

Lunchtime Concert

Saturday 15 September 2018 ~ 1pm

Beethoven

Cello Sonata No. 1, Op. 5/1

1. Adagio Sostenuto – Allegro

2. Rondo. Allegro Vivace

Tim Horton, Bjørg Lewis

Schoenberg

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4 for String Sextet

Clark, Volle, Roberts, Gibson, Lewis, Brendel

Programme Notes

With the Op. 5 Sonata **Beethoven** found a brilliant solution to the problem of how to give both piano and cello equal roles in a duo. The later Haydn and Mozart Piano Trios had elevated the cello from its continuo role, but sonatas for these instruments hitherto had “demoted” the piano or harpsichord to the same role. Balance is an obvious problem with this genre, even with eighteenth and early nineteenth century pianos. Beethoven makes sure that neither instrument is playing in the same tessitura unless a particular sonority is required and often the cello will fill in the gaps, so to speak, with the hands of the piano high and low and the cello in the middle, for example.

Although the piano part of the F major Sonata is clearly to the fore in many ways (not least because the part was written for the composer himself to play) the cello is by no means an accompanying instrument. After all, the Sonata was dedicated to King Frederick William II of Prussia, a keen amateur cellist whom Mozart had in mind when writing some of his later String Quartets. The opening Adagio starts with both instruments in unison followed by the cello pronouncing the first melody. Equal status is given to each instrument in regards to exposing themes, one either responding to or copying the other’s statement. The piece is joyful from start to finish and sets a trend for the first four Sonatas in not containing a true slow movement, the Adagio of the first movement serving as an extended introduction to the piece.

by Tim Horton

Arnold Schoenberg

Verklärte Nacht Op. 4 for String Sextet

Verklärte Nacht, composed in 1899, is one of **Schoenberg’s** earliest masterpieces, written in a language that owes much to both Wagner and Brahms, two of the predecessors he most admired. In this ravishingly beautiful sextet

(which Schoenberg later arranged for string orchestra), he uses Wagnerian leitmotifs, and he was clearly influenced by the sound world of Tristan und Isolde. But when it comes the work’s formal construction, Brahms is the dominant influence. Themes are developed by variation, through combination with other themes, and by fragmenting or dissolving them. This is a process that Schoenberg himself admired so much in the music of Brahms – a technique he called ‘developing variation’. So while the use of leitmotifs suggests a Wagnerian kind of musical narrative – aptly so for a work that tells a story without words – we hear Brahms in the approach to development, tonality and form that Schoenberg uses to create a single movement lasting half an hour.

The work takes its title from a poem by the Symbolist writer Richard Dehmel (1863–1920), a kind of German Aubrey Beardsley. When Dehmel’s collection *Weib und Welt* (which includes the poem *Verklärte Nacht*) was published, it caused a scandal, and Dehmel was tried for obscenity and blasphemy. Though he was acquitted, the court demanded that all copies of the book should be burned. In Dehmel’s *Verklärte Nacht*, a man and a woman pass through a moonlit landscape. She confesses to carrying a child that is not his; bathed in light, he tells her that she must have the child, and bear it as their own. At the end of the poem, ‘He clasps her round her strong hips. Their kisses mingle in the night air.’ This erotic text was not only Schoenberg’s inspiration, but also guided the structure of the work which is thus a kind of tone poem for string sextet. The first performance took place on 18 March 1902 in the Vienna Musikverein when it was played by the Rosé Quartet with Franz Jelinek and Franz Schmidt – the latter a cellist as well as a distinguished composer.

by Nigel Simeone



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 have featured, 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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