

Plush 10 ~ Evening Concert

Saturday 15 July 2017 ~ 7.30pm

Haydn

Trio in F sharp minor HOB XV:26

Allegro

Adagio

Tempo di Minuet

Tim Horton, Lawrence Power, Adrian Brendel

Berio

'Naturale' for viola and percussion

Tim Horton, Tim Williams

~

Brahms

Four Ballades, Op. 10

No. 1 in D minor. Andante

No. 2 in D major. Andante

No. 3 in B minor. Intermezzo. Allegro

No. 4 in B major. Andante con moto

Tim Horton

Schumann

Piano Quartet, Op. 47

Sostenuto assai - Allegro ma non troppo

Scherzo: Molto vivace - Trio I - Trio II

Andante cantabile

Finale: Vivace

Corey Cerovsek, Lawrence Power,

Adrian Brendel, Tim Horton

Programme Notes

One of the most rewarding explorations of a composer's archive for me has been the discovery of **Haydn's** piano trios. There are five volumes, of which the last two are filled with masterpieces. There is an undoubted leap in musical adventure in every sense in these later works, as if Haydn had scaled the summit of his craft. They were written between 1794-1797 and are often referred to as the 'London' trios - Haydn spent a successful time there in the years following his retirement from his Esterhazy post.

Haydn used F-sharp minor only twice in his chamber works, and the dark-hued tonality saturates the two outer movements. The trio begins with a crisp allegro in sonata form with two clear thematic areas made vivid by the change from minor to major. The central movement is one of Haydn's finest. A genial shift to F-sharp major is accompanied by a change in tempo and mood for a slow movement that brings to mind the dreamy piano concerti of Mozart. Haydn's piano trios are often considered "accompanied piano sonatas" where violin and cello enjoy only modest roles reinforcing the keyboard as the central player. But this movement demonstrates some truly artful and independent writing for the violin, a feature of all the late trios. Haydn unusually concludes the work with a minuet. Poised, delicate and dark, the minuet gives way to a trio in F-sharp-major that has the lilt and charm of an English ditty. A dramatic flourish bends the music back to the minor-keyed minuet. Perhaps to give extra weight to the movement as a finale, Haydn equips the minuet with a coda.

One of the most individual voices of the 20th century avant-garde was **Luciano Berio**, an Italian composer and performer of bewildering talent who was as well-known for his extraordinary improvisations with his wife Cathy Berberian as he was for his large-scale orchestral works. His musical output defies categorisation, so varied were his pursuits in style and form. He conceived his stunning work 'Naturale' as a violist's stream of consciousness accompanied by percussion accents and tape. The tape consists of

raw field recordings of Peppino Celano, indigenous to Palermo in Sicily, singing the complex *abbagnate* (street vendor cries) of the region. 'Naturale' was originally intended and performed as a dance piece, and some residue of this can be found in the score even if the violist has quite enough to do without this added dimension!

The liberties Berio took in his transcription of the folk songs found in 'Naturale' hint at larger elements of his philosophy of sound. His thoughts on the matter are fascinating: "The act of transcription - like, sometimes, that of translation - may imply three different conditions: The transcriber can identify emotionally with the text, the original text can become a pretext for experimentation; or, finally, it can be overwhelmed and philologically 'abused'. I think you reach a solution when these three conditions co-exist. It is only then, I believe, that an ideal situation occurs; when the three conditions come to blend and coexist freely and with full awareness. Only then does transcription become a truly creative, constructive act. "I'm not an ethnomusicologist, just a pragmatic egoist. I tend to be interested only in those folk techniques and means of expression that I can in one way or other assimilate without a stylistic break, and that allow me to make a few steps forward in the search for a unity underlying musical worlds that are apparently alien to one another."

Perhaps **Brahms** might have resonated with many of Berio's ideas as a passionate collector of folk music himself. His 4 Ballades for solo piano follow a different route altogether, coinciding with the beginning of his lifelong affection for Clara Schumann although written for his friend Julius Otto Grimm. Chopin had written the last of his Ballades 12 years earlier, but Brahms is concerned with a much more literal connection to narrative poetry than Chopin.

The first Ballade is inspired by a poem called 'Edward' whose ancient *ossianic* character is brought vividly to life in the music. The bleak final chords of this first piece are followed by a blaze of sunlight in D major, before the third and most obscure of the set suggests a restless

and tortured character. Some commentators have suggested that Schumann's suicide some months earlier had a profound effect on the 21 year old composer, and this movement is perhaps the clearest allusion to the dramatic shifts of character so evident in Schumann's personality late in life. The wonderful 4th Ballade combines warmth and intimate beauty with nostalgic regret, stretching into an extended entrancing form that is an extraordinary achievement for such a young composer.

Schumann's Piano Quartet was also written 12 years earlier in 1842, his 'annus mirabilis' for chamber music. The quartet is a wonder of clarity and concision that pays homage to Schumann's tireless study of his great predecessors Haydn, Schubert and Beethoven. It is a concentrated and highly integrated composition that manages to naturally incorporate all the key features of Classical chamber music. Melody, counterpoint, motivic development, heartfelt song, scherzo, and fugue. The first movement sonata opens with a slow, spacious introduction. The four note motif stated at the opening also begins the following allegro, and is at the heart of the work's thematic development. The thematic writing in this and the other movements is very simple and optimistic, exposing a rare calm in the composer's state of mind. In this sense it is very much a sibling of the more famous Piano Quintet, celebrating all the good things in life just a short while before the beginning of Schumann's tortured final years.

Adrian Brendel

Music Director



HISTORY

Founded in 1995, 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 and song recitals.

Since 2013 the festival has been running an annual education project connecting aspiring young players in Dorset with visiting musicians.

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