Daniel Tong - Piano

Photograph by Benjamin Harte

"Tong, whose cultured pianism affords unqualified pleasure throughout" **Gramophone**

"pianist Daniel Tong negotiates every difficulty with absolute control" **Fanfare**

Daniel Tong was born in Cornwall and studied in London, where he now lives. His musical life is spent performing as soloist and chamber musician, as well as directing two chamber music festivals and teaching. Outside the UK he has performed in Sweden, France, Belgium and Portugal. He has recently recorded his first solo CD of works by Schubert, soon to be released on the Quartz label.

Daniel has appeared at many of the foremost British venues and festivals - Wigmore Hall, South Bank Centre, St Georges Bristol, Birmingham Town Hall as well as the Cheltenham, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh Festivals. He is frequently heard on BBC Radio and has broadcast throughout Europe and beyond. His latest project, 'unravelled' in collaboration with musicologist Richard Wigmore, has seen a series of lecture-recital weekends on Beethoven and Schubert piano sonatas. It continues throughout 2011 and 2012 in Oxford and Winchester. In 2012 Daniel has been invited to curate a festival of Elgar's music at Kings Place in London. He will also give a series of presentations in northern Portugal, with performances by the Skampa Quartet, exploring the late Beethoven quartets and contemporary works by Schubert and Mendelssohn.

His London Bridge Ensemble has established itself as an exciting presence on the UK music scene, combining different combinations of strings, piano and voice to form challenging and inspiring programmes. They were resident for several years at the Ponte de Lima Festival in Portugal and have recorded two CDs of works by Frank Bridge for Dutton as well as Schumann for Sonimage. These releases have each been praised and recommended in the press. A further release is planned for 2011, featuring works by Fauré. In 2012 the ensemble returns to the Wigmore Hall, appears at Kings Place in London and gives a series of concerts in Portugal. They will also present their fifth annual festival - The Winchester Chamber Music Festival.

Daniel is excited about Opus 1, his new piano trio with Sara Bitlloch and Amy Norrington. He has collaborated with the Navarra and Allegri quartets and will perform with the Elias and Barbirolli quartets in 2012. He has a regular duo with baritone Ivan Ludlow.

Each year Daniel plays with an array of wonderful individual artists, often at his own chamber festival in the Wye Valley. Founded in 1999, the Wye Valley Chamber Music Festival attracts many of the most exciting chamber musicians of the younger generation to spend ten days making music in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Festival has become a well-established and treasured event in the region's cultural life, gaining national attention for its creative spirit and artistic vibrancy.

Daniel studied piano with Hilary Coates at school, with Irina Zaritskaya at the Royal College of Music and with Paul Roberts at the Guildhall in London.

Reviews

Heinz Holliger in Profile: Souvenirs and Fairytales
Curator: Christoph Richter - at King's Place, London, 23rd March 2011

Ken Carter - MusicWeb International, April 11

Background note: As part of this concert, Christoph Richter and Daniel Tong performed Schumann's Five Pieces in Folk Style, Op. 102

"In contrast, the five Pieces in Folk Style were played in the same room as oneself, as it were. The difference was thrilling and warming. Daniel Tong's piano was a presence by one's side. The sounds were immediate; the playing was robust; the phrasing was marked. In the right sense, the playing was dramatic. Suddenly, into the room came the striking presence(s) of Florestan and Eusebius. The emotional contrast, rightly, constituted the shape of each piece: its emotion was its form. Reciprocally, Christoph Richter's cello played in partnership with the mellow passion and rich hints of depth that characterise his instrument. This was the culmination as well as, as it happened, the end of the evening."

Heinz Holliger In Profile - Kings Place, London, 23-26 March 2011
Curator: Christoph Richter

Richard Whitehouse - Classical Source, April 11

"Rounding off this first evening was Schumann's Fünf Stücke im Volkston (1849) for cello and piano, perhaps the most varied and certainly the best balanced of his sets of miniatures, given here with a burnished eloquence as well as a robust humour by Richter and Daniel Tong.

The second evening, Darkness and Infinity, accordingly investigated deeper as well as darker musical waters. Following the Berio-like rhythmic genuflection of Holliger's Trema (1981) for solo violin, incisively played by Cantoreggi, the mellifluous ease of Clara Schumann's Drei Romanzen (1853) for violin and piano was the more pronounced – elegantly rendered by Cooke and Tong, and a reminder of a compositional talent which scarcely allowed itself to flower further"

Frank Bridge has been well served by this disc

Jonathan Woolf - Fanfare, Mar/Apr 2011

"Violinist Benjamin Nabarro plays [the violin sonata] with considerable authority and pianist Daniel Tong negotiates every difficulty with absolute control"

A Spell Binding Account - Daniel Tong, St John's, Smith Square

Bob Briggs - MusicWeb International, Dec 10

"This lunchtime, St John's was an oasis of calm, set in the middle of the student protest at the rise in tuition fees which the House of Commons was due to vote on, just round the corner, later in the day. But Schubert wove his magical spell and all was forgotten as Tong delivered a spell binding account of the penultimate Sonata of the Austrian master. After a brief, but forceful, call to arms, Tong settled into the first movement, bringing out the inherent melancholy of the music, with lyricism to the fore, and a good sense of the progress of the music. His vision was clear and his purpose well delineated. What impressed was that the climax was a logical part of the whole, not a peak to be reached and overdone. The slow movement was in the same mode, melancholic and withdrawn, beautifully shaded and understated. This was a fine interpretation. The scherzo brought some light relief, and some very light playing to match it. Tong seemed able to make the piano speak whilst hardly touching the keys. The finale starts with a theme which is reminiscent of Beethoven's Ode to Joy and as Tong touched the keyboard to start, the sun came out and lit up the room. But this isn't a big joyous finale, for there are problems and at the end Schubert breaks his theme into segments and destroys any hopes of a happy ending. Tong withheld any chance of a joyous conclusion as he

defiantly hammered out the final chords. This was a fine performance, distressing in its agonised loneliness. Splendid.
The three pieces from the Moments Musicaux, D780 brought a mood of expectation to the hall, these small pieces proving to be the perfect aperitif to the main course. Without them the emotion of the Sonata would have been unbearable."

Another Generous Bridge Helping from this Sensitive and Stylish Outfit

Andrew Achenbach - Gramophone Magazine , Dec 2010

Frank Bridge "Violin Sonata and Piano Quintet" Dutton Epoch CDLX 7254 - London Bridge Ensemble

"the poetry, flexibility and ardour displayed by these gifted players held me captive from first note to last"

"Benjamin Nabarro plays Paul Hindmarsh's splendidly idiomatic completion of this appealing torso [violin sonata] with ingratiating lustre and subtly shaded tone. Elsewhere, viola player Tom Dunn makes light of the not inconsiderable technical challenges of Pensiero (1905) and Allegro Appassionato (1908) while Kate Gould's sweetly sung cello in Spring Song (1912) in another treat. In all four pieces, Daniel Tong tenders immaculate support"

"the ensemble's pianist also makes a classy showing in the [Frank Bridge] Three Sketches (1906), his generous rubato in "rosemary" both apposite and disarming"

"fingers crossed for more Bridge from this exemplary team!"

Daniel Tong Turns these Little Lovelies with Real Sensitivity

Rob Barnett - MusicWeb International, Sep 2010

Frank Bridge "Violin Sonata and Piano Quintet" Dutton Epoch CDLX 7254 - London Bridge Ensemble

"The disc has been assembled with a practised eye to variety and to listening to the disc all through. Michael Ponder's engineering brings the listener front-seat close to the players. The blood-rushing triumphant romance of the [Frank Bridge] Piano Quintet is magnificently put across by London Bridge Ensemble..
...After such torrid emotions and tumultuous striving the [Frank Bridge] Three Sketches are charming, shapely and familiar miniatures with a hint of what we later associate with the manner of Mayerl, Chopin and Godowsky. Daniel Tong turns these little lovelies with real sensitivity. "

Frank Bridge Songs and Chamber Music, Dutton Epoch 2008

Gramophone

"Tong, whose cultured pianism affords unqualified pleasure throughout"

A Most Memorable Recital

Robert Matthew-Walker - Musical Opinion

"an astonishingly successful occasion, in which Jennifer Pike was partnered by Daniel Tong."

"Elgar's Sonata received a deeply musical performance was both musicians' total grasp of this fine yet demanding composition. A most memorable recital."

Reviews

Not the Notes which Count, but the Way You Play Them

The Evening Standard

"It's not the notes which count, but the way you play them. Tong displayed a versatile touch. Sally Beamish's Piano Sonata had golden clusters in the lento and a roaring bass in the presto"

A Natural-born Stylist....Uncommon Panache, Fluidity and Spontaneity

Douglas Cooksey - Classical Source

"For once one really had the sense that both players were so in tune and responsive to each other that they were able to play together with a rare sense of freedom."

"What was rather remarkable – whether in the elliptical and elusive Debussy sonata, or the almost nightclub-like accompaniment to the fourth of Prokofiev's Melodies, or the richly-voiced Brahms – was the way in which Daniel Tong succeeded unobtrusively and with the minimum of fuss in finding the individual tone of voice for each of these very different pieces. A natural-born stylist."

"...playing with uncommon panache, fluidity and spontaneity; they achieved a smouldering volatile intensity entirely appropriate, the piece's rapid swings of mood and tempo caught on the wing. Edge-of-seat stuff and totally convincing."

"Tong's accompaniment was particularly remarkable here: full-toned, rich, fluid but never heavy or hectoring, an object lesson in how to find the right tone of voice in this music."

Much Musicality to Offer....He Will Go Far

David Allenby - Musical Opinion

"Daniel Tong was relaxed yet involved, and contributed the greater part of the atmosphere to each of the performances. Particularly impressive was his handling of the Janáček, where the busy textures and pungent ostinati needed careful balancing with the violin. There was much thought given to the internal weighting of chords, such as in the Adagio of the Brahms Sonata, and to the characterisation of groups of material in the Lutoslawski which created a febrile tension to the performance as a whole."

"This is an accompanist who has much musicality to offer, without hogging the show. He will go far."