

EDINBURGH  
UNIVERSITY  
CONCERTS

1977-78

AN EVENING OF 20th CENTURY MUSIC

directed by

GEOFFREY KING & PETER NELSON

with

JOHN GRANT *flute*

RAYMOND McKEOWN *clarinet*

ALASDAIR MALLOY *percussion*

FRANCIS COWAN *guitar*

RICHARD BEAUCHAMP *piano & harmonium*

PETER NELSON *celesta*

WINIFRED FREEMAN *harp*

and

POPPY HOLDEN *soprano*

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Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 2 March 1978

STRAVINSKY 1882-1971

Four Songs for voice, flute, harp and guitar (1953)

This group of songs is a rearrangement of 'Canard' and 'Chant dissident' from *Four Russian Songs* (1918-19), and 'Berceuse' and 'Tilim-bom' from *Trois Histoire Pour Enfants* (1915-17). They have a half-amusing, half-nostalgic flavour, combining the naive and the crudely sophisticated in their harmonisations of melodic lines of the utmost simplicity.

PROKOFIEV 1891-1953

Five Sarcasms for solo piano Op. 17 (1912-14)

These pieces were written while Prokofiev was still a student at the St Petersburg Conservatoire and were received with great acclaim at their first performance. Prokofiev gives a programme for No. 5 'We often indulge in malicious laughter at someone or something, but when we pause to look, we see how pitiful and sad is the object of our ridicule and then we grow ashamed; the mocking laughter rings in our ears, but it is we who are its object now.'

STOCKHAUSEN b. 1928

Refrain No. 11 (1959) for piano, celesta and vibraphone  
The music of Refrain is chordal and rhythmically still. The use of high piano, high sounding percussion and the explosive vocal sounds that the players make, create a brilliant resonating sound world. The score, with its semi-circular staves and plastic strip, is perhaps the most famous of avant-garde 'graphic' music.

SCHOENBERG 1874-1951

Herzgewächse Op. 20 (1911) for high soprano, celesta, harmonium and harp

This brief setting of a poem by Maeterlinck, in German translation, was first published in the famous almanac *Der Blaue Reiter*, alongside essays by Kandinsky, Marc, and others. His famous ending, containing one of the highest notes in the vocal repertoire, expresses prayer rising above 'formless sorrows', while the gently glittering accompaniment suggests Maeterlinck's floral imagery.

HEART'S BLOSSOMS

The blue crystal sphere of my listless longing  
covers an ancient nameless sorrow  
which I now leave behind in its numbness of sleep.

Its flowers form a symbolic tracery:  
Dark water-lilies of pleasure,  
palms of desire,  
supple vines and cooling moss.

Amidst the foliage, a single lily,  
numb and pale with suffering,  
rises beyond the leaves of sorrow.

Its petals are luminous to behold  
as, bathed in white moonlight,  
it sends its mystical prayer aloft to the blue crystal sphere.

Original poem, in French, by Maurice Maeterlinck.  
Translation into English by Stephen Pruslin.  
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INTERVAL

MESSIAEN b. 1908

Abîme des Oiseaux (3rd Movt. of Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps)

The Quartet was written whilst Messiaen was a prisoner of war in Silesia. It was finished in January 1941 and its first performance was given in that month by the composer with three fellow prisoners playing clarinet, violin and 'cello.

In his preface to the score, Messiaen says of the third movement 'the abyss (l'abîme) is time, with its moments of sadness and of weariness. Birds are the opposite of time; they are the desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and joyous song'.

GEOFFREY KING b. 1949

Corona Stellarum for piano solo (1978)

This piece was written recently as a companion to my *Ave Maris Stella*. It is in four sections, the first a small ternary form, the second a very slow melody (sometimes branching into two) over a rhythmic ostinato borrowed from Ravel's *Le Gibet*, the third a scherzo-like section leading to an arch-shaped melody much disguised which approximates formally to the classical coda. The sections are entitled *a crown of stars, song, angels, moon*.

MONTEVERDI—KING

Ave Maris Stella—Trove (1972)

This is a setting of the famous sixth-century hymn of Fortunatus. The text is set, many notes to each syllable. The most unusual feature of the work however, is that it begins and ends with an arrangement of an earlier setting of these same words — Monteverdi's from his *Vespers* of 1610.

Ave Maris Stella  
Dei Mater Alma  
Atque Semper Virgo  
Felix Coeli Porta  
Amen

Hail star of the sea,  
Blessed ever virgin  
Mother of God, the Happy  
Gate to Heaven.

GEOFFREY KING b. 1949

Gaelic Songs (1978) for flute, clarinet, percussion, celesta, piano, harp and guitar

1. Sad am I
2. What will I do now?
3. Mór, do you think you'll marry?
4. A thousand curses
5. 3 dances (a) I wish the other pullet would lay  
(b) Bogiemen in the hill  
(c) Bring Alan over to me
6. My dear one
7. The old woman would reel

This little anthology of Scottish Gaelic Songs has been selected from material gathered in the Hebrides over the last 20 years. The arrangements stick quite close to the original tapes (the instrumentation of No. 1, for example, a waulking song, reflects the way in which a second voice keeps on joining in, refrain-like). However, I have added various doublings and sometimes harmonies.

I am indebted to Morag MacLeod for helping me to select these pieces and to her and her colleagues at the School of Scottish Studies for allowing me access to tapes and transcriptions, and not least to the singers themselves.

Programme notes by G.K. and P.N.

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*Next concert: Thursday 9th March Reid Concert Hall*

CONCERT BY STUDENTS OF THE  
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Programme includes a selection of French and Italian madrigals and piano music by Debussy and Quilter.

*Admission free*

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THE STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY  
OF MUSIC

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 9 March 1978