

NORTH EAST of SCOTLAND MUSIC SCHOOL presents:
A PIANO RECITAL by MURRAY McLACHLAN

Fantasy & Fantasie

Fountainhall at the Cross Church (Queen's Cross Church)
Saturday 22nd March, 2025

PROGRAMME:

J. S. Bach (1685 -1750)

Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in d minor BWV 903

Frédéric Chopin (1810 – 1849)

Fantasia in f minor Op.49

Marcus Blunt (1947 – 2022)

Two Fantasies:

1. *Fantasy on the name SCRABin (1992 – 2003)*

2. *Fantasy on the name MURRAY MCLACHLAN (2006)*

Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)

Fantasia in C Major, D760 'The Wanderer'

REVIEW:

Saturday afternoon's special performance for the North East of Scotland Music School by Murray McLachlan was described simply as 'A Piano Recital'. For me, that was something of an understatement. Especially regarding the opening of the first piece, J. S. Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in d minor BWV 903*. I might have entitled it 'A Tidal-Wave of Piano Virtuosity'. The spirit of Bach was certainly there, ghosted in the bass part, but one could almost imagine the piece as an attempt by Franz Liszt to imitate Bach. Actually, I googled Liszt's name alongside the title of the Bach piece to discover that Liszt had indeed 'used this work as a demonstration of virtuosity and expressiveness' in his concerts. Murray performed the blisteringly fast up and down surging runs with shock and awe virtuoso brilliance. The word *Chromatic* in the title was delivered as the music moved through many keys in improvisational toccata style at the beginning. The opening section is quite extensive and we still had the Fugue to come. It had more solidity to it and Murray's performance needless to say was a masterclass of performance. This amazing work by Bach was followed by Chopin's *Fantasia in f minor OP. 49*. It began, as promised by Murray in his opening remarks, with a solemn march-like theme. .

There followed an impassioned virtuoso section in which Murray's hands ran over the entire keyboard from top to bottom with a wonderful sense of free flight. Such sections looked as magnificent as they sounded. There were quieter sweeter passages in which Murray delivered all of Chopin's emotional power. The *Fantasia* ended with an exciting final flourish.

The next two pieces were also described using the word *Fantasy*. Both of these were by the modern English composer Marcus Blunt (1947 – 2022). The first *Fantasy on the name SCRABin (1992- 2003)* was explained to us by Murray who played the notes of the theme. He did the same for the second piece, *Fantasy on the name MURRAY MCLACHLAN (2006)*. The music of the first piece had a certain angularity to it and rhythm was a tremendous centre of interest. The second piece was smoother and with a touch of sweetness. Both pieces had a feeling of mystery within them and Murray's playing made them make perfect musical sense. He often performs contemporary music and is able to make it shine.

The final work in his special recital was one of Franz Schubert's most famous piano pieces, the *Fantasia in C Major, D760 'The Wanderer'*. The melody of Schubert's song *Der Wanderer* occurs in different variations through the piece, especially in the second movement marked *Adagio*. Actually the four movements run together as one, but they have different moods. The first section is marked *Allegro con fuoco* and it has fugal suggestions. The third movement *Presto* is a scherzo and the final section ends with thunderous virtuosity. As a whole, the piece is like a Symphony for piano and thinking about Murray's performance I said afterwards to another audience member 'That music has absolutely everything in it' and he agreed. So my thanks are due to Murray and to NESMS for an afternoon of unequalled piano entertainment as well as musical education. Even at the age of near eighty, there is still so much for me to learn about music.

ALAN COOPER