



Nicola Meecham, Piano



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Biography

With her playing described as “sensational”, British pianist Nicola Meecham has been gaining international acclaim from critics and listeners alike since the release of her recent CD on the SOMM label.

Nicola started playing the piano at the age of four and gave her concerto debut at the age of thirteen. She went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music where she won numerous competitive prizes, including the Academy’s highest distinction, the Macfarren Gold Medal. Study awards included scholarships from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and from the Czech Government to study in Prague and she was a prizewinner of the Goddard Concert Trust. Her teachers have included Hilary Coates, Hamish Milne and Andrzej Esterhazy.

Since her debut for the Park Lane Group 20th Century Music Series in London, Nicola has performed in all the major halls, including Wigmore Hall, St John’s Smith Square, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, and at prestigious international festivals including Exeter and King’s Lynn. Abroad, she has performed in Holland, Italy, Belgium and the Czech Republic.

Nicola has given premières of works by a number of international composers for which she has received critical acclaim. These include Henryk Górecki’s Four Preludes Op 1, HK Gruber’s Luftschlösser and David Horne’s Nocturnes and Nightmares.

Her recording output includes a highly acclaimed disc for the SOMM label featuring solo piano music by Janáček, Kodály and Enescu. She has also recorded music by Kurt Schwertsik and the maverick American composer „Moondog” (aka Louis Hardin) for the Kopf and Largo labels. In addition, Nicola has broadcast recitals for BBC Radio 3 and for Dutch Radio and has appeared on BBC 2.

Nicola's concerto and recital repertoire is wide-ranging and includes many rarely performed works. She has a great affection for folk- inspired music, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe, and her recitals have also featured music by Latin and South American composers.

Critical Acclaim

“No praise could be high enough for such an adventurous and challenging programme, particularly when offered in such vivid and affectionate performances... Enescu's 3rd Sonata is a wholly personal creation, played by Nicola Meecham with brilliant dexterity and musical devotion.” -**Bryce Morrison/The Gramophone**

“Excellent... Meecham is completely inside the music, alert to the expressive undertones and implications of Janacek's fragmentary, allusive style of writing... altogether a very distinguished recital.” -**Calum MacDonald/International Record Review**

“...the complex multi-layering of Enescu's 'Third' Sonata is enough to make most mortals despair, but to do so with the sleight-of-hand reflexes and exuberant delight of Nicola Meecham borders on the sensational...[she] captures perfectly the child-like wonder that lies at the heart of *On an Overgrown Path*. Her close identification with Eastern European, folksong-inflected music is further demonstrated by her masterly traversal of Kodaly's *op.II Pieces*.” -**Julian Haylock/International Piano**

“Schubert's G major sonata, D894...was a really compelling experience. The background calm of the first movement was superbly maintained, allowing the eruptive climaxes to stand out all the more sharply. The third movement had a truculence that was not out of place, while the distant vision of the trio section was genuinely poignant. A triumphant performance of Prokofiev's 2nd Sonata ended the evening, with a fine control of the driving rhythms in the Scherzo, a beautifully shaded approach to the third movement's big climax, and unflagging energy in the finale.”
-**Music and Vision**

“To control not only the notes of Schumann's long and congested F sharp minor sonata, Op 11, but to perform them in a convincing way, takes a very special sort of pianist. Nicola Meecham, who chose it as centerpiece of her lunchtime recital at Edinburgh University yesterday, certainly proved equal to the task. Even, in the finale, by which point many performers are suffering loss of will-power, this deceptively demure young player made each resounding statement of the main theme gather an unstoppable force, strong enough to sweep aside all the intervening passagework and drive the music to its conclusion... One of her virtues was that she could focus on a melodic line without letting it become entangled in the convoluted figuration and obsessive rhythms which dominate the work. Thick textures evidently held no fears for her. The transcriptions of six Gershwin songs, with which she completed her programme, sounded quite Lisztian; but they, too, were impressively put over.”
-**The Scotsman**

"Nicola Meecham gave a short recital in which Leighton's Six Studies (Study Variations) op 56, impressed by their inventiveness and economy. She is a confident and accomplished player." -**The Times**

"Wednesday's concert got off to a fine start with Leighton's Six Studies for piano, strongly realized by Nicola Meecham. It is very much to her credit that her playing constantly drew attention to the music itself rather than to the often hair-raising technical challenges posed by the works in her recital. In Roberto Gerhard's Dances from Don Quixote (played from memory) she seemed completely at ease. Individual voices were clearly differentiated - so much so that I soon forgot that I was listening to a transcription of a complex orchestral score." -**The Musical Times**

"A strong and commanding musician - I look forward to hearing her soon in some mainstream repertoire." -**The Financial Times**

"Accomplished and intelligent . . . she gave a lively account of the Dances from Don Quixote." -**The Daily Telegraph**

"Nicola Meecham, from England, further perfected her interpretation and affinity for the music of Janáček, whose piano cycle In the mist she played with extraordinary understanding." -**Prague Evening News**

"Lambert's Piano Sonata made a striking impression in a superbly rhythmic and zestful performance by Nicola Meecham." -**The Guardian**

"Constant Lambert was represented by his brilliant Piano Sonata of 1927, which Nicola Meecham gave with sweeping confidence." -**The Times**

"...beautifully played by Nicola Meecham. This type of performance is not easy to pull off: the pianist has to be spot-on with response to the Speaker's Narrative, illustrating each episode with unerring capture of mood. She did it all to perfection. I want to hear her in other music - an artist with a future, no doubt at all." -**Musical Opinion**

Discography

SOMMCD 081

Piano works by Enescu, Janáček and Kodály

"... played by Nicola Meecham with brilliant dexterity and musical devotion."

LARGO 5125

Kurt Schwertsik: Für Christa

Songs and instrumental works performed by Christa and Kurt Schwertsik, Christopher Van Kampen (cello) and Nicola Meecham (piano).

KOPF KD 94 33 33

sax pax for a sax

A collection of Moondog's works performed by The London Saxophonic with Danny Thompson (bass) and Nicola Meecham (piano), directed by Moondog (Louis Hardin)

Repertoire

Concerti

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 1 in C major, Piano Concerto No 3 in C minor

Brahms: Piano Concerto No 1 in D minor

Chopin: Piano Concerto No 1 in E minor, Piano Concerto No 2 in E major

Dvořák: Piano Concerto in G major

Fauré: Ballade

Franck: Symphonic Variations

Gershwin: Piano Concerto in F major, Rhapsody in Blue

Ginastera: Piano Concerto No 1 Op 28

Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor

Haydn: Piano Concerto No 5 in D

Lambert: The Rio Grande for piano, chorus & orchestra

Mozart: Piano Concerto No 9 in E flat major K271, Piano Concerto No 18 in B flat K456, Piano Concerto No 20 in D minor, K466, Piano Concerto No 21 in C major K467, Piano Concerto No 23 in A major K488, Piano Concerto No 24 in C minor K491

Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 1 in F sharp minor Op 1, Piano Concerto No 2 in C minor Op 18

Ravel: Piano Concerto in G major, Piano Concerto for the left hand

Saint-Saëns: Piano Concerto No 2 in G minor

Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor Op 54

Scriabin: Piano Concerto in F sharp minor

Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No 2 in F major Op 102

Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 1 in Bb minor Op 23

Baroque & Classical

Bach: Italian Concerto BWV 971, Fantasia and Fugue in A minor BWV 904, Fantasia in C minor BWV 562, Preludes and Fugues (selected)

Beethoven: Sonata in C minor Op 10 No 1, Sonata in C sharp minor Op 27 No 2 (*Moonlight*), Sonata in F minor Op 57 (*Appassionata*), Sonata in E flat major Op 81a (*Les Adieux*), Sonata in E minor Op 90

J L Dušek: Sonata in E flat major Op 44 (*L'adieu*)

Haydn: Fantasie in C major Hob XVII:4, Sonata in A major Hob XVI:26, Sonata in E major Hob XVI:31, Sonata in C major Hob XVI:50, Sonata in E flat major Hob XVI:52

Mozart: Rondo in A minor KV 511, Sonata in G major KV 283, Sonata in D major KV 311, Sonata in B flat major KV 333, Sonata in D major KV 576

Scarlatti: Sonatas (selected)

Schubert: Fantasie in C major Op 15 D760 (*Wanderer*), Four Impromptus Op 90 D899, Four Impromptus Op 142 D935, 12 German Dances D420, Sonata in A major D664, Sonata in A minor D845, Sonata in G major D894, Sonata in B flat major D967

Romantic

Balakirev: Sonata in B flat minor

Brahms: Intermezzi Op 117, Intermezzi Op 118 (selected), Fantasien Op 116 (selected), Sonata in F minor Op 5

Chopin: Ballades Nos 1, 2, 3 and 4, Barcarolle, Etudes (selected), Fantasie in F minor, Mazurkas Op 17 No 4; Op 59 Nos 1, 2 and 3, Nocturnes (selected), Scherzi Nos 2, 3 and 4, Sonata in B flat minor Op 35, Sonata in B minor Op 54, Three Ecossaises, Waltzes (selected)

Grieg: Holberg Suite

Liszt: Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este (Années de Pèlerinage, book 3), Sonata in B minor, Sposalizio (Années de Pèlerinage, book 2)

Medtner: Skazki (selected), Sonata in G minor Op 22

Mendelssohn: Andante and Rondo Capriccioso, Songs without Words (selected)

Rachmaninov: Preludes (selected), Sonata No 2 in B flat minor

Schumann: Abegg Variations Op 1, Arabesque Op 18, Carnival Op 9, Fantasie in C major Op 17, Kinderszenen Op 15, Papillons Op 2, Presto Appassionato WoO 5/2, Sonata in F sharp minor Op 11

Scriabin: Sonata No 3 in F sharp minor, Preludes (selected)

Smetana: Polkas (selected)

Tchaikovsky: Sonata in C sharp minor Op 80, Grande Sonate in G major Op 37

French & Spanish

Albeniz: Iberia Book 1 (Evocación, El Puerto, Fête-dieu à Seville), Iberia Book 2 (Rondeña, Almería, Triana), Suite española (selected)

Debussy: Children's Corner, Danse, Estampes, Images (books 1 and 2), L'isle joyeuse, Preludes from books 1 and 2 (selected), Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune (arr. Borwick)

Fauré: Theme and Variations Op 72

Granados: Allegro de Concierto, Valses Poeticos

Ginastera: Sonata No 1 Op 22, Suite de Danzas Criollas Op 15

Mompou: Impresiones Intimas (selected)

Ravel: Jeux d'eau, Gaspard de la Nuit, Miroirs, Pavane pour une infante défunte, Sonatine, Valses nobles et sentimentales

20th Century & Contemporary

Adams: China Gates

Bartók: Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm

Copland: Four Piano Blues

Giles Easterbrook: 25 Variations

Enescu: Sonata in D major op 24 No 3

Gerhard: Dances from Don Quixote

Gershwin: 3 Preludes, Song Transcriptions (selected)

Górecki: Four Preludes Op 1

HK Gruber: Luftschlösser

Horne: Nocturnes and Nightmares

Janáček: In the Mist, On an Overgrown Path, Sonata 1:X:1905

Kodály: Dances of Marossek, Seven Pieces Op 11

Lambert: Piano Sonata, Elegiac Blues

Leighton: Six Study-Variations Op 56

Martinů: Butterflies in Flowers, Birds and Butterflies in Paradise, Scherzo (1924)

Moondog (Louis Hardin): Sea Horse, Fiesta, Chaconne in A minor

Prokofiev: Sonata No 2 in D minor, Sonata No 3 in E major

Rzewski: Down by the Riverside, Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

Schwertsik: Nocturnes

Sample Programs

Programme 1

Vorisek: Fantasia, Op.12

Schubert: Sonata in G major D 894

Ravel: Miroirs (selection)

Prokofiev: Sonata No 2 in D minor

Programme 2

Adams: China Gates

Tchaikovsky: Sonata in G major

Debussy: Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune (arr. Borwick)

Debussy: Preludes (selection)

Chopin: Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise

Programme 3

Haydn: Sonata in E major Hob XV1:31

Schumann: Kreisleriana

Granados: Spanish Dances (selection)

Stravinsky: The Firebird Suite. (arr. Agosti)