

## *Bach-Mugham*

To reflect the centrality of performance in artistic research for *L8nite Performances*, I would like to present my newly envisioned work, *Bach-Mugham*. The intention of this project is to showcase the re-composition of J.S. Bach's keyboard works with the Azerbaijani national music genre *mugham*.

As a pianist, I have been performing a wide range of Azerbaijani and Bach's keyboard repertoire for a long period of time and have been motivated by passion in exploring new avenues of interpretation. The balance between fusion of contrasting musical traditions is at the centre of my current practice-based doctoral research at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Additionally, two of the leading experts on Bach's music and classical improvisation, Robert Levin and David Dolan, have been offering me guidance on the interpretation and embellishment practices in Bach's keyboard repertoire. How these practices take shape in performance and how musical methods of ornamentation can introduce a wide range of interpretational opportunities. The development of my music consciousness was mirrored in the continuous experimentation with the text, the tendency is widely represented with jazz or folk music but was not passed onto classical musicians to such an extent. The experimental ideas that I have already planned and started applying in my doctoral studies have introduced new stylistic possibilities such as the integration of *mugham* into Bach's music. *Mugham* is the foundation of Azerbaijani classical music traditions in the twentieth-century. It consists of improvised melodic patterns being explored throughout repeated sections within a composition. The heavy prevalence of *mugham* ornamentation in Azerbaijani classical piano repertoire, has encouraged me to combine improvisatory aesthetics of *mugham* modes with Bach's keyboard music for this project. *Bach-Mugham* consists of two following movements:

1. *Andante* from *Italian Concerto* (BWV 971) with *mugham Bayati Shiraz*
2. *Menuet* from *Partita No. 4* (BWV 828) with Azerbaijani national dance elements of *Terekeme*

The performance programme will also include first two movements from the *Variations for Piano* written by Fikrat Amirov (1922-1984) based on the elements of the lyrical *mugham* mode Shur with embellished repeats, and my improvisational arrangement of Bach's *Aria* from *Goldberg Variations*.

The most common types of improvisatory methods that I am planning to use are:

1. Improvising chords and melodic patterns over a fixed bass line (*basso ostinato*)
2. Florid ornamentation of Bach's pre-composed melody with the selected *mugham* modal pattern while varying sections of a piece upon its repetition
3. Inserting free *mugham* sections between Bach's composed sections (e.g. *passaggi*, *cadenzas*)

The transposition of Eastern *mugham* and Western Baroque musical sections within one composition relies on my personal interpretational sense of balance and spontaneity. I aimed to fuse the cross-cultural continuum of improvising traditions introduced by *mugham* studies and the written improvisatory formulation by C.P.E. Bach. I studied and tried numerous amounts of different, repeated, symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns of each unit and then contemplated it within a unified musical flow.

It would be an incredible honour to take part in a the EPARM conference, and if invited, I would relish the opportunity to share my creative process with the audience and fellow artists.

Relevant audio recordings:

Mirzayeva, G., *Gunel Mirzayeva - JS Bach/G Mirzayeva, Bach-Mugham*, date of the recording 21.06.2019, YouTube video, added by Gunel Mirzayeva on 6 October 2019 [Online] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfygMEeGsPI>

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Gunel Mirzayeva was born in Baku, Azerbaijan and began studying the piano at the age of seven. In 2006, she moved to London where she is currently completing a Doctorate of Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Gunel has performed extensively throughout the UK and Europe. Notable performances include concerts at the Wigmore Hall, The House of Commons, The Yehudi Menuhin School, St. Martins-in-the-Field and the Barbican Hall in London, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Steinfurter Bagno Concert Hall in Germany. Gunel has a particular interest in Bach's keyboard music and has begun to work with David Dolan and Robert Levin on its embellishment practices. In 2018, Gunel explored a project focusing on the *Goldberg Variations* in a Residency at the prestigious Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Gunel's recent musical project *Bach-Mugham* at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, explored the re-composition of Bach's keyboard works with the Azerbaijani national music genre *mugham*.