

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH CONCERT SERIES SPRING · SUMMER 2011

Concerts at The University

Tuesday 1 February 2011

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Morwenna Del Mar · cello

Simon Smith · piano

Programme of works by LEIGHTON,
PÄRT and MACMILLAN.



Alleluia Pascha Nostrum

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

This work was commissioned by Raphael Wallfisch and Richard Markham with funds provided by the Arts Council. It was completed in 1981 and the first performance took place in a BBC concert in Manchester. Like the Missa de gloria for organ (composed in the previous year) it is based on plainsong melodies from the 12th century Salisbury Chant for Easter Day, and this material (freely varied and extended) is present almost throughout. The work is in six main sections played without a break and these may briefly be described as follows:

1. An intense introduction on cello solo (based on the Alleluia) leading to a slow accompanied melody which is entirely original. This is varied with pizzicato accompaniment and works towards a climax.
2. A slow pulsating variation again using the Alleluia.
3. A further variation marked Presto precipitoso which gradually builds up the tension and leads to:
4. A broad statement of the melody (varied) of the Haec dies.
5. A return of the slow original melody of Section 1.
6. A mystical epilogue in which the cello sings quiet variations on the melody of the Epistle for the day (Lectio Epistolae beati Pauli Apostoli). The music eventually fades away in the highest range of cello solo.

Kenneth Leighton

Spiegel im Spiegel (1978)

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Spiegel im Spiegel (Mirror in the Mirror) was composed in 1978 as a work for violin and piano, and has subsequently been published in versions for a large number of other instruments. It is the last work that Pärt composed before leaving his native Estonia, and one of the earliest examples of his 'tintinnabuli' style of composition, which – in its most simple form, as exemplified here – consists of a very simple melodic part, usually derived from scale fragments, against an accompaniment made up of arpeggiated diatonic triads.

Cello Sonata No 1

James MacMillan (b.1959)

- I. Face
- II. Image

The work was commissioned by the Bath and Queensland Biennial Festivals of 1999 and specially written for its dedicatee Raphael Wallfisch. The most important element in the Sonata's two movements is the interval of a minor third, from which emerges much of the music's material and which binds the ideas together.

The first movement *Face* begins with a lyrical, cantabile melody for the cello accompanied by delicate trills, shimmering tremolandi and scurrying scales on the piano. The cello gradually descends to its lowest register with a brooding and introspective theme. Against this the piano has a completely contrasting idea – an innocent and simple theme like a child's clockwork musical toy.

The cello writing becomes faster, evoking the dance lilt of a jig, but the piano gradually becomes more ominous. This leads to a central 'fantasy' section of violence and brutality with strange, surprising sounds coming from both instruments.

Another dance-like episode follows for pizzicato cello, punctuated by brittle clusters on the piano. Towards the end of this section a short, keening, two-note figure emerges and provides the basis of the final section. The cello rises anxiously and expressively using only five notes (across a number of octaves) while the piano material is based on a martial idea that becomes increasingly agitated. The climax of this interaction leads to a short coda in which the music winds down through a number of earlier ideas.

The second movement *Image* is a mirror image of *Face*. The structural procession of elements is inverted, and the roles of the instruments are reversed. Even some of the themes are retrograded. The *coda* brings the music back to the melodic and tonal simplicities of the opening bars of the first movement, before fading serenely to nothing.

James MacMillan

Morwenna Del Mar graduated in 2009 with a Masters in Music and an Orchestral Studies Diploma from the Eastman School of Music, New York, where she studied for two years with Professor Steven Doane. She gained a postgraduate performance diploma (with Distinction and DipRAM for outstanding final recital) from the Royal Academy of Music in 2007, having graduated from Cambridge University with an Honours Degree in Music in 2005.

Morwenna enjoys a busy freelance schedule as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician. She has performed in solo and chamber concerts in the Purcell Room, Leeds Town Hall, Colston Hall (Bristol), St James's Church (Piccadilly, London), West Road Concert Hall and Kettle's Yard (Cambridge), the Duke's Hall (Royal Academy of Music), and as part of the St Endellion (Cornwall), Shoreham (Kent), Seaton (Devon), Budleigh Salterton (Devon) and Norfolk & Norwich Festivals. Performances with orchestra include concertos by Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Elgar, and Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme, with recent solo recitals including at the Budleigh Salterton Festival, Courtauld Gallery (Somerset House) and St James's Church, Piccadilly, and a performance James Macmillan's *Kiss on Wood* as part of the King's College Easter Festival in King's Chapel, Cambridge, in the presence of the composer.

Simon Smith was born in Northumberland in 1983. At St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh he studied piano with Richard Beauchamp and composition with Tom David Wilson, also receiving lessons from John Maxwell Geddes and James MacMillan. At Clare College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 2005, he studied composition with Giles Swayne.

As a pianist he has performed many of the landmarks of the 20th-century piano repertoire, most notably the complete piano music of Alfred Schnittke, several of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke* and the complete etudes of György Ligeti, following a performance of which he was acclaimed as "a phenomenon – nothing daunts him, technically or musically" (*The Scotsman*). For Delphian Records Simon has recorded the complete piano music of James MacMillan along with the Piano Sonata by Stuart MacRae, a disc of piano music by Hafliði Hallgrímsson and solo and chamber works by Thomas Wilson, all of which have met with wide critical acclaim. Future plans include a recording of Schnittke's complete piano music.

Following the premiere of his orchestral piece *Paragon* in May 2001, Simon was recognised as "clearly a composer determined to go places" (*The Scotsman*). His subsequent large-scale composition *Crucifixus*, premiered in Edinburgh in 2002, was described as "beautifully paced, finely structured, Passion music for today... a direct and emotional work" (*The Herald*). In 2004 his orchestral piece *Still* won the Cambridge University Music Society Composition Competition, and *The Time That Remains*, for orchestra, was premiered in Bristol in 2007. His most recent orchestral work *Against All Things Ending* has just been shortlisted in the University of St Andrews 600th Anniversary Composition Competition and will be premiered there in April.

FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Friday 4 February, 1.10pm. St Cecilia's Hall, Niddry Street.

Performances by current music students from the University of Edinburgh.

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