

SUMMER PIANO FESTIVAL: PIANO, MULTIMEDIA, FILM – LIMINAL SPACES

TUESDAY 16 JUNE, 3.30PM
ANGELA BURGESS RECITAL HALL



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Liminal Spaces brings together contemporary piano works with experimental visual staging to explore thresholds between presence and absence; stillness and transformation. Inspired by ephemeral natural phenomena such as changing light, clouds, weather, shadows and reflections, the programme unfolds through a series of evocative visual and sonic landscapes in which perception becomes fluid and time seems suspended.

Featuring music by Kryštof Mařatka, Cindy Cox, Scriabin, Debussy, John Cage, Oliver Knussen, Kenneth Leighton and Brahms, the performance combines piano, live electronics, experimental lighting, reflective kinetic objects and moving imagery. Developed in collaboration with audiovisual artist **Kathy Hinde**, *Liminal Spaces* creates an immersive dialogue between sound, light, space and perception. The programme notes are by the performers.

Aurore Brindel, Nalni Chen, Cherry Ge, Kaiwen Jin, Hayden Miller, Lily Petrova and **Pei-En Wu** piano

John Cage (1912-1992)

In a Landscape (9')

Lily Petrova piano

Composed in homage to Erik Satie, *In a Landscape* accompanied choreography by the dancer Louise Lippold. Cage worked with the idea that the purpose of the music was 'to sober and quiet the mind, thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences,' and the overall effect of the piece seems to suspend time. The piano performance is paired with a slowly rotating mirror reflecting

projections of clouds. As the images are fragmented and dispersed around the space, the audience may also capture brief glimpses of their own reflections.

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

Six Studies 'Study-Variations' Op 56 (9')

II Allegro molto e secco

III Adagio molto

IV Allegro leggiero e capriccioso

Nalni Chen piano

Kenneth Leighton's *Six Studies* (1969) are celebrated for their intellectual rigour, bound together by a central, recurring four-note motif. This performance directly mirrors that musical structure by deploying exactly four abstract, black-and-white visuals captured from daily life. Stripped of colour and context, these monochromatic clips focus the eye entirely on texture, shadow, and geometry, transforming everyday environments into a hypnotic choreography that evolves alongside the music's structural intensity. The performance begins in Study No 2 with cyclical motions that match the piano's relentless momentum. The mood shifts for Study No 3 into a contemplative space of stark, quiet contrasts, mirroring the music's steady, suspended descent. Finally, Study No 4 reaches a climax by overlaying the remaining visual layers, blending organic patterns with industrial rhythms to echo the complex, contrapuntal texture of Leighton's writing. By marrying four musical notes to four obscured visual elements, it invites the audience to focus on pure form, uncovering a hidden, mechanical poetry in the ordinary world.

Cindy Cox (b 1961)

La Cigüeña (2014) (8')

Hayden Miller piano with electronics

dropping true as Earth
la cigüeña flies an iridescent spiral
shining white deep blue-green
an opal of great price given
to one whose luminous work
you may look into but never through
John Campion

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Préludes, Book 1

Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir

La sérénade interrompue

Préludes, Book 2

Bruyères

Aurore Brindel piano

Claude Debussy's *Préludes* invite listeners into worlds of suggestion, atmosphere, and fleeting sensation. In *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*, inspired by a line from Baudelaire, sound and scent seem to drift together in a twilight haze. *La sérénade interrompue* evokes a playful, interrupted guitar song, alternating between charm, hesitation, and humour. In contrast, *Bruyères* offers a serene pastoral landscape, its gentle lyricism recalling the quiet beauty of heather-covered fields. Accompanying these works are atmospheric visuals derived from ephemeral patterns created by the shadows of trees moving in the wind. Like Debussy's music, these shifting forms capture moments that are never fixed, inviting us to experience a world of subtle transformations, memory, and light.

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Deux danses, Op 73 (5')

Pei-En Wu piano

In his final years, Scriabin became fascinated by the relationship between sound, colour and perception. He believed that music could engage multiple senses simultaneously and famously devised a *clavier à lumières* ('keyboard of lights'), projecting colours alongside the music. The *Two Dances*, composed in 1914, belong to this visionary late style. The first dance, *Guirlandes* ('Garlands'), unfolds in delicate, shimmering layers, while the second, *Flammes sombres* ('Dark Flames'), is more restless and volatile. The LED lights' visual projections in this performance aim to recreate Scriabin's imaginations of music, colour and sensory transformation.

Kryštof Mařatka (b 1972)

Afro (9')

Cherry Ge piano

Afro (1926) is the first in a series of etudes that takes inspiration from the music of various cultures around the world. A Czech composer himself, but dividing his time between Paris and Prague, Mařatka is interested in the commonality of music that has accompanied humankind across landmasses, nations, and borders, for eons. For instance, the pentatonic scale that features so prominently in much of his music, and in *Afro* predominantly in the latter half of the 9-minute etude, is one of the oldest known musical constructs in human history. It predates recorded music theory by a millennium

or so, with the oldest discovered intact pitched instrument- a vulture bone flute discovered in Southwestern Germany - being turned to this scale. And in *Afro* Mařatka weaves in the soft texture of flutes, echoes of birdsongs, and towards the end, with the high song of a flute above it, the sweet, repeated pattering of a traditional instrument of the Shona people in Zimbabwe, the Mbira, the western counterpart of which is the Kalimba. Even then, Mařatka does not shy away from the louder ranges of the piano, drawing in the energy and rigour of percussive instruments that build almost imperceptibly from the beginning into an almost fiery ending.

Oliver Knussen (1952-2018)

Prayer Bell Sketch (7)

Kaiwen Jin piano

Composer's programme note:
It is well-known that Toru Takemitsu always conceived the title of a piece before composing it. In May 1988, between rehearsals for the first performance of *Tree Line* in London, Takemitsu and I took a long walk in Regent's Park. One of the things we talked about was Peter Serkin's recital programme made up entirely of new pieces, planned for the following year, to which we had both been invited to contribute. 'I already have title', he said. 'Prayer Bell. I expressed appreciation of this wonderfully evocative starting point, and afterwards tried to imagine what it might draw from him. But Takemitsu's piece for Peter Serkin turned out in the event to be *Les Yeux Clos II*. Some years later, talking about titles again, I asked him what had happened to *Prayer Bell*. 'Prayer Bell may be too difficult,' was the response this time. Following his death

in 1996, I spent much time trying to imagine a 'Prayer Bell in memory of Toru,' and came to the conclusion that he was probably right - so what eventually emerged during three days in Tokyo in September 1997 is a *Prayer Bell Sketch*, recollections and rearrangements of a few simple bell sounds which, to me, resonate with memories of a dear friend and wonderful composer.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Intermezzo in E major, Op 116 No 4 (5')

Pei-En Wu piano

Written in the final years of Brahms's life, the *Fantasien* Op 116 move between passion and introspection. The Fourth Intermezzo offers a moment of calm amid the set's contrasts, unfolding with warmth, simplicity and quiet tenderness. Its gentle lyricism and sense of stillness have made it one of Brahms's most beloved late piano works. Accompanied by images of clouds and views of this very venue - the Angela Burgess Recital Hall itself - this performance closes the programme with a sense of reflection and homecoming, inviting the listener to savour a final moment of quiet contemplation.

BIOGRAPHIES

Kathy Hinde

Kathy Hinde, who runs the Piano, Multimedia, Film course for pianists at the Academy, is an artist and composer whose practice embraces open methods and evolving processes. Through installations, performances and site-specific experiences, she aims to nurture a deeper and more embodied

connection to the more-than-human world. Composed of hand-made objects, electronics and a blend of digital and analogue systems, her work represents a cross between kinetic sound sculptures and newly invented musical instruments. She creates pieces in response to specific locations and frequently works in collaboration with other practitioners and scientists and often actively involves the audience in the creative process. She has toured work across Europe, USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Colombia, Australia and New Zealand.

Aurore Brindel

Aurore Brindel is a French pianist currently completing her Master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music with Professor Tessa Nicholson, having graduated with First Class Honours in 2024. She previously studied at the Conservatoire Paul Dukas in Paris with Frédéric Vaysse-Knitter and was awarded First Prize and the Philomuses Prize at the Opus Yvelines International Piano Competition. Since 2015, she has received annual summer mentorship with Sergei Babayan, and has also participated in masterclasses from artists including Tatiana Zelikman, Elena Rozanova, Steven Osborne and Yevgeny Sudbin.

Passionate about Romantic repertoire, Aurore is also an active chamber musician, performing regularly with her piano trio in France.

Nalni Chen

Nalni Chen is a Taiwanese pianist, cellist and percussionist. A passionate advocate for contemporary and experimental music, she currently pursues Postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music as a scholar with Joseph Havlat and Mei-Ting Sun, following her graduation from the Royal Northern College of Music and the University of Manchester, where she received the Faculty of Humanities Dean's Award. As a soloist, Nalni Chen has performed concertos ranging from Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Hive Sinfonia, to Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue with the Burnley Orchestra and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in Malvern. Committed to making music accessible to all, she performs across concert halls and community spaces, including care homes, championing innovative repertoire for diverse audiences. Nalni's collaborative work spans contemporary and cross-disciplinary projects.

Cherry Ge

Cherry Ge is a first-year postgraduate pianist studying with Professor Christopher Elton whose vivid artistry sits at the intersection of interpretation, collaboration, and social practice. Praised by The Straits Times (Singapore) for her '*keen sense for musical storytelling,*' and expressive nuance, she is known for her communicative depth and emotional range. Since achieving the highest score in Singapore's Grade 8 ABRSM piano exams at just nine years old, she has performed at major venues including Wigmore Hall, the Borhuslava Martinů Hall, Southbank Centre, and

Cadogan Hall- where she made her concerto debut with conductor Natalia Luis-Bassa- as well as at leading festivals such as Aldeburgh, Petworth and Chipping Campden. Recent highlights include a performance at Wigmore Hall as part of the Royal Academy of Music Soloist Ensemble under Jonathan Berman. Her forthcoming Wigmore Hall solo recital debut in November 2026 marks an exciting new chapter in her growing international career.

Kaiwen Jin

Kaiwen Jin is currently in the second year of his bachelor's degree in Piano Performance at the Academy studying with Professor Christopher Elton. In addition to the Bicentenary Scholarship, Kaiwen is also supported by the Alexis Gregory Award.

Before entering the Academy, Kaiwen studied under the guidance of Associate Professor Hong Huang at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. During his high school years, Kaiwen honed his craft and delved deeper into the nuances of musical expression. Kaiwen won the Third Prize in the Youth International Piano Competition hosted by the Music Middle School affiliated with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He has been invited to perform at prestigious venues across Zhejiang and Shanghai including Cadillac Shanghai Concert Hall and He Luting Concert Hall.

Hayden Miller

Hayden Miller is a third-year undergraduate pianist from Houston, Texas, and studies with Mei-Ting Sun. Previously, he received a diploma in

Piano Performance from the Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, where he studied with Piper Ward and Jennifer Hayghe. With repertoire ranging from Louis Couperin to Alexina Louie, he often travels beyond the canon of classical music, creating interdisciplinary experiences with visual artists, writers, actors, and dancers. An advocate for new music, Hayden's performances with the Academy Manson Ensemble have been praised as containing 'every nuance and every gradation of dynamic' (Matthew Johnson, *The Music Professor*). *Curves of Longing*, his debut recording of music by Stewart Lane, has received play on the BBC. Additionally, Hayden has performed at the Folkestone New Music Festival alongside the RIOT Ensemble. In 2024, he participated in the first complete performance of György Kurtág's *Játékok* at the Royal Academy of Music, and appeared in the Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival. Composers he has worked with include Hans Abrahamsen, Augusta Read Thomas, and Anna Meredith.

Lily Petrova

Prize-winning pianist Lily Petrova is a first-year postgraduate pianist studying with Professor Joanna MacGregor. She has performed at leading venues including a debut recital at Wigmore Hall earlier this year, the Southbank Centre, Cadogan Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Steinway Hall and Bulgaria Hall. A frequent performer at the Bulgarian Cultural Institute, she was invited to perform at the welcoming ceremony for the Bulgarian Cultural Minister.

Upcoming highlights of the 2026-27 season include performances at the Farley Festival and Petworth Festival, musician in residence with the 'precept.concept.perception' programme in Slovenia, and a recording project at Abbey Road Studios. Internationally, she has performed across Europe and Canada, most recently completing the Fuse residency at the Banff Centre in Canada, where she collaborated with artists including actor John de Lancie, conductor Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser and members of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Lily's artistic practice extends beyond the traditional recital format, integrating music with film and visual media, with a particular focus on contemporary repertoire. Alongside her performing career, Lily is Director of the Maria Vraka Music Academy in London, where she has led significant growth; she is co-founder and trustee of the Maria Vraka Foundation, established in 2025 to support accessible music education and emerging artists.

Pei-En Wu

Taiwanese pianist Pei-En Melody Wu is currently pursuing her Master's degree studying with Ian Fountain, with support from the Leverhulme Scholarship and the Help Musicians Postgraduate Award. Pei-En was awarded Third Prize at the BPSE Senior Intercollegiate Competition 2024, after winning the RAM Beethoven Piano Prize. She also received the Academy's 'Best Original Cadenza' Prize for Mozart Concerti and Second place in the Musicians' Company Harriet Cohen Bach Prize. In 2020, she won Third Prize at the National Student Competition of Music in Taiwan. Despite being born in

Taiwan, Pei-En grew up in Shanghai, and studied with Natalia Filippova, professor at the Middle School of Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She has performed in major concert venues across the city, including the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra Hall, Oriental Arts Center, and Bechstein Center. Over the years, Pei-En has gained inspiration from masterclasses and lessons with renowned musicians such as Dame Imogen Cooper, Boris Berman, Adrian Brendel, Arnulf von Arnim, Yevgeny Sudbin, and Steven Osborne. As an active chamber musician, she performs regularly with her Gokotta Clarinet Trio and was a finalist in the RAM Strings and Piano Duo Prize 2025.

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IV

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10am A Wild Pianism

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Khrystyna Mykhailichenko

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Schumann: The Complete Piano Works
IV

2.30pm Inspirations

3.30pm The Young Ones

4.45pm Epilogue

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Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time

Duke's Hall

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