

## **Motoki Hirai at Cadogan Hall** [*London 27/09/2018*]

The recital programme by Motoki Hirai under Lisa Peacock Management in aid of Children with Cancer brought a very large audience to Cadogan Hall on September 27, who were rewarded with playing of effortless eloquence and distinction.

Motoki began with a finely sculptured reading of Bach's C minor Partita BWV 826, with tempos, voicing and phrasing all put at the service of architectural strength and expressive interpretation. This genuine performance was followed by rarely-heard Beethoven – at least, in the concert hall – in the shape of his Six Bagatelles Op 126, a shape difficult to convey and to cohere, as the profound individuality of the late quartets beckoned, but Motoki was at one with the composer, delineating each with its own characteristic expression and giving and delivering an overall coherence that was admirably convincing.

Then followed the first performance of the pianist's Fifteen Folktale Pieces, composed in 2018. This is clearly a significant work in Motoki's output, lasting close on half an hour, varied and extraordinarily wide-ranging (the third, especially, appeared almost as a forgotten Schumann albumleaf in its opening stanzas) in expression. It made a remarkable impression on the attentive audience.

The second half opened with six transcriptions: Schubert-Hirai, Schubert-Godowsky, Schubert-Liszt, and two Chopin-Liszt, which made a fascinating and wholly convincing set of varied pieces, before Mendelssohn's Opus 14 Rondo capriccioso brought this distinguished recital to an admirable conclusion.

## **Robert Matthew-Walker**

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