

Musicians from The North East of Scotland Music School

# Talk and Chopin Piano Recital

Joseph Long

Lunchbreak Concert  
Aberdeen Salvation Army Citadel  
Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016

Reviewed by Alan Cooper

It was no surprise that the Salvation Army Citadel was packed to capacity for Joseph Long's piano recital on Thursday. Regular appearances at Lunchbreak Concerts have made him a longstanding favourite with Aberdeen audiences who when they see his name know that they are in for something very special and as Roger Williams said to me after the concert, "Joseph just gets better and better". The fact that he was going to play music by Chopin was also bound to attract a large audience.

Today, he was going to play just one piece – but what a piece – it was Chopin's Sonata No. 3 in b minor Op. 58.

Before the concert Joseph gave a very wide ranging and enlightening talk about the Sonata. He filled in the background to the composition explaining its position within Chopin's repertoire. He compared it with Liszt's Sonata in the same key, b minor, and he mentioned the reactions of other composers to the work. He went on to pick out the important features of each of the four movements and what was extra special, he played excerpts of all the music he mentioned, not just Chopin but Liszt and Wagner too. This made his comments so easy to understand. I was reminded of some of the concert talks given by Leonard Bernstein, many of which are still available on the internet. Joseph's pre-concert talk certainly whetted my appetite for the full performance. I thought it was going to be really exciting and I was certainly not to be disappointed.

I was fortunate to be seated where I got a perfect view of Joseph's hands as he played – something that gives a much deeper and more detailed understanding of the music.

The opening of the Sonata is marked *Allegro maestoso* and both of those words were encapsulated in the opening bars of the music. Along with dramatic chords there is a delicate tracery of notes as a surrounding aura. The music moves on to a deliciously romantic and melodic second theme which plays a major part in this first movement. Joseph's performance was so clean and clear making perfect sense of the journey through Chopin's fresh account of sonata form. This movement just felt so satisfying in Joseph's performance.

The second movement a Scherzo marked *Molto Vivace* was wonderfully light and airy with a warm trio that had splendid variety of dynamics and piano touch.

The slow movement, Largo, opened dramatically with a sensation of dark portent which then melted beautifully into gently unwinding music which Joseph in his pre-concert talk had demonstrated was like a nocturne. This was beautiful music, pure Chopin, played with remarkable depth of feeling by Joseph.

The Finale was pure excitement. Joseph's hands were positively dancing over the keyboard. The many descending runs were beautifully accomplished every bit as exciting to watch as to hear. Joseph made this movement the perfect consummation of the sonata. It left some of those sitting near me gasping audibly with admiration.

A tsunami of applause for Joseph brought forth the perfect encore for today's audience – a dreamy performance of Chopin's Prelude Op. 28 No. 15 in D♭ Major popularly known as the "Raindrop" Prelude. Raindrops are not usually that welcome in Aberdeen but in this case they made the whole audience smile.