures, mixture of traditional classical musical training and very personal interpretations of composers' scores give her performances depth, intensity and grace.

She is the recipient of two ECHO Klassik Awards, and her recordings range from music by Chopin, Rachmaninov, Brahms, Liszt, Bach and Schubert, to Satie, Morricone, Gainsbourg, Pärt and Cage. In addition to her solo albums, she has recorded with Gidon Kremer, Paavo Järvi and the band Coldplay.

A committed humanitarian, Khatia Buniatishvili has participated in benefit concerts for causes close to her heart: the plight of refugees, the United Nations, human rights and music education.

Gvantsa Buniatishvili

Pianist Gvantsa Buniatishvili is the elder sister of Khatia. It was her mother, an amateur pianist, who introduced her to the piano at an early age. She graduated from the Tbilisi State Conservatory of Music, where she studied with the renowned pedagogue and pianist Tengiz Amiredjibi.

She started performing in public at an early age, giving solo recitals, four-hand duets with Khatia, and with orchestra, both at home and internationally. She has since appeared at many prestigious venues in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Italy, as well as at leading European festivals.

Gvantsa Buniatishvili has recorded a number of critically acclaimed albums as a four-hand duo with her sister.

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