
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Spring - Summer 2016

Friday 4 March 2016

1.10pm

Greyfriars Kirk

Morley Whitehead · organ

Programme of works by **J.S. BACH**, **JONGEN**,
VAN HULSE and **FRANCK**.

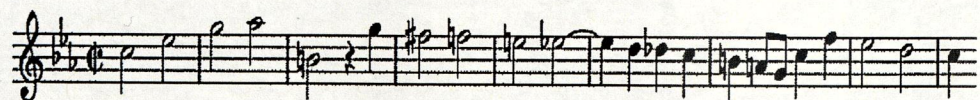


THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Ricercar à6 from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 -1750)

The Musical Offering is a collection of keyboard canons, fugues, and other pieces, all based on a single theme given to the composer by Frederick the Great, to whom they are dedicated. The Ricercar à6, a closely wrought six-voice fugue and the highpoint of the entire work, was described by musicologist Charles Rosen as the most significant piano (sic) composition in history, partly because it is one of the first – although we hear it today played on the organ, where it seems perfectly at home! The “Thema Regium” is present, in one form or another, in almost every bar.



Petit Prélude W.319

Joseph Jongen (1873 -1953)

Born in Liège, Jongen was a virtuoso pianist and organist, and a “mainstream” composer of some 400 works, although it is mostly for his organ music that he is remembered today. The 3-minute long Petit Prélude is a charming miniature: an aria for the “Hautbois” (Oboe) stop, and almost certainly written for use at the Brussels Conservatoire, where the composer was professor and later director.

Biblical Sketches - Four Impressions from the Pentateuch, Op.107

Camil van Hulse (1897 -1988)

Van Hulse, too, came from Belgium (apart from the Bach, all the music in today's programme is by Belgian composers), although he later settled in America. He composed prolifically for the organ – works both great and small. These 4 quasi-improvisatory “impressions” are best explained by reading the texts which inspired them. The fourth, with its obsessive repetition of the 11-note rhythm heard in the first 2 bars, is particularly powerful.

1. **The Creation.** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested... (Genesis 2, 1-2);
2. **Moses brings the Decalogue from Mount Sinai.** And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. (Exodus 31, 18);
3. **The Blessing.** The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6, 24-26);
4. **The Death of Moses.** And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. (Deuteronomy 34, 8.)

Choral No.1 in E major

César Franck (1822 -1890)

The composer's Trois Chorals for organ are his swan-song, the publisher's proofs being corrected, it is said, on his death-bed, and their appearing in print but posthumously. They are arguably his finest work.

All three Chorals are of considerable magnitude, each playing some 13-14 minutes. As has often been pointed out, they are NOT choral preludes; rather they may be seen as closely-wrought variations on choral-like themes, and owing something at least in the matter of architecture, if not in melody and harmony, to Beethoven's late quartets. Franck himself said of the first Choral that “The choral is not what [at first] you think it is”, and certainly what might be termed the principal theme makes its first appearance some 2 or 3 minutes into the piece – on the very distinctive “Voix Humane” stop. The overall gradual increase in tension throughout the course of the work (1 or 2 “false” climaxes on the way notwithstanding) is remarkable, and is only resolved (to wonderful effect) on the last page, when we hear the main theme at last back in the home key, harmonised with massive chords and given canonic treatment on the pedals, in a blaze of Full Organ.

Morley Whitehead is a Man of Kent, and studied at the Royal College of Music, London, where his teachers included the late Herbert Howells. Whilst a student he was a multiple prize winner at both the Associateship and Fellowship diploma examinations of the Royal College of Organists, and was awarded the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

In 1979, he moved to Edinburgh, to become Assistant Organist at St Giles' Cathedral, a post he held for over ten years. He finally left the High Kirk in 1991 to become Organist & Choirmaster of (what is now) Morningside Parish Church, on the south side of the city. There he is the proud curator of the last "Father" Willis organ to have been built north of the border (in 1901) and which was fully restored by Messrs Harrison & Harrison of Durham in 2004. And in November last year he was appointed Organist at the Thistle Foundation's Robin Chapel, where every Sunday afternoon, after services at Morningside, he accompanies a fully choral service sung by a professional choir.

Morley has worked for many years for Edinburgh University Library, where he is music specialist, and has the care of the Reid Music Library, one of the finest collections of its kind in the United Kingdom. Outside of Library hours he is accompanist to a number of the city's musical institutions, such as Edinburgh Royal Choral Union, Opera Camerata, and Colinton Community Choir. At the same time he undertakes a wide variety of freelance playing, both within Edinburgh and beyond, more often than not as an accompanist; although in recent years he has given recitals too in all three of the city's cathedrals, the Usher Hall, Caird Hall Dundee, and Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum Glasgow. Morley's most recent recording appearance has been with "Cadenza", on their CD "Bright Star", a collection of Christmas music with a largely Scottish flavour.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:

Tuesday 8 March

1.10pm

Methodist Church, Nicolson Square

The Edinburgh Quartet

GAL String Quartet No.1

BARBER Adagio

Admission Free

Friday 11 March

1.10pm

Greyfriars Kirk

John Kitchen (organ)

Music by MARCHAND, CLERAMBAULT, ALAIN and COR KEE

Admission Free