



Queen's University
Belfast

School of Creative Arts

Clare Hammond (piano)

Thursday, 11 October 2012

7.30 pm

Harty Room



Presented in association with Moving on Music

Programme

Suite No. 6 in F sharp minor
HWV 431 (1720)

George Frederic Handel
(1685-1759)

- i) Prélude
- ii) Largo
- iii) Allegro
- iv) Gigue - Presto

Handel, in common with most composers of the period, was a virtuoso keyboard player and particularly well known as an improviser. Much of his harpsichord music was extemporized and has since been lost, but his eight 'Great Suites', published in 1720, soon after he settled in England, remain to posterity. While preserving a sense of the French decorum and elegance characteristic of the dance suite, Handel's operatic and public style is also very much in evidence.

The key of F sharp minor was notoriously problematic in Baroque tuning and often inspired composers to more melancholic or fantastical flights of fancy. In this case, Handel is drawn to a grander style. Both the 'Prélude' and 'Largo' are in French dotted rhythm with thick chordal textures while the Italianate fugue uses suspensions and sustained pedal notes to create an impression of space and majesty. The 'Gigue', the only dance movement in the entire suite, brings us to a more cheerful close.

Piani, Latebre (2010)

Piers Hellawell
(b.1956)

Piani, Latebre ('layers, hiding-places') is a set of three diverse pieces for solo piano. Their order is chosen by the pianist; they are preceded by an introductory flourish presenting a tiny preview of their core material. The title began as a feeble pun on 'piano' the instrument (pianoforte) and the Italian word *piano*, denoting layers or storeys, since the piano offers the ultimate in 'stacked' or layered textures; to this was then added *latebra*, hiding-place, for this music is not just concerned with voicing of simultaneous layers but with the search for hidden corners - expressive places - lurking in the familiar sound-world of the piano.

The work is built upon three archetypal materials of the piano keyboard: the tremolo (rapid alternation of two notes or chords), the scalic flourish up or down the keyboard and a striding idea in melody-and-bass. Each piece combines two of these three building materials, so that each occurs in two pieces. My pianistic concern throughout is with the relative weight, or ‘voicing’, of different elements in the texture. The three pieces have clearly distinguished characters, and rely much on the expressive resource offered by the piano’s different registers. Their differences of character offer alternative dramatic sequences, depending on the ordering; this dramatic choice of running order is, as in other of my works, left to the performer. After each piece is attached a title from the Romantic repertoire, as a mere echo of the instrument’s core repertoire: these are (in tonight’s order) *Ballade*, *Étude* and *Impromptu*.

Piani, Latebre was commissioned by William Howard with funds generously provided by Landmark Chambers, and was premiered by him in Shoreditch Church, London, as part of the 2010 Spitalfields Festival.

(Piers Hellawell)

**Sonata in F minor, Op. 57
“Appassionata” (1804-5)**

**Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)**

- i) **Allegro assai**
- ii) **Andante con moto**
- iii) **Allegro ma non troppo**

The ‘Appassionata’ Sonata was composed at the very beginning of Beethoven’s so-called ‘Middle Period’ when he established his reputation as a great composer. While the most characteristic works of this time, the ‘Eroica’ Symphony or *Leonore (Fidelio)*, were written in a heroic vein, the turbulence and intense foreboding of this sonata precludes such a description. Dedicated to the Count Franz von Brunsvik and published in Vienna in 1807, it was not given the sobriquet the ‘Appassionata’ until the late 1830s, by a publisher of a four-hand arrangement of the work who presumably wished to boost sales.

Whatever the provenance of this nickname, it corresponds so well with the fervency and intense contrasts of the first movement that it has endured. The brooding opening is swiftly shattered by the bruising potency of *fortissimo* interjections; this is music of extremes. The second movement, in variation form, is a marked contrast in its serenity and the tender warmth which Beethoven demands from the instrument. In the

third movement, the taut tension of the *moto perpetuo*, marked to be played 'fast, but not too fast', brings us back to the disquiet of the opening. The sense of an unknown danger, approaching ever more closely but always out of sight, is haunting.

INTERVAL

Métopes, Op. 29 (1915)

Karol Szymanowski
(1882-1937)

- i) *L'île des Sirènes*
- ii) *Calypso*
- iii) *Nausicaa*

In architecture, a 'metope' is a rectangular space between columns in a Greek temple which is often decorated with relief sculptures. By using *Métopes* as the title to a musical work, Szymanowski creates a series of musical tableaux which are vividly pictorial and have a clear narrative content. He depicts three female characters from Homer's *Odyssey*, all of whose stories are closely related to the sea. The Sirens were half-woman and half-bird who lured sailors with their song to shipwreck on the rocky shores of an island. In Homer's account, Odysseus was keen to hear the Sirens and asked his crew, who stopped their ears with beeswax, to tie him to the mast of their ship so that he might not be induced to leave it. In Szymanowski's piece, the siren song starts after a brief introduction, becomes more intense, and then fades away as the ship moves into the distance.

A little later, having escaped the Sirens but lost his ship and crew, Odysseus found himself on the island of Ogygia, which was ruled by the nymph Calypso. Calypso fell in love with Odysseus and wished to marry him. She kept him with her for seven years but was ultimately compelled to let him return home, although his path was impeded once again when he was shipwrecked in Phaeacia. After falling asleep on the shore he was woken by Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous, as she played ball with her servant girls on the beach. The lively, playful character of the opening is swiftly succeeded by a boisterous passage as the game becomes more frenzied.

**World premiere of two recently-discovered
piano pieces (1934)**

**Sir Hamilton Harty
(1879-1941)**

- i. *Portrait*
- ii. *Spring Fantasy*

Although Harty was one of most admired accompanists of his day, piano music rarely featured among his compositions. There is a small handful of four piano works, including a *Fantasia* for Two Pianos from the early 1900s, but none of these were published. Unbeknownst until recently, Harty returned to piano composition much later in life and for a very particular reason. In the spring of 1934, having severed his links with the Hallé Orchestra he sailed for Australia for what was to prove a hugely successful concert tour. This took place under the auspices of the Australian Broadcasting Company, the quality of whose symphony orchestra Harty did much to advance.

A fellow passenger on the ocean voyage was a young woman, Lorie Bolland, with whom Harty rapidly fell in love. While there is no evidence of reciprocity on her part, Harty dedicated two piano pieces to her: *Spring Fancy*, composed for her birthday on 23 April 1934, and *Portrait*, written at sea and dated 9 July 1934. They are delicate, melodious, unpretentious works which commemorate an episode in the composer's life which has remained private until their rediscovery among Lorie's papers some two years ago by her son, Christopher Bolland. Queen's University is deeply grateful to Mr Bolland for giving us permission to host the world premiere of *Portrait* and *Spring Fancy*.

(Jan Smaczny)

Three Préludes (1928-9)

**Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)**

- i) *La Colombe (The Dove)*
- ii) *Nombre léger (Light Number)*
- iii) *Reflet dans le vent (Reflection in the Wind)*

Messiaen was born in Avignon and began his studies at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of eleven where he studied piano, organ and composition. He composed his eight preludes, of which three will be played this evening, while still a student and many of the characteristics which were to become so important in his later works are already

apparent. His use of rhythm, for example, while immensely complex and intricately structured, retains a fluidity and flexibility which evoke Oriental music, as does his use of exotic scales.

Messiaen's Roman Catholic faith was incredibly strong and is present in much of his music. He preferred to concentrate on joy, divine love and redemption, rather than sin, as is apparent in the first prelude, 'The Dove'. The second prelude, 'Light Number', is a testament to pianistic wizardry and the third, 'Reflection in the Wind', shows Messiaen's interest in surrealism. The influence of Debussy's Preludes is still palpable, not least in this last title.

Sonata No. 5 in F sharp, Op. 53 (1907)

Alexander Scriabin
(1872-1915)

*"I summon you to life, secret yearnings!
You who have been drowned in the dark depths
Of the creative spirit, you timorous
Embryos of life, it is to you that I bring daring."*

(Poem of Ecstasy, 1911)

Scriabin was a remarkably intense man who lived life on the edge. His charisma was such that, while he proclaimed himself to be the Messiah of a new cult, the "apotheosis of world creation... the aim of aims and the end of ends", even the more sceptical of his contemporaries remained convinced by his genius. His belief that "life is eternally creative, full of miracles and revelations, ever new and ever deeper, infinite and inexhaustible" is powerfully rendered in his music, which shocked many when it was written yet was later appropriated by the Soviets as a sonic manifestation of the spirit of the Revolution.

The Fifth Sonata was written at the same time as Scriabin's orchestral work, *Le Poème de l'extase*, and is prefaced with an excerpt from his poem of the same name. The work is in one movement and, while the influence of sonata form is discernible, its comparatively conventional formal outline is heavily disguised by innumerable variations and transformations of thematic motifs. The sonata veers suddenly between phrases of inexpressibly sensuous langour and of frenetic activity. Such rapid alternation of unconventional performance directions, ranging from 'languid' and 'caressing' to 'impetuous', 'imperious' and 'breathless', may give a disjointed impression and the ending itself, which does not end so much as abruptly stop, is particularly perplexing. Yet by

challenging our assumptions and extending the realm of musical experience, Scriabin forces us, with dazzling intensity, to reexamine our perceptions of the human condition.

(notes by Clare Hammond except where shown)

CLARE HAMMOND

Acclaimed by The Daily Telegraph as a pianist of “*amazing power and panache*”, Clare Hammond has performed across Europe, Russia and Canada and has appeared recently at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls in London, and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. Her Purcell Room debut for the Park Lane Group concert series was praised by The Guardian for its “*crisp precision and unflashy intelligence*”. A passionate advocate of twentieth and twenty-first century music, Clare combines a formidable technique and virtuosic flair onstage with stylistic integrity and attention to detail. Since her debut with orchestra at the age of eleven, she has acquired a concerto repertoire of over 20 works which she has performed at major venues across the UK and on the continent. Solo engagements have included recitals in concert series and festivals in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and Russia.

Clare has just completed a five-date concert tour taking in St George’s Hall Bristol, the Queen’s Hall Edinburgh, and culminating at the Wigmore Hall London. The final concert was broadcast by BBC Radio 3 as part of their ‘Live in Concert’ programme and her performance of Ravel’s *Le Tombeau de Couperin* was chosen as one of their Classical Highlights. Clare released her debut CD of British contemporary piano music at the beginning of the year for Prima Facie Records, and recently appeared on BBC Radio 3’s ‘In Tune’ to promote the disc.

Forthcoming highlights include a BBC broadcast of études by Unsuk Chin, performances of Bach’s fifth Brandenburg Concerto at venues across London over the summer, and the premieres of works written especially for Clare by Kenneth Hesketh and Robert Saxton. Keen to collaborate with composers, Clare has just premiered *Aquarelles*, a series of five miniatures commissioned to commemorate Debussy’s 150th birthday from composers James Francis Brown, Peter Fribbins, Alan Mills, David Matthews and Robin Walker. An active chamber musician, Clare has worked with Andrew Kennedy, Jennifer Pike, Philippe Graffin, Lawrence Power, Ruth Palmer and the Endellion, Dante and Benaïm String Quartets. She performs regularly with the flautist Ana de la Vega as the ‘Duo Dounia’, and with the Goldfield Ensemble.

Eager to extend the boundaries of traditional concert life, Clare is intrigued by new perspectives that musicological study can bring to bear on performance. She has just completed a doctorate on twentieth-century left-hand piano concertos and was convenor for the RMA Study Day *Performing Musicology*, held at City University London in June 2011. Clare is in demand as a speaker and has been invited to give presentations at Oxford, Manchester, and Surrey Universities in the coming season. On the concert circuit, she enjoys introducing recitals, pre and post concert talks and giving lecture recitals and workshops to audiences of all levels.

Clare completed a BA at Cambridge University, where she obtained a double first in music, and undertook postgraduate study with Ronan O'Hora at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and with Professor Rhian Samuel at City University London. She has been supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Stradivari Trust, Martin Musical Scholarship Fund, Jessie Wakefield Bursary and the Kenneth Loveland Gift. Clare is represented by Liz Webb Management. *If you wish to be added to Clare's mailing list, please email info@clarehammond.com or visit www.clarehammond.com/contact.html.*

Clare's next recital in the Harty Room as our 2012-13 Pianist in Residence will be a Lunchtime Recital on Thursday 21st February.

Forthcoming Event

Thursday, 18 October, 1.10pm, Harty Room

Huw Watkins

Huw will perform two works written almost exactly a century apart: Oliver Knussen's *Ophelia's Last Dance* and Maurice Ravel's 1911 masterpiece, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*.