

Giuseppe Guarrera  
Pianist  
Playing at Writhlington School on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020



“Energy, melancholy, delicacy, objectivity and humour were all heard in animated conversation.....I listened entranced.”

Lausitzer Rundschau

Giuseppe has brought a programme full of variety, from the lyrical and dreamy via another world to the angry and tragic.

We begin with one of the piano's greatest composers, **Frédéric Chopin**, a great virtuoso pianist born in Poland in 1810, whose unique compositions were based on his professional technique, unrivalled in his generation. This is his **Polonaise-Fantasia** Op.61, which was written in 1846 as his notorious relationship with the (female) French novelist George Sand was coming to an acrimonious end and his health was gradually failing.

**Maurice Ravel** was a French composer thought to be influenced by the impressionist movement although he rejected the term. Like Chopin he was a pianist who wrote largely for the piano, but Ravel would then arrange his work for full orchestra; as a result his work spanned operas, songs, orchestral works and chamber pieces. The **Oiseaux Tristes** (Melancholy Birds) is one of five movements from the work **Miroirs** (Mirrors) each of which represented a friend from his group of "Hooligans" the avant-garde artist group Les Apaches.

**Une Barque Sur L'Océan** (A Boat on the Ocean) is also from **Ravel's Miroirs**, and is the longest of the five movements. The arpeggios of the music recall the flow of the waves and currents of the water as the boat is carried along in its power.

The third piece Giuseppe will play from **Ravel's Miroirs** is the fourth in the series, a Spanish inspired piece called **Alborade del Gracioso**, or the Jester's Aubade, where the aubade is a lover's daybreak farewell. This is a technically demanding piece that recalls Spanish melodies and rhythms. Ravel himself rewrote it for orchestra along with the "Barque".

Vsevolod Meyerhold was a close friend and associate of **Sergei Prokofiev** who was about to start rehearsing Prokofiev's new opera "Semyon Kotko" in June 1939 when he was arrested by Russia's secret police, the NKVD, and shot a few months later. The NKVD also murdered Meyerhold's beautiful actress wife, Zinaida Raikh less than a month after his arrest. Just after this Prokofiev was "invited" (ordered) to write a piece to celebrate Stalin's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday; this was the man ultimately responsible for the senseless murder of his friends.

Later that year, Prokofiev wrote three sonatas called the "War Sonatas", of which No.7, which Giuseppe is playing tonight, is the second. In these sonatas Prokofiev revealed his true feelings: his anger, his grief, his sense

of impotency and rage. The insensitivity of the Russian establishment to art was exposed (not for the first or last time) when the **Piano Sonata No. 7** received a Stalin Prize.

The Sonata begins with an **Allegro inquieto**, which means “fast and restless”, which it certainly is. The music mocks its own traditions and is harsh and discordant. This then calms down to a slower second theme, which picks up again, finishing on the original theme.

The slow movement is **Andante caloroso**, which means quite slow (walking pace) and with warmth. The theme is based on a song by Robert Schumann called “Sadness”, which is about deep sorrow hidden beneath a deceptive exterior.

The final movement is **Precipitato** and immediately creates a feeling of rushing towards an edge, the music full of tension and nervous energy. This last section is hugely demanding of the pianist both technically and emotionally, finishing with a thundering crash of octaves.



## **Giuseppe's career so far:**

In 2017 Giuseppe won 2nd Prize at the Montréal International Competition along with five other awards including the People's Choice.

Over the last year Giuseppe has won a prestigious Klavier Ruhr Festival scholarship and the Tabor Foundation Award at the Verbier Festival Academy. He completed his studies at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin with Nelson Goerner and has now joined the Faculty.

This season Giuseppe makes his debut with the McGill Chamber Orchestra at the Salle Bourgie in Montréal, the New Generation Orchestra in Florence, the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen in Cremona and at the Al Bustan Festival in Lebanon. Other highlights include recitals at Wigmore Hall, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Società dei Concerti in Milan, Festival *Armonie in Valcerrina* and Lingotto Giovani series in Turin.

Giuseppe has performed widely in Europe, recently giving recitals at the Boulez-Saal, Klavier-Ruhr Festival, the Luis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, Estivales de Musique en Médoc and Lericci Festivals.

Solo appearances include the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (with Vasily Petrenko), the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (with Claus Peter Flor) and the Orchestra del Teatro la Fenice. In 2017 he premiered a concerto by Benjamin Attahir with the Pierre Boulez Ensemble conducted by Daniel Barenboim. He was selected by YCAT in 2018.

### **Great debut at the Ruhr Piano Festival in Schwelm**

Giuseppe Guarrera is .....an extraordinary young talent... A breathtakingly differentiated technique and a great ability to own artistic design dominated the pianist's playing.

### **Westfalen Post / Klavier Ruhr Festival / July 2019**

You can learn a little more about Giuseppe here and see him play at the Wigmore Hall:

<http://giuseppeguarrera.com/>