

# Fieri Consort & Tim Horton

Friday 3 August 2018 ~ 7.30pm

## **Gesualdo**

O vos omnes  
Illumina faciem tuam

## **György Kurtág**

Prelude and Choral  
(Choral for Benjamin Rajeczky's 80th birthday)

## **Gesualdo**

Itene o miei sospiri  
Merce grido pangiendo

## **Michael Berkeley**

From Haiku Goldfinches and Barn Owl

## **Gesualdo**

Peccantem me quotidie  
Venit lumen tuum

## **Stockhausen**

Klavierstück VIII

## **Gesualdo**

Omnes amici mei

## **György Kurtág**

Hommage a Schubert

## **Gesualdo**

Io tacerò  
Tenebrae facae sunt

INTERVAL

## **Schubert**

Piano Sonata in D major D 850

1. Allegro vivace
2. Con moto
3. Scherzo. Allegro vivace
4. Rondo. Allegro moderato

# Programme Notes

Known popularly as the murderous Prince of Venosa, **Carlo Gesualdo** (1566-1613) led a colourful life. Born into nobility in the 1500s, he killed his wife and her lover after finding them in flagrante delicto and was never charged. After this, he isolated himself in his castle and produced some of the most devastatingly emotional music ever written, using a harmonic language centuries ahead of its time.

He was a deeply religious man who published three books of sacred music. This motet for six voices *O vos omnes* is from his set of liturgical Responsories for Holy Week published in 1611. His setting of the line "if there be any sorrow like my sorrow", is beautiful and full of his signature chromaticism. He bursts out of this sound-world with attention-seeking demands in the next line "Pay attention, all people, and look at my sorrow" with fast-moving polyphony juxtaposed with stark homophony.

We follow this with *Illumina faciem tuam*; a delicate work from his earlier *Cantiones Sacrae* (1603) in which he calls for mercy and depicts shining light in the opening phrase. Arguably, the most beautiful moment harmonically underlies his pitiful call to the Lord, "Domine".

*Itene o miei sospiri*, a madrigal from Gesualdo's fifth book (1611), is full of stark contrasts in mood, with stretched and sustained phrases composed with surprising harmonic shifts which give way to busy passages, particularly in the setting of the last line of the text "Cangerò lieto, in amoroso canto," (and sing a love song). At the beginning of the piece we hear complex word-painting, as "precipitate il volo" is shaped by a descending phrase on "precipitate" (to fall) followed by a fast-moving upwards phrase illustrating the flight of "il volo" (it flies). Also from his fifth book, Gesualdo's setting of *Merce grido piangendo* employs his characteristic juxtaposition of tortured suffering with pleasure and ecstasy. He uses word-painting techniques in the extreme, for example, on the word "grido" (I cry) in the opening line, he writes a jolting upwards leap in the highest voice with an unsettling harmony underneath. This first cry for attention is

followed by a heavy silence as he goes on to realise that no one listens to his pain "ma chi m'ascolta" which is repeated with desperation and frustration. Gesualdo died three years after this in isolation in his castle. In the years that led up to his death, he had his servants beat him, living in a depression, perhaps brought on by guilt for his past murders and misdeeds. It is thought that he took pleasure from these beatings and this is hinted at in the serene major chord which the madrigal resolves to following a sinister chromatic repetition of "Io moro" (I die).

*Peccantem me quotidie* is characteristic of Gesualdo at his most tortured, with a yearning, uneasy chromaticism throughout. The falling interval of a sixth on the word "peccantem" (sin) in the opening motif evokes his personal struggle with sin and darkness. It is immediately answered by its partner: a rising minor third on "quotidie" (daily) to illustrate his daily efforts to redeem himself. Later in the piece he writes a dramatic falling octave for the word "timor" (fear). Perhaps he saves his most experimental chromaticism for his plea for mercy towards the end "miserere mei". These two motets are also from the 1603 *Cantiones Sacrae*, from which we heard *Illumina faciem tuam* earlier.

*Venit lumen tuum* contains a promise of hope, and a sinuous beauty in a much lighter sound-world, featuring rising figures and intervals rather than dropping into dark despair as he did before.

*Io tacerò* from Gesualdo's fourth book (1596) presents a luscious darkness and a sombre mood. The opening phrase "I will be silent, but in my silence", is written in a low tessitura with the top voice noticeably absent/silent. Unusually for Gesualdo, the harmonies do not wander far. As the first part goes on to speak of death, the over-dramatic Gesualdo that we know, heightens the intensity with a rising semitone from G to G# forming a surprising E major to A major cadence on the word "mora" (death) - illustrating 'death' as alien to the rest of the piece. In the second part however, it is the word "cele" (concealed) that leaps downwards to a hidden harmonic world, far from where we thought we were. Gesualdo returns to death calmly in the last line

"Gives voice to silence and to death" with a gentle and resigned plagal cadence finishing in G major. *Tenebrae factae sunt* is again from Gesualdo's *Tenebrae responses*, published in 1611. Similarly to the previous madrigal, *Io tacerò*, the opening phrase "Darkness fell" is scored only for the lower voices in their lowest register. Gesualdo saves his most dramatic word-painting for the voice of Jesus, setting up the entry with octave leaps in many voice-parts on the word "exclamavit" (exclaimed) and then writing homophonically in a major key, "Deus meus" (My God) for the voice of Jesus himself. Gesualdo sets the ending of the text "and [he] gave up the ghost" in his most simple and beautiful style.

Unsurprisingly, Gesualdo was controversial in his own time. Some respected him for his experimental chromaticism, some spoke out against his arrogance at flaunting the rules. Even during his lifetime, fifteen years before his death, he seems to have been regarded as an institution of chromaticism and contrapuntal skill: "exquisite counterpoint, with difficult, beautiful canonic subjects in each part" and was known for being particularly challenging to sing.

by *Fieri Consort*

Although the three piano pieces by **Kurtág**, **Stockhausen** and **Berkeley** are succinct, they are emotionally extreme and fall into a long tradition of pianistic miniatures that one can trace back to Chopin, Schumann, Grieg and Schubert, amongst others. Their relationship to Gesualdo is not direct but allusional. Each composer is writing in an uncompromisingly modern style.

**György Kurtág's** pieces hark back in their titles but use an atonal language. The *Homage to Schubert* uses the rhythm of the song *Der Tod und das Mädchen* to create an expressive world quite removed from its inspiration.

**Karlheinz Stockhausen's** piece *Klavierstücke VIII* is an exercise in strict serial counterpoint that becomes increasingly complex and angry, interspersed with brief flourishes. It packs an extraordinary punch in its two minutes.

**Michael Berkeley's** Haiku contain multiple influences; poetry, of course, birdsong and its depiction in music, not least Messiaen, but also the brevity of Kurtág's music. In his own words "these often elliptical musical fragments were also inspired by the very short pieces of György Kurtág, where less always seems to result in more."

Linking the biography of a composer to the character of their work is often hazardous and none more so than with **Schubert**. Sonata D 850 dates from 1825, a year in which he also worked on his Symphony No. 9 and the A minor Sonata D 845. The latter is one of the more uncompromising of his piano sonatas, dark and angry in its outer movements, and fits well with the image of a tortured composer approaching a premature death. In contrast, D 850, written in Gastein during an Alpine holiday, could not be more different. With many of Schubert's works in major keys post-1823 there is a sense of unease despite any surface jollity but this sonata is joyful, naïve, childlike, openly virtuosic pianistically and without any hint of Schubert's desperate personal concerns. This is not to say that it lacks depth, the second movement being one his most complex and extended utterances, but serenity tends to override any negative feelings.

The first movement is highly energetic and joyful, revelling in the virtuosity that it requires from the pianist. The second movement is extensive and symphonic in its scope, perhaps deserving of Schumann's epithet "heavenly length" as much as anything he wrote. Its tempo marking, however, shows us that it is not a slow movement in the true sense of the term, as a flowing speed is necessary. The *scherzo* is back in the heroic mood of the first movement and contains music that is Viennese in character. The *finale* has confounded some for its naïve nature, including Schumann, but seems entirely appropriate after the heroics that have come before it. Gustav Mahler is known to have played this Sonata for friends and it can be no coincidence that he quotes from this movement in the last movement of his own Fourth Symphony, *Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden* (We enjoy heaven's delights).

by *Tim Horton*

# Musicians

## Tim Horton piano



**Tim Horton** Tim Horton studied at Chetham's School of Music and Trinity College, Cambridge.

In 1995 he replaced Alfred Brendel at short notice in two performances of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle at Symphony Hall, Birmingham and the Royal Festival Hall, London. In 2005 Tim was chosen as the scholar of the Klavier Festival Ruhr at the recommendation of Alfred Brendel.

With the Leonore Piano Trio, Tim has given concerts in Italy and throughout the UK and toured New Zealand. They have performed a cycle of the complete Beethoven Trios at King's Place, London and the Crucible Studio, Sheffield. They have recorded several discs for Hyperion, most recently of the complete Parry Trios. Tim is the pianist with Ensemble 360. Since then they have performed to great acclaim throughout the UK and abroad and released four CDs.

In 2015 Tim completed a four-year cycle of the complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas at the Crucible, Sheffield where he also started a cycle of Schubert Sonatas last Autumn. He made his solo debut at the Wigmore Hall in 2016 and will return as a soloist and chamber musician in the coming seasons.

Tim is deeply committed to the performance of new music with a repertoire that includes pieces by Boulez, Ligeti, Birtwistle, Kurtág, Berio, Huw Watkins, Thomas Adès and Stockhausen, amongst others.

## Fieri Consort

**Lucy Cox** soprano

**Hannah Ely** soprano

**Helen Charlston** mezzo-soprano

**Tom Kelly** tenor

**Chris Lombard** tenor

**James Holliday** bass



Founded in 2012, **Fieri Consort** has evolved into one of the UK's most exciting vocal groups, offering a unique blend of technical precision and theatrical innovation. Performing without a conductor, Fieri presents innovative and engaging programmes, and specialises in the rich and varied tradition of 16th and 17th century Italian repertoire. Performing a cappella, accompanied by early instruments, with guests and even, memorably, with members of their audiences, Fieri's interpretations are always ingenious and informed by the collective experience and knowledge of the group.

Fieri were delighted to be awarded the Cambridge Prize at the prestigious York Early Music Festival in 2017. They have been invited twice to Australia to perform concerts and run workshops, they participated in the Brighton Early Music Festival's young artist's programme, BREMF Live! and have featured several times on BBC Radio 3.



## HISTORY

Founded in 1995 by Adrian Brendel, Plush Festival is a summer concert series of classical and contemporary music run by the Brendel family.

Musicians visit Plush from around the world to perform solo and ensemble works, with the platform given to both new formations and established groups. Programmes span a diverse repertoire; from Bach cantatas and Beethoven quartets to lesser known classical and Romantic works and modern discoveries. Contemporary composers such as Oliver Knussen, Harrison Birtwistle and Thomas Adès regularly feature, alongside jazz, improvisation, folk and song recitals.

The annual Young Musicians Workshop connects aspiring students in Dorset with visiting musicians for an inspirational day of music-making.

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