

THE MISS MARGARET DAVIS MEMORIAL RECITAL

THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025

RUDDOCK HALL, 13.10

MAX WALSH – *piano*

KAREN MAO – *viola*

SIMON CHEUNG – *clarinet*

PIANO: LUCY AKEHURST AND YILIN CHEN

Sonata no. 5, op. 53

SCRIABIN

First Meeting

COATES

Galop

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Sonata no. 2 in Eb

BRAHMS

ALEXANDER NIKOLAYEVICH SRIABIN (1872-1915): Sonata no. 5, op. 53 (1907)

Scriabin was a Russian composer, pianist, philosopher, and writer. He is one of the most enigmatic and controversial figures of the Russian Silver Age, spending much of his later life exploring mysticism and theosophy. In 1905, he penned his most famous declaration: *"I am God! I am nothing."* By this, he meant that everyone has the potential to self-actualise and 'become one' with the divine; an idea that influences his entire late compositional catalogue.

Although his early works were largely inspired by the tonal language of Frédéric Chopin, his 5th Sonata has no clear harmonic centre. Instead, the harmony evolves continuously over the course of the work, without any satisfactory resolution, reflecting theosophical ideas of abandoning identity. It begins with a sudden burst of vitality (marked "fast, impetuous, and with extravagance") immediately contrasted by a slow, meandering introductory theme. The musical material is remarkably compact: almost all themes are derived from the first few bars. This slow motivic development generates an incredible sense of anticipation, culminating in an earth-shattering coda, marked "fff" with accents on every melody note; a representation of pure, eternal, divine ecstasy.

The following poem, written by Scriabin as an epigraph to the work, may guide the listener into the more abstract philosophical ideas the music explores:

*"I call you to life, O mysterious forces!
Drowned in the obscure depths
Of the creative spirit, timid
Shadows of life, to you I bring audacity!"*

The work is considered one of Scriabin's most difficult compositions, both technically and musically. It remains an awe-inspiring work; revolutionary both philosophically and musically.

MAX WALSH, UPPER SIXTH

ERIC COATES (1886-1957): *First Meeting* (1943)

Coates studied violin as a child, later changing to viola and studying with Tertis at the Royal Academy of Music where he also studied composition. He played viola in several professional quartets in the early 1900s and eventually became principal viola in Queen's Hall Orchestra from 1912-1919. Then, he concentrated on composition. He is described, slightly offensively, in Grove as 'an outstanding exponent of agreeable light music'. His most famous composition is probably the *Dam Busters* march (for the film of the same name). He composed two pieces for Viola and Piano *Ballad* and *First Meeting* both for Lionel Tertis.

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958): *Galop* (1934)

Vaughan Williams learnt piano and violin as a child, but switched to viola; his family were against him becoming an orchestral player, so many years of study at the Royal College of Music and Trinity College, Cambridge followed, during which time he studied with Parry Wood and Stranford, and later with Bruch and Ravel. Vaughan Williams was a close friend of Gustav Holst and they played their compositions to each other before seeking publication. He was also attracted to British Folk Songs. It was perhaps the *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis* (1909) in which he finally establish his own unmistakable style.

The Suite for Viola and small Orchestra in 8 movements was composed for Lionel Tertis, as well as a *Romance* which was only discovered posthumously.

KAREN MAO, UPPER SIXTH

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897): Clarinet Sonata in Eb, no. 2 (1894)

Brahms was a German composer and one of the leading figures of the Romantic era, composing many symphonies, concertos and chamber music that are all popular today. After hearing German clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld perform, Brahms composed his final set of works, including two clarinet sonatas.

His *Clarinet Sonata in Eb* opens with a gentle, flowing theme. This theme is passed between the clarinet and piano throughout the movement, almost like a conversation. A contrasting second idea brings more energy and playfulness. The opening melody finally returns softer and more reflective, leading the movement to a close. This sonata is famed for its expressiveness and musicality, making it a staple of the clarinet repertoire.

SIMON CHEUNG, UPPER SIXTH

MAX WALSH is 17 years old and has been playing piano for over a decade. He currently studies at the Junior Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under Jan Loeffler (Head of Keyboard). In 2023, he was awarded a distinction in his ARSM Diploma. Since then, he has participated in both national and international competitions, winning prizes at the Bromsgrove Young Musicians' Platform and the New Talent Festival, and performing in masterclasses with Boris Giltburg, Julian Lloyd Webber, and Joanna MacGregor. Next month, he will be competing in the Wales International Piano Festival. He also studies composition and recently became a Senior Scholar with the London Music Fund. He is in his final year of IB, studying music, Spanish, and philosophy. In his spare time, he enjoys jazz piano, choral singing, and photography. He hopes to attend a conservatoire after finishing his studies.

KAREN MAO is in her final year at King Edward VI High School for Girls and is currently studying Viola under Lucy Akehurst. She has completed her Viola diploma and has also achieved distinction in Piano Grade 8 with Dr Heng Ching Fang. Aside from music, Karen likes to make soap and decorate cakes.

SIMON CHEUNG is 17 years old and began studying the clarinet at the age of 8 with Sharon Reading. He is currently learning with Rela Spyrou and he has completed his ARSM Diploma with distinction. As well as being an associate of the National Youth Orchestra, Simon is principal clarinet of KES/KEHS Symphony Orchestra, and he has enjoyed taking part in multiple orchestras and ensembles in school. After IB, Simon wants to study Medicine.

YILIN CHEN is 15 years old and started playing the piano with Rosie Cross at 6 years old. He completed his Grade 8 piano in 2021 and hopes to take his ATCL diploma within the next few months. He now studies the piano with Sarah Daniels. He has taken part in the Birmingham Piano Festival over the past few years. Yilin has also played the clarinet since the age of 7, with John Meadows and Andy Isherwood. He plays the clarinet in the schools' Symphony Orchestra and has taken part in CBSO Project Remix in the past. He now studies clarinet with Rela Spyrou and hopes to complete his Grade 8 this term. Outside of music, Yilin enjoys playing table tennis.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

SHELLS' AND THIRDS' RECITAL

Monday 22 September 2025, 17.00 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

The first opportunity for our new Shells and Thirds from both schools to perform.

PERFORMERS' PLATFORM

Tuesday 23 September 2025, 18.30 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

A short concert of solo performances given by advanced musicians from both schools.

INSTRUMENTAL EVENING

Monday 29 September 2025, 17.00 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

An informal concert given by string players from both schools.

PERFORMERS' PLATFORM

Tuesday 30 September 2025, 18.30 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

A short concert of solo performances given by advanced musicians from both schools.

INSTRUMENTAL EVENING

Monday 6 October 2025, 17.00 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

An informal concert given by pianists and organists from both schools.

LUNCHTIME RECITAL

Thursday 9 October 2025, 13.10 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

Hilary Cheng, violin; Tarun Muruganathan, 'cello; Shrilakshmi Sen, viola
Piano trio: Max Walsh, piano; Khai Yang, violin; Josh Wei, 'cello.

INSTRUMENTAL EVENING

Monday 20 October 2025, 17.00 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

An informal concert given by woodwind and brass players from both schools.

LUNCHTIME RECITAL

Thursday 6 November 2025, 13.10 / Ruddock Hall / Admission free.

Glenda Cheung, violin; Alastair Zhang, guitar; Gwilym Thorp, trumpet
Piano Quartet: Mark Bo, violin; Karen Mao, viola; Ming Jiang, 'cello;
Aidan Zhang, piano

For information on these and other concerts, visit **www.ruddockpac.co.uk**

Box Office open Monday to Friday 1-3pm: **0121 472 9585**