CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Spring - Summer 2019

Tuesday 26 February 2019
1.10pm
Reid Concert Hall

The Edinburgh Quartet

Tijmen Huisingh · violin
Tom Hankey · violin
Catherine Marwood · viola
Mark Bailey · cello

Programme of works by HAYDN, KURTÁG,
J.S. BACH, and GIBBONS.

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Introduzione (Adagio e maestoso)
from *The Seven Last Words Op.51*
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Microlude 1, 2 & 3 from *12 Microludes for String Quartet, Op.13*
György Kurtág (b. 1926)

Contrapunctus 1 from *The Art of Fugue*
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Microlude 4 & 5
György Kurtág

Contrapunctus 6
Johann Sebastian Bach

Microlude 6 & 7
György Kurtág

Fantasia No.1
Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Microlude 8 & 9
György Kurtág

Fantasia No.2
Orlando Gibbons

Microlude 10, 11 & 12
György Kurtág

Contrapunctus 14
Johann Sebastian Bach

Il Terremoto (presto e con tutta forza)
from *The Seven Last Words Op.51*
Joseph Haydn

Haydn himself wrote about *The Seven Last Words*:
'I was requested by a canon of Cadiz to compose instrumental music on *The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross.* It was customary at the cathedral of Cadiz to produce an oratorio every year during Lent, the effect of the performance being not a little enhanced by the following circumstances. The walls, windows, and pillars of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one large lamp hanging from the centre of the roof broke the solemn darkness. At midday, the doors were closed and the ceremony began. After a short service the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words and delivered a discourse thereon. This ended, he left the pulpit, and prostrated himself before the altar. The interval was filled by music. The bishop then in like manner pronounced the second word, then the third, and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse. My composition was subject to these conditions and it was no easy task to compose seven adagios lasting ten minutes each, and to succeed one another without fatiguing the listeners.'

The original version of 1787 was for orchestra but very soon afterwards Haydn arranged the work for string quartet. There is also a contemporary version for keyboard, of which Haydn thoroughly approved, and there are two versions using chorus, only the second of which was Haydn's work.

This is a highly unusual composition with seven slow movements following an introduction and with an added finale. Haydn begins with his Introduction in D minor – the key associated with mode (i) in ancient plainchants; the mode that was used for to reflect the most solemn seasons of the year. In the finale, *Il Terremoto (The Earthquake),* the music is fast-moving and unpredictable, perhaps anticipating the *Representation of Chaos* which opens the later oratorio *The Creation*. Here however, it is placed as the representation of the final moment of Christ's death and the appalling consequences of his time on the Cross.

Roger Williams

The composer György Kurtág was born in Lugoj, Romania, in 1926. As a child he learned to play the piano and, immediately after the Second World War, he went on to study at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. There he met his wife Márta Kinsker and also the composer György Ligeti, who was to become a close friend. For seven years Kurtág studied piano with Kadosa and composition with Veress and Farkas. After the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, he travelled to Paris to take lessons with Milhaud and Messiaen.

This was a difficult time for him and he suffered from severe depression. 'I realised to the point of despair that nothing I had believed to constitute the world was true.' He underwent a course of therapy, discovered Webern and the plays of Samuel Beckett. His spirits thus restored, he returned to Budapest two years later, where he published his first string quartet as his Opus 1. This he dedicated to the therapist, Marianne Stein, who had brought him through his despair. He became teacher of piano and composition at the Academy until he retired in 1993.

Kurtág's reputation grew slowly. It wasn't until his *Messages of the Late Miss R. V. Troussova* for soprano and chamber ensemble was premièred in Paris in 1981 that he achieved international recognition. He often employs serialist principles in his work, but manages to apply these to classical melodic forms. This method of composition can sometimes seem rather off-putting to the general listener, but Pierre Boulez offers a most welcome and very positive insight when he says, 'With it [twelve-note music] music moved out of the world of Newton and into the world of Einstein. The tonal idea was based on a universe defined by gravity and attraction. The serial idea is based on a universe that finds itself in perpetual expansion' (quoted in Peyser, *Boulez*, 1976).

Many of Kurtág's compositions, like the *Microludes*, consist of very short movements. His celebrated *Kafka-Fragments*, for example, is a 55-minute song cycle for voice and solo violin that comprises of settings of 40 brief extracts from Kafka's writings. The critic Tom Service states that Kurtág's compositions often involve 'reducing music to the level of the fragment, the moment'. 'Flowers We Are, Mere Flowers' from *Games* for piano solo is only seven notes in length. On a much larger scale, his first opera, based on Beckett's play *Endgame*, was premièred at La Scala on 15 November 2018, to a rapturous response. The critic Enrico Gerardi considers it 'a masterpiece that will rewrite the history of modern music'.

Such brevity in composition entails maximum concentration and intensity. Written from 1977-8, Kurtág's *12 Microludes for String Quartet, Op.13* lasts hardly ten minutes. The separate pieces each evoke a self-contained world with a unique atmosphere – sometimes calming, sometimes extremely bracing. There are no maps or landmarks, save what our imagination brings to our listening.

György Kurtág celebrates his 93rd birthday at the end of February 2019 – an inspiration to us all!

Ron Butlin

A contemporary Who's Who in European music published in the mid-1740s accorded Telemann 20 pages; Johann Sebastian Bach only got 2 lines. Bach's reputation, such as it was, rested mainly on his skill as a keyboard improviser. Few of his pieces were published in his lifetime and when he died in 1750, both he and his works fell into total oblivion. A few keyboard pieces were treated as exercise pieces, but nothing more. Not until 1829, when Mendelssohn revived the *St Matthew Passion*, did things begin to change. But only very, very slowly. For example, it wasn't until the beginning of the 20th century that, thanks to Pablo Casals, Bach's Cello Suites finally came out of the practice room and into the concert hall. Nowadays, however, even the most 'squeaky-gate' of modern musicians acknowledge Bach as possibly the greatest composer who has ever lived.

Back in the 18th century being a composer was a craft like any other. Some people made furniture, some wrote music. It was often, as in Bach's case, a family business. His father and grandfather were musicians, as were several of his own children. He moved from employer to employer. If he was employed by a church, as in Muhlhausen, he wrote organ and choral music setting the week's text; if it was a court, as in Cöthen, he wrote secular music. In Weimar, being even less appreciated than usual, Bach tried to give notice and was put in jail. There he began writing the first book of preludes and fugues. On release, he was dismissed. He then spent several very happy years at the court of Cöthen until the prince married. His wife turned out to prefer marching bands, uniforms and parades to concerts. Bach had to move again. Offering *St John Passion* as his calling card, he applied to the St Thomaskirche in Leipzig. After Telemann and Graupner had both turned down the position, the committee resigned itself to accepting the relatively unknown Bach. The minutes of the council meeting read: 'As we cannot get the best, we must settle for someone who is second-rate'.

Towards the end of his life, when he was still in Leipzig, Bach began one of his finest works, *The Art of Fugue*. A fugue is a piece of music a bit like a round (e.g. London's Burning), except infinitely more complex. As 'pure' music goes, *The Art of Fugue* must be about the purest. Neither instrumentation nor *tempo* is indicated. Indeed, it is very doubtful if Bach considered the 75-minute (approx.) series of 14 fugues and 4 canons, all arising from the same theme and all in D minor, as a performance piece.

Ron Butlin

Born in December 1583, the seventh of ten children, Orlando Gibbons was baptised on Christmas Day. He was to become a fine composer as well as one of the greatest English organists of the period. The Gibbons were a family of musicians – his brother Edward was choirmaster for the Choir of King's College Cambridge. Aged thirteen, Orlando became a chorister there and was soon composing music for the choir. In 1605 he was made senior organist at the Chapel Royal, a post he retained until his death. In due course, Gibbons became chamber musician to the King and then organist at Westminster Abbey. He died suddenly in 1625, at Canterbury. He had written the music for the wedding of Charles I and, while waiting to take part in the service, suffered an apoplectic stroke. His wife died the following year.

Gibbons is best-known as a composer of church music. At a time when polyphonic music prevailed, he introduced the 'verse anthem' for chorus and solo voices, the soloists having independent instrumental accompaniment, usually keyboard or strings. He wrote many works for keyboard as well as several madrigals – the most popular being 'The Silver Swanne' – and many verse anthems. The first-ever collection of English keyboard music, *Parthenia*, was published in 1611 and contained six pieces by Gibbons in addition to fifteen works by John Bull and William Byrd. His keyboard music is revered to this day. Glen Gould, for example, states that '…the repertoire I'm fondest of tends to emerge from *fin-de-siècle* men. I can't think of anyone who represents the end of an era better than Orlando Gibbons does. Gibbons is my favourite composer – always has been,' (Cott, *Conversations with Glen Gould*, 1984).

Gibbons's collection of *'Fantasies of 3 Parts… composed for viols'* came out in 1610. The printer clearly took great pride in his work as he inserted a note on the title page which read: 'Cut in copper, the like not heretofore extant in England.' Complex and endlessly inventive, these works show a mastery of three- and four-part counterpoint. In most cases a basic theme is treated to extensive development before arriving at a satisfying resolution. They are masterpieces of formal construction, profoundly expressive as well as being charged with a sense of urgency and drama. It is to be regretted that the fantasies do not feature in concert programmes more often as any audience would delight in their subtle shiftings of tone and their juxtapositioning of serenity and breathless excitement.

Ron Butlin

The Edinburgh Quartet has long been celebrated as one of Britain's foremost chamber ensembles, having appeared regularly at prestigious venues across the UK and toured extensively across Europe, the Far and Middle East, and North and South America. In addition to a busy concert schedule the Edinburgh Quartet is frequently featured in radio broadcasts for the BBC and other stations. Recently this has included live appearances on *Classics Unwrapped* (BBC Radio Scotland) and *Jazz Line-Up* and *In Tune* (BBC Radio 3) as well as video recordings for Studio One Sessions, which appear on the BBC Radio Scotland website.

The Edinburgh Quartet is committed to nurturing talent and is resident at the University of Stirling and University of Edinburgh. As well as giving a regular classical concert series at each of these institutions, the players work with composition students, instrumentalists and student teachers. In addition to this the Edinburgh Quartet's outreach programme encompasses workshops for primary and secondary school children and tutoring adults on the Variations Summer School in Ullapool, and their annual tours around Scotland.

Please note today's concert will be followed by a workshop from 3pm to 5pm, when The Edinburgh Quartet will work with student composers on new compositions, one of which will be performed at the lunchtime concert on 19 March.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:

Wednesday 27 February, 2pm
Reid Concert Hall
Tovey Memorial Prize Competition
The Tovey Memorial Prize is awarded annually to the Music student who shows the greatest promise in composition or performance.
Admission Free

Friday 1 March, 1.10pm
Reid Concert Hall
Simon Leach (organ)
C.P.E. BACH sonata in D major
J.S. BACH Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam BWV 684 and 685
STANLEY Voluntary VIII in D minor Op. 5
F. COUPERIN i) plainchant of the First Kyrie
ii) Recit de Cromorne
iii) fugue on the Jeux de Anches
BUXTEHUDE Praeludium in G minor BuxWV 149
Admission Free

Saturday 2 March, 7.30pm
Reid Concert Hall
Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra
William Conway (conductor)
Richard Blaquiere (clarinet)
SPOHR Clarinet concerto No.4
MENDELSSOHN Scottish Symphony
£10 / £5 (concessions) Tickets available on the door

Sunday 3 March, 7pm
Reid Concert Hall
Edinburgh Studio Opera
Mark Rodgers (conductor)
Cover roles from the cast of TCHAIKOVSKY's Eugene Onegin present a narrated concert performance of highlights from the opera.
£5 / £3 Tickets available on the door or via www.edinburghstudioopera.org

Tuesday 5 March, 1.10pm
Reid Concert Hall
Jack Tait Westwell (piano)
BRAHMS Two Rhapsodies Op.79
POULENC Les soirées de Nazelles
Admission Free