

J.S. BACH 1685-1750

Cantata No.182 "Himmelskönig, sei willkommen" (1714)

(Libretto by Franck for Palm Sunday)

- 1. Sonata
- 2. Chorus *Himmelskönig, sei willkommen*
- 3. Recitativo *Siehe, siehe, ich komme*
- 4. Aria *Starkes Lieben, das dich, grosser
Gottessohn, von dem Thron*
- 5. Aria *Leget euch dem Heiland unter*
- 6. Aria *Jesu, lass durch Wohl und Weh*
- 7. Choral Fantasia *Jesu, deine Passion*
- 8. Chorus *So lasset uns gehen in Salem der Freuden*

Next Concert: Thursday 1 May

PETER WALLFISCH *piano*

MICHAEL FREYHAN *piano*

HINDEMITH Sonata for 2 pianos

REGER Variations on a theme by Beethoven Op.86

HANS GAL Three Marionettes

SAINT SAENS Variations on a theme by Beethoven Op.35

15 pence

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CONCERTS

1979-80

PETER WALLFISCH *piano*

MICHAEL FREYHAN *piano*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 1 May 1980

HINDEMITH 1895–1963

Sonata for Two Pianos

This work was written in 1942 at Yale University, at a time when Hindemith was much concerned with broadening the repertoire of small instrumental groups, and the large output of this period includes sonatas for things as disparate as harp, double bass and piano, trombone and piano, organ, as well as violin, viola, cello and piano and other regular combinations. His deeply rooted sense of tradition is evident in the melodic lines, phrases and overall regulation of tonal tension and relaxation, and his craftsmanly management of counterpoint.

There are five movements.

1. *Glockenspiel* — an odd movement of repeated notes and cadences, setting a texture between the two instruments.
2. *Allegro* — a typical boisterous section with much quaver movement.
3. *Kanon* — the second piano follows what the first piano plays exactly one octave below and one bar later. The whole point of a canon, of course, is that this 'staggering' of a piece *with* itself still makes good musical sense. Gentle and lyrical.
4. *Recitative* — the music represents directly the vocalisation of an old English Verse "This World's Joy" from the fourteenth century.
5. The finale is a lengthy fugue of great drive and power eventually recalling an atmosphere of the opening *Glockenspiel*.

MAX REGER 1873–1916

Variations and Fugue on a theme by Beethoven Op.86

This gigantic work was composed in the summer of 1904 and first performed in October of that year in Munich, with the composer playing one of the pianos. The variations demonstrate Reger's command of the variations and fugal style in a truly grandiose way. He uses fully the possibilities of the two keyboards, exploring every facet of tonal contrast and effect of dialogue, always maintaining great lucidity in the part-writing. The theme of the Variations is taken from the last of Beethoven's eleven Bagatelles op.119, a splendid melody closely related to the opening of the Sonata op.110. The twelve variations go through a wide variety of keys, only four of them are in the home tonality of B flat! The eighth for instance is almost wholly atonal in its remote mysticism and contrasts excitingly with the Scherzo-like seventh, full of vivid colours, and the ninth which is savagely

percussive. The fugue seems at first to be unrelated, but eventually it is revealed that it forms a countersubject to the original theme. The work ends with a very broad Coda of symphonic splendour and fulness. In 1915 Reger transcribed the work for orchestra, omitting variations 2, 4, 8 and 9 and reversing the succession of the remaining ones and changing key of some of them.

INTERVAL

HANS GAL 1890

Three Marionettes for Piano Duet Op.74

Pantalone
Colombina
Arlecchino

The Italian *Commedia dell'arte* with its traditional characters and improvised action has always had an irresistible appeal for me. When I was young, piano duet playing was a favourite pastime of music lovers. I am afraid this habit has very much diminished meanwhile, but I have always maintained my love for it. Here is a specimen, connected with the subject mentioned above: musical portraits of three of those traditional characters, put together as a little suite; grave, ceremonious *Pantalone*, graceful *Colombina*, and gay, sportive *Arlecchino*. H.G.

SAINT-SAËNS 1835–1921

Variations on a theme by Beethoven Op.35

Saint-Saëns was one of the most productive composers of the 19th century, writing music in all styles and having a marked influence upon French culture, its music and composers (Fauré was his pupil). He seems to perpetuate the eighteenth century musical spirit of good craftsmanship and could also be described as a traditionalist. It is not surprising, therefore, that he took his theme for these variations from the Trio of the Minuet of the Sonata in E flat op.31 No.3 by Beethoven — a movement for which he seemed to have had a great attraction for there is more than a slight reference to this same Trio in 'Kangaroos' (*Carnival of Animals*.)

His power as craftsman is shown vividly in these Variations, written in 1874, which are an interesting exercise and commentary on Beethoven, in Saint-Saens' eyes. The theme provides the composer with chordal leaps of an octave, a ninth and a tenth, interspersed with legato, melodic fragments. However, before stating the theme, an introduction (later used as variation 8) gives the hint that full use is to be made of these intervals. There are ten variations in all, mostly of the light-hearted nature. No. 7 is a mock Funeral March and the penultimate one a fugue, which gives way to a high-spirited final Scherzo-Presto. It is related that at one performance Saint-Saëns himself lost his nerve here, rushing ahead regardless of his partner, winning the race with a lead of one bar!

Next Concert: Thursday 8 May

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

directed by PETER NELSON

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with

COLIN HEGGIE *baritone*

CHARLES BELL *reciter*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 8 May 1980