

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH CONCERT SERIES SPRING · SUMMER 2012

Concerts at The University

Tuesday 27 March 2012

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Programme of music performed by current music students from the University of Edinburgh including the winner of the Tovey Memorial Prize 2012.



Paul Grant · baritone
Stuart Hope · piano

Vier Ernste Gesänge Op.121 (Four Serious Songs)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Written only a year before his death and the last work published before he died, Brahms' *Vier Ernste Gesänge* contain a multitude of emotions and a number of questions concerning the purpose and value of life. Saddened by the news of Clara Schumann's stroke, Brahms naturally started contemplating his own life and started working on the song cycle, completing it on 7th May 1896 – his last birthday. With sacred texts from the Bible and the Apocrypha being used, Brahms manages to explore the spiritual side of death and what comes after.

The cycle opens with a solemn piano ostinato which echoes that of Brahms' earlier work, *Begräbnisgesang*, which is then taken over by the singer. This theme is alternated with moments of sudden, hurried triplets which leads the singer to the climactic question, asking 'who knows if man's soul rises up?' The second song is more reflective in nature as the singer observes the injustice and oppression on the earth which leads to the singer praising the dead and the unborn as they do not have to suffer such oppression. The third song contains the turning point of the song cycle. By looking at death and the bitterness experienced in those who die young, the piece shifts from E minor to E major and the text that follows describes how welcoming death is for someone who has lived a long life or for someone who is ill: for them, it is a release. The final song is a change, not only by using a text from the New Testament but in the nature and outcome of the piece. While similar to the opening of the cycle by mentioning that man, despite his efforts, can do nothing, it ends with the declaration that the greatest thing is love – which is the greatest commandment.

PDG

Ecclesiastes 3:19-22

Denn es gehet dem Menschen wie dem Vieh;
wie dies stirbt, so stirbt er auch;
und haben alle einerlei Odem;
und der Mensch hat nichts mehr denn
das Vieh: denn es ist alles eitel.

For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.

Es fährt alles an einem Ort; es ist alles von Staub gemacht, und wird wieder zu Staub.

Wer weiß, ob der Geist des Menschen aufwärts fahre, und der Odem des Viehes unterwärts unter die Erde fahre?

Darum sahe ich, daß nichts bessers ist, denn daß der Mensch fröhlich sei in seiner Arbeit, denn das ist sein Teil.

Ecclesiastes 4:1-3

Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle, die Unrecht leiden unter der Sonne; und siehe, da waren Tränen derer, die Unrecht litten und hatten keinen Tröster; und die ihnen Unrecht täten, waren zu mächtig, daß sie keinen Tröster haben konnten.

Da lobte ich die Toten, die schon gestorben waren, Mehr als die Lebendigen, die noch das Leben hatten;
und der noch nicht ist, ist besser, als alle beide, und des Bösen nicht inne wird,
das unter der Sonne geschieht.

Ecclesiastes 41:1-2

O Tod, wie bitter bist du, wenn an dich gedenket ein Mensch, der gute Tage und genug hat
und ohne Sorge lebet; und dem es wohl geht in allen Dingen und noch wohl essen mag!

O Tod, wie bitter bist du.

O Tod, wie wohl tust du dem Dürftigen, der da schwach und alt ist, der in allen Sorgen steckt,
und nichts Bessers zu hoffen noch zu erwarten hat!

O Tod, wie wohl tust du!

All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upwards and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.

But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at least in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things: yea, unto him that is yet able to receive meat!

O death, acceptable is thy sentence unto the needy, and unto him whose strength faileth, that is now in the last age, and is vexed with all things, and to him that despaireth, and hath lost patience!

I Corinthians 13:1-3, 12-13

Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engels-zungen redete, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wär' ich ein tönend Erz, oder eine klingende Schelle.

Und wenn ich weissagen könnte, und wüßte alle Geheimnisse und alle Erkenntnis, und hätte allen Glauben, also daß ich Berge versetzte, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wäre ich nichts.

Und wenn ich alle meine Habe den Armen gäbe, und ließe meinen Leib brennen, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wäre mir's nichts nütze.

Wir sehen jetzt durch einen Spiegel in einem dunkeln Worte; dann aber von Angesicht zu Angesichte.

Jetzt erkenne ich's stückweise, dann aber werd ich's erkennen, gleich wie ich erkennt bin.

Nun aber bleibt Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei; aber die Liebe ist die größte unter ihnen.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Emmeline McCracken · violin
Simon Coverdale · piano

Violin Sonata No.3 in C minor, Op. 45

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

(i) Allegro molto ed appassionato

Edvard Grieg left a relatively small output of chamber music: only six works, of which three are violin sonatas. The C minor sonata remains the most popular, and was completed whilst Grieg was residing in Troldhaugen, Norway in 1887. Grieg joined violinist Adolf Brodsky in its premiere at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig in December that year. The Violin Sonata No.3 is a three-movement work in which folk elements are prevalent in melodies and rhythmic patterns but in which the harmonies remain in the traditional Romantic era style.

The first movement, allegro molto ed appassionato, opens heroically and boldly with the theme played by the violinist on the deep, robust G string. Melodies and themes flow seamlessly between each other following no particular compositional form. The opening theme however makes many disguised appearances throughout the movement. Motifs are also regularly passed between the violinist and pianist. Despite there being a feeling of conquest and bravery in this first movement there is also a feeling of uneasiness and nervousness portrayed by the consistent syncopations. These contrasting feelings are created by the marvel of contrasting themes being relentlessly contrasted and juxtaposed.

Svetoslav Todorov · piano

Scherzo No. 2 in B Flat Minor Op.2

Frederick Chopin (1810 – 1849)

The word "scherzo" means "joke" in Italian; however, the opening of Chopin's *Scherzo No 2 in B Flat Minor* doesn't sound very "joking", but something mysterious. It was composed and published in 1837, five years after the first. It was dedicated to Countess Adele Fürstensein. Robert Schumann, a composer who frequently wrote about his contemporaries' works, compared this *Scherzo* to a Byronic poem, "so overflowing with tenderness, boldness, love and contempt." Wilhelm von Lenz (one of Chopin's pupils) wrote of the *sotto voce* opening that "For Chopin it was never questioning enough, never soft enough, never vaulted enough. It must be a charnel-house."

The overall structure of the Chopin *Scherzo No 2* is sonata form. The tempo marking is *presto* with the main melody marked *con anima* (animated). Although the *scherzo* is in the key of B Flat Minor, most of the work is written in D Flat major for the main section, and A Major for the middle section. In contrast to the *Scherzo No 1*, the second *Scherzo* is somewhat more contained and melodically pleasing, and is perhaps the most popular of the four *Scherzi*.

Basso Ostinato

Rodion Shchedrin (b.1932)

Rodion Shchedrin is one of the most popular and honoured Russian composers and pianists nowadays. He was the Winner of the Lenin Prize (1984), USSR State Prize (1972), the State Prize of the Russian Federation (1992), the Dmitri Shostakovich Prize (1993) and many others. For over a decade, he was chairman of the Composers' Association of the Russian Federation. He is married to the famous Russian prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. He divides his time between Germany and Russia, teaching and composing.

Basso Ostinato (1961) is probably his most popular masterpiece and is performed worldwide. The *Basso Ostinato* meaning is one of the forms of variation in music, based on the repetition of an unchanging theme over and over in the bass (lowest) voice; this theme is accompanied by changing themes in the higher voices. In the music of the 19th and 20th centuries the *ostinato* technique has gone beyond the *basso ostinato* and has become one of the basic formative principles in various elements of musical language (melody, rhythm, harmony, and so forth). Shchedrin's piece is polyphonic, fast and fluctuating in different dynamics. That makes its performing very difficult and virtuoso but attractive, impressive and enjoyable.

Born and raised in Edinburgh, **Paul Grant** is in his final year of studying music at The University of Edinburgh. He studies singing with Rupert Forbes and was a finalist in the 2012 Tovey Memorial Prize Competition. Throughout his time at university, Paul has focussed on performance and music in the community. Through the community music course, Paul has taken part in two projects, working with 300 Edinburgh school children: *The Quicken Tree* (2011) and *The City Sings* (2012), while also running a music group for adults with acquired brain injuries at the Astley Ainsley Hospital. Recent solo performances include Schubert's *Mass in G*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and *The Messiah* and John Adams' *The Wound Dresser* with the Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra. Operatic roles include Cadmus (*Semele*, Handel) and Keeper of the Madhouse (*The Rake's Progress*, Stravinsky) and in 'opera scenes', Count Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart), Henry Kissinger (*Nixon in China*, Adams) and Marco (*Gianni Schicchi*, Puccini) all with Edinburgh Studio Opera – of which he was President this past year. Paul also sings with the National Youth Choir of Scotland, Edinburgh University Singers and has sung with the Edinburgh Festival Chorus which has led to concerts in the Edinburgh International Festival, BBC Proms in London and tours to London, Germany and Italy. Forthcoming concerts include Fauré's *Requiem* with the Edinburgh Practice Choir.

Emmeline McCracken began violin tuition in Aberdeen at the age of five, under the guidance of Shelagh Reid. In this time she played in a variety of orchestras including the Aberdeenshire Youth Orchestra, Grampian Youth Orchestra, the Robert Gordon's College school orchestra and many more as part of the Aberdeen city music centre. While at school Emmeline gained her Higher and Advanced Higher Music certificates and was awarded the Charles Graham Music Travel Prize for gaining the top place in Advanced Higher music. She is now in her fourth year of a BMus degree at the University of Edinburgh, studying violin under the tutelage of Uli Fenner. Since studying at the University Emmeline has been a member of the University's Chamber, Symphony and String Orchestras and is currently playing in the Composers' Orchestra. For the past two years Emmeline's main focus has been working on and playing in various community music projects, including "The Quicken Tree" and "The City Sings". In the future Emmeline hopes to undertake post-graduate study in music therapy, specialising in supporting children with additional needs.

Svetoslav Todorov is a young Bulgarian pianist, singer, chamber musician, composer, teacher and accompanist. He started playing the piano at the age of six in a musicians' family in his hometown Dobrich. Six years later he moved to the national music school, Dobri Hristov, in Varna City, where he graduated in 2010. Before coming to the University of Edinburgh in September 2011 as a first-year music student, Svetoslav studied piano with Prof. Stella Dimitrova-Maystorova at the National Bulgarian Conservatoire, Pancho Vladigerov, in the capital Sofia. Svetoslav has participated in many festivals and concerts all over Europe (e.g. concerts in Gaveau Hall in Paris 2010, in Moscow Conservatoire's Rachmaninov Hall 2009, in Madeira Island, Portugal 2010 and many others), and has won international awards. He has collaborated with many orchestras in Bulgaria and has enjoyed participating in variety of TV shows and broadcastings. His musical interests vary from classical and jazz, to film and contemporary music styles. Svetoslav is this year's winner of the Tovey Memorial Prize.

FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Friday 30 March

1.00pm**

St Cecilia's Hall

James Gilchrist · tenor

Anna Tilbrook · piano

SCHUBERT Die Schöne Müllerin

ADMISSION FREE

** As this will be a live broadcast in collaboration with BBC Radio 3, the audience must be seated by 12.45pm