

## PROGRAMME NOTE

This piece is from a series of piano works which take as their model Scarlatti's and Scriabin's (last 6) sonatas. Each piece explores a different musical form. The term 'sonata' here refers to the duality of competing themes which follow their own paths, more than to the traditional 'sonata form'. Sonata No. 4 is subtitled 'philosophale' (philosopher) because it is based on ideas of metal transmutation, as epitomised in the idea of the philosopher's stone. An alchemical substance capable of turning base metals (eg. mercury) into gold, the philosopher's stone symbolises the total transformation of the being, body and soul – separating the 'rough' from the 'subtle' to reach absolute purity, a spiritual apotheosis.

*Le Petit Œuvre* follows the preparation of the soul to its alchemical transformation. Here one travels from the darkness, to calcination (mercury), ice, fixation (lead), liquefaction (nit), to reach the moon (silver), seen as the first stage of purification. *Le Grand Œuvre* continues this process of transformation, through copper and iron, eventually reaching the sun (gold), the ultimate sublimation.

The structure of this sonata is therefore in two large movements, *Petit Œuvre* and *Grand Œuvre*, which are themselves subdivided into smaller sections played without break. Each of these smaller sections corresponds to a planet and metal pair. Different themes evolve in these sections: the main motive (TH), a non-retrogradable palindromic theme, and two theme-symbols – the Cross (and inverted Cross) and the Moon. To symbolise the separation of the 'rough' from the 'subtle', a tone is removed at each section, moving from the chain of twelve chromatic notes towards the purity of a six-note consonant mode of  $\mathbb{1}\mathbb{2}$  major.

Richard Dubuignon, 2016

Duration: c. 17 minutes

*Commissioned by the Festival Piano à Saint-Ursanne, Switzerland*

*First performed on the 8th August 2016 by Vasilisa Varnavova*

à Vasilis Karavatos  
**Sonate No. 4**  
"Philosophale"

Nota bene : les abréviations ne sont valables que pour les notes à la même hauteur dans la même mesure et la même partie conjointement.

Richard Dubagnon  
Op. 76

**VIVO ARGENTO**  
(Vif argent, Mercure)  
Andante ♩ = 90

I. Petit Œuvre

(12 bars) *mf* *mf* *f* 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1

tenir "notes" qu'avec l'échappatoire seulement, sur autre piano jouer tout ce passage à l'octave supérieure)

2 *p* *ben incertaine* *pp* *mf*

3 *mf*

4 *mp* *mf*

5 *mf*