

John Bingham

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John Bingham, who has died after a long illness aged 61, was a musician of exceptional sensitivity and profundity, regarded by the small but select circle who knew his work well as one of the finest pianists of his generation. A private, unworldly personality, he maintained the musical and pianistic ideals of the musicians of the Romantic era. Perhaps it was no coincidence that his interpretations of Liszt earned exceptional accolades.

He was born in Sheffield where his father, a keen amateur musician, worked in the steel industry and his mother and aunt ran a corner shop. Encouraged by his family, Bingham's talent showed itself early and at the age of 16 he became a pupil of the piano teacher Harold Craxton. He then won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), where he was taught by Myers Foggin, who, later, as principal of Trinity College of Music, appointed Bingham to the staff, in 1968.

While still a student at the RAM, Bingham played the Beethoven Emperor Concerto under the baton of Sir John Barbirolli. He won scholarships to the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia in Rome and the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin; Nadia Boulanger was also among his teachers. But one of the strongest influences on him were his studies at the Moscow Conservatoire, where he was a pupil of Stanislav Neuhaus for two years, the pianist's first and only British student. There he developed the beauty, depth of tone and intense, late Romantic approach for which he was most celebrated.

Bingham entered the first Clara Haskil competition in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1963. No first prize was awarded, but a groundswell of popular support for Bingham was a sign of things to come: when he made his debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1967, his overwhelming performances of Scriabin launched him into a career that was to encompass a repertoire of some 50 different concertos and solo music, from the Baroque to the present day.

He made many recordings for BBC Radio 3 and toured extensively, to Europe, Japan, Russia, the US and Australia. In 1997, his 30th anniversary concert at the Wigmore Hall drew a full house and critical acclaim.

Bingham remained on the faculty of Trinity College of Music for the rest of his life, serving as head of keyboard (1990-95) and encouraging students to develop the musical integrity, beauty of tone and legato cantabile touch that lay at the heart of his own approach. He had been planning at the time of his death, to set up a summer school programme that would lead to a piano academy dedicated to the Romantic traditions of piano playing.

A keen cook, thinker and conversationalist, Bingham took an interest in a vast range of topics from metaphysics to fast cars and UFOs. He is survived by his daughter, Natasha, from his first marriage, his second wife, Kaoru, and their two-year-old son, Jascha.

· John Bingham, pianist, born March 31 1942; died December 6 2003