

St Thomas the Apostle Church, Groombridge  
Sunday November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2.30pm

**GERSHWIN -**  
***CONCERTO IN F***

100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1925 - 2025



Plus music by Debussy and Faure

Steve Law, piano

*Collection in aid of Hospice in the Weald*

# ***Programme***

*In memory of Paul Ingram*

**Claude Debussy**      ***Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum (1908)***

*from Children's Corner*

***Images Oubliées No.1 (1894)***

***- Lent (Melancolique et doux)***

***Clair de lune (1890 revised 1905)***

*from Suite Bergamasque*

**Gabriele Faure**      ***Nocturne No.6 Op.63 (1895)***

**George Gershwin**      ***Concerto in F (1925)***

*1. Allegro*

*2. Adagio – Andante con moto*

*3. Allegro agitato*

(with recorded orchestral accompaniment arranged by Steve Law)

Steve Law (piano)

*All contributions for the Hospice in the Weald are gratefully appreciated.*

**stevlawcomposer.com**

My wife Lorna and I would like to dedicate this concert to our dear friend Paul Ingram, who very sadly passed away last December. The Hospice in the Weald supported Paul and his beloved wife Louise, who is here with us today. We would like today's collection to raise money for the Hospice who continue to care for our community. Thank you.

This year I have been marking the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the premier of George Gershwin's *Concerto in F*. It is a work that holds a special place in my heart. At the age of 14 I saw the BBC tribute *The Gershwin Years* and it included Peter Donohoe performing the last movement of Gershwin's *Concerto in F* - which completely bowled over.

My sister had an LP of the magical 1971 recordings by Andre Previn playing and conducting Gershwin with the London Symphony Orchestra. I instantly loved the *Rhapsody* but found *Concerto in F* to be something far greater and deeper. I had loved John Williams' film scores for *Superman* and *Star Wars* from a young age but it was Gershwin who initiated my exploration of piano concertos and classical music. I am sure Gershwin has similarly inspired millions of others. His music is so immediately approachable and successfully blends influences from popular music and jazz into classical forms. Gershwin was just as sincere writing hit songs for Broadway as he was writing symphonic works or opera.

I studied my father's score of the solo version of the concerto and within a year I had learned *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Concerto* before having a piano lesson. I had taught myself to read music by studying scores by Scott Joplin and composing piano rags but suddenly I wanted to write a piano concerto! (I made several attempts in my mid-teens.)

Gershwin's *Concerto* is inspired and original throughout. It seems to conjure up every possible image and feeling of America. Apart from its youthful energy, and love of life there is an underlying melancholy. There are also some of Gershwin's most memorable and beautiful melodies.

The first movement presents a series of jazz inspired portraits. There is use of the Charleston rhythm and pentatonic scale. The recurring main theme uses repeating notes with a shifting chord accompaniment.

The bluesy *Adagio* has a haunting melancholic atmosphere. The magnificent finale features Gershwin's love of fast repeated notes and a brilliantly innovative form – bringing in reminiscences from the first two movements.

*Concerto in F* was composed and orchestrated in just 6 months between May and November 1925. It was the first work Gershwin orchestrated himself (with some help, perhaps) but it was a phenomenal advance in expression and form so soon after the *Rhapsody in Blue* of 1924. It was commissioned by Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony and premiered on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1925 with the composer as soloist. It has become the most popular and performed of all American concertos and a highly regarded piano concerto.

**Debussy** dedicated his Children's Corner suite to his baby daughter Claude-Emma. *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* is a reference to a set of well-known piano exercises published by Czerny and Clementi. *Images Oubliées* date from 1894. They were unpublished in Debussy's lifetime, with 'Oubliées' added posthumously to distinguish them from his two later sets of *Images*. Debussy did publish a revised version of the second piece *Sarabande* in his suite *Pour le piano* in 1901.

Debussy's famous *Clair de Lune*, meaning moonlight, takes its title from Verlaine's poem of the same name.

**Faure's** sixth Nocturne is one of his greatest and best known. It was composed in 1894 while spending the summer at his parents-in-law's. It has three contrasting ideas with different time signatures. Faure delights as always in unexpected modulations, irregular phrases and searching chromatic harmonies. Floating above it all is continuous singing melody.



**Steve Law** is a composer, arranger and pianist who lives with his wife Lorna in Wadhurst. He studied music at Bristol University under Raymond Warren and received a Masters degree in composition for his opera *Heaven On Earth*.

Steve's music mixes classical and popular styles with catchy melodies and jazzy rhythms. His *Piano Concerto* was released by Navona in 2022 on *Symphonic Chronicles Vol.1* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and pianist Joseph Havlat conducted by David Watkin. It received an Oppenheim John Memorial Trust award and a *BBC Music Magazine* 4 star

review, being described as 'a likeable collection of modern, robustly tonal orchestral music.' Steve's *Violin Concerto* was premiered in 2017 in Scotland by violinist Mark Wilson and conductor Paul Wood. *3 Poems by Lorna Law* were performed at *Harrow Summer Music* in 2018 by Ferrier award winning baritone Gareth Brynmor John. *Musicweb International* described Steve's first CD of piano music as 'kaleidoscopically varied works...engagement with melody, impressionistic... jazzy syncopation....slowly burning passion'.

Steve is also one of the most accurate transcribers of piano music from recordings. His sheet music arrangements of Dudley Moore's album *Songs Without Words* are published by Faber and his transcriptions of all Gershwin's improvisations from the 1920s and 30s are awaiting publication in the *Gershwin Critical Edition*. Arrangements of Fats Waller, Russ Conway, Elton John, Billy Taylor etc. are available to buy at *Sheet Music Direct* along with some of his own music.

Steve has often performed his own music alongside favourite composers like Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Debussy and Prokofiev. He has a long association with Scott Joplin, Gershwin and Billy Mayerl. In 2012-13 Steve performed unique tribute concerts, starting at St James's Piccadilly, recreating the music and jazz of Dudley Moore. Dudley invited Steve to meet him in London in 1999. Steve co-founded *Harrow Summer Music* in 2014.