

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH CONCERT SERIES AUTUMN · WINTER 2010

Concerts at The University

Tuesday 9 November 2010

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Roxburgh Quartet

Ulrike Fenner · violin

Sharleen Clapperton · violin

Feargus Hetherington · viola

Helen Duncan · cello

Programme of works by PURCELL and MOZART



Pavane and Chaconne

Henry Purcell (1658-1695)

The short life of Henry Purcell spanned one of the most tumultuous periods in English history. During his childhood the country was still recovering from a long and bloody Civil War. In 1660 the English monarchy was restored to power under Charles II, and at the tender age of ten Henry composed an ode to the new king. Nevertheless, the Restoration did not bring stability. As court composer to the ill-fated monarch James II and VII, Purcell found himself at the heart of a nation in turmoil. He was to witness both the king's subsequent betrayal and the birth of English democracy during the so called Glorious Revolution.

Purcell's early death did not prevent him from producing a remarkable body of work. Nevertheless, while his opera *Dido and Aeneas* is familiar to audiences around the world many of his instrumental pieces remain less well known. The *Pavane and Chaconne* were originally composed around 1680 as fantasias for a consort of viols. Purcell had by this time already demonstrated an extraordinary mastery of the idiom. He even took the genre to its farthest extreme by composing a Fantasia in F 'upon one note'.

As a dance form, the *pavane* was said to have originated from the Italian town of Padua. It has often been associated with processional music of a somewhat melancholy character. Purcell captures this mood perfectly by juxtaposing heartrending minor 6ths with rising and falling chromatic lines. The *chaconne* weaves a series of elegant harmonies and gentle syncopations around the repeating line or 'ground bass' of the cello.

Sharleen Harshenin

Quartet No. 19 in C, K. 465 'Dissonance'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

- (i) Adagio
- (ii) Andante cantabile
- (iii) Menuetto and Trio
- (iv) Allegro

The C Major K. 465, Dissonance Quartet acquired its incongruous nickname from the slow introduction that offended the 18th-century sensibility—so much that audiences insisted they heard wrong notes and players asked the publisher for corrected scores. Reportedly, Haydn commented, "Well, if Mozart wrote it, he must have meant it." All this merely points to the inventive and groundbreaking quality of the set of quartets dedicated to Haydn, and, in particular to the "Dissonance" or "Dissonant" quartet, as it was called.

Indeed, the opening Adagio is disturbing even to modern ears, not on the basis of its dissonance but certainly because of its ominous nature suggested by the repeated notes of the cello and the pervading dark tonality. Without warning, we are thrust into tragedy. Twenty-two bars later, Mozart bursts into the brightest of C major merriment. We are left astounded.

The second movement, Andante cantabile, is one of Mozart's most rapturous songs. The rapture, however, is underscored by profundity. A four-note theme is passed among the instruments, followed by a curious duet between the highest and lowest sonorities of the string quartet: the first violin and cello.

Contrast again marks the third movement in what could be best described as horizontal versus vertical music. The gentle Menuetto flows along in canon-style until the Trio section, in which hear the upward and downward leaps in melodic line, a technique for which Mozart is renowned. The minor key of the Trio also contributes to the sense of contrast dominating this movement.

All thoughts of darkness are dispelled in the final movement, Allegro, exuding all of Mozart's glorious wit, charm and good humour as well as his great compositional skills, including his use of counterpoint. A brilliant coda brings this adventurous masterpiece to a glorious end.

Feergus Hetherington

ROXBURGH QUARTET

The warmth, intimacy and passion which audiences comment on in Roxburgh Quartet performances can be explained by the long held musical friendships within the group and by their shared dream of what music making is about. Violinists Uli Fenner and Sharleen Clapperton come from Lübeck and Vancouver respectively, violist Feergus Hetherington was born in Glasgow and cellist Helen Duncan is from Edinburgh.

The members of the quartet have studied with inspirational teachers such as Chris Rowland, Walter Levin, Thomas Kakuska, Irvine Arditti, Paul Tortelier and Lukas Hagen. Formed in 2005 and based in Edinburgh, the quartet's repertoire ranges from the baroque to contemporary music, meeting with great success with "Schir Corbie Ravin" by James Clapperton, in which the history, poetry and music of Scotland are reflected. The group is committed to bringing live performance to as wide an audience as possible and their concerts are highly popular with people of all ages. They are particularly thrilled about the number of young people who keep coming back for more!

Roxburgh's 2010/11 season has so far included an extensive tour of the West Coast of Scotland with further concerts scheduled for the Highlands and Eastern Scotland.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Friday 12 November

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Jessica Beeston · viola

Andrew Johnston · piano

SCHUMANN Märchenbilder Op.113

HANS GÁL Suite for Viola and Piano

HUMMEL Fantasy for Viola and Piano

ADMISSION FREE

Saturday 13 November

7.30pm

Reid Concert Hall

Edinburgh Studio Opera

ESO soloists and musicians join together for an evening of entertainment, performing much-loved and well-known operatic arias. Please check the website for more information www.edinburghstudioopera.com

ADMISSION FREE but donations welcome

Tuesday 16 November

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

A varied programme of chamber music performed by pupils of St. Mary's Music School

ADMISSION FREE