

What joy to spend an evening listening to the prodigiously talented pianist Ashley Fripp. Here is a pianist you can trust to put the music first, with no showy flamboyance, and yet his thoughtful restraint allied to the warmest tone allowed each piece to speak as it should. Ashley's enthusiasm for his chosen programme was clear from the start and it was both helpful and a delight to hear him explaining the background to Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit" by reading the poems on which it is based. (by A. Bertrand, similar to Edgar Allan Poe). In "Ondine" Ashley caught Ravel's macabre and mysterious watery world with fast right-hand figurations. In "le Gibet" Ravel depicts a man hanging from the gallows. Here Ashley created the grotesque nature of the scene with careful balance of texture and impressionistic chords.

Finally in "Scarbo" a devilish goblin is portrayed. This tour de force of pianism has many difficult repeated notes, some created due to Ravel's agile thumb (!): Ashley's fingers and thumbs were always equal to the challenge and the enthralled audience showed their appreciation.

Earlier, Ashley had captured the Baroque style in Bach's Partita no.2.

An all Chopin second half to the recital proved a treat. Ashley admitted to his strong liking for the Berceuse and the Barcarolle and Chopin's filigree decorations came across engagingly. Ashley made a strong case for the unfamiliar 3rd Chopin Sonata.

Then Ashley had to dash-train to Glasgow-plane to Florence. So glad he came to Carlisle!
Ian France