

PROGRAMME



Reg Charity 1118886

SALLE CHURCH ON JULY 10th 2010

Emma Kirkby, Soprano and James Lisney, Piano

Price: £1

The Music:

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Arianna a Naxos, Cantata for Voice and Piano Hob.XXV1b:2

Haydn wrote a number of small scale cantatas which became very fashionable in London during his two visits there. The cantatas are mainly based on classical themes. Arianna a Naxos is thought to have been written in 1789 and is mentioned in correspondence with his London publisher, John Bland, in April, 1790. The setting is for solo voice and keyboard and has four main sections. The drama is condensed into a short time span. Two expressive recitatives are set off by two arias.

The Greek heroine sings of her absent love, but initial happiness gives way to utter despair, as isolation and reality as to her being abandoned on the island becomes ever more apparent. Her final outburst in the closing aria is in F minor, a key associated with Sturm und Drang, and even if an orchestra would make more of the drama it is still a dramatic close to a very effective miniature work.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Fantasy in C, opus 17

Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen

Mabig: Durchaus energisch

Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten

Schumann wrote the Fantasy in C in 1836, and many people consider it to be his finest keyboard work. The composer himself considered the work to be 'more impassioned than anything I have ever written.' He dedicated the work to Liszt.

There are pictorial images connected to the three movements. Firstly a picture of classical ruins; secondly a picture of a great triumphal arch; and lastly the image of a starry crown. The opening is heroic and filled with ardour, but interspersed by an uneasy repose of some beauty. The second central section is in march form, mercurial rather than military. The finale is that of a shifting sunset where the sun is the starry crown, and is almost Turner like

in its impressionism and an image portrayed not on canvas but in music. The pianist has to be a master of the drama and colours as well as the poetry.

INTERVAL

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Songs:

Chansons de Bilitis, L.90:

La flute de Pan

La Chevelure

Le Tombeau des Naiades

Debussy's three songs were published in 1898 for voice and piano, and the texts were based on poems by Pierre Louys. At the time the songs were regarded as an example of pagan art, a feature of Debussy's imagination as exemplified by *Après-midi d'un faune*, and above all *Le Martyre de saint Sebastien*.

The second song was in fact the first to be written, in 1897 and was initially published on its own. The songs are notable for mild eroticism and are sensual. They were first performed in Paris in 1900 with the composer at the piano.

The first song is quite simple, a pastoral idyll, and it is sensuous and harks to the solo flute work *Syrinx*. The second song is more declamatory and erotic, with an open forthright passion more akin to Massenet than Debussy, as the song describes the passionate and ecstatic lovemaking of Pan and Bilitis.

In the final song Bilitis follows a faun to the tomb of the naiads, set in a glacial surround with fresh footprints in the snow. Bilitis comes to a mausoleum made of ice blocks crafted by Pan, and sees a wintry sky in which there is nothing but disillusionment.

The range of expressionism and emotion in these songs is considerable and a challenge to both singer and pianist.

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

Impromptu in G flat major, opus 51

This impromptu is the third of four published by Chopin in 1843. It was in fact the last of the 'set' to be composed, in 1842, and it was dedicated to the Countess Esterhazy. Unlike the others it is in 12/8 time, and more complex in character.

Amy Beach (1867-1944)



Amy Beach was an important American composer and pianist. She was born in Henniker, New Hampshire, to a distinguished New England family. She was a child prodigy composing at four years of age, and playing the piano in public at seven. In 1875 her family moved to Boston, and despite family willingness to send her to a top music school she was largely self taught. In 1883 she performed as soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 1885 she married Dr Henry Beach, a Boston surgeon nearly 25 years older, and for social reasons – conforming to Boston society - she devoted herself to composition. By 1892 she was considered one of America's foremost composers.

Her husband died in 1910, and she went to Europe on a concert tour as a pianist playing her own compositions. She then moved to New York sometime after 1915, and remained there until her death in 1944. She was considered the most important American woman composer, and is enshrined on the granite wall at Boston's famous Hatch Shell, where the Boston Pops perform.

Her legacy is that of a prolific and popular song writer, often in a romantic idiom, and sometimes she is compared to Brahms. Emma Kirkby has become a champion of her art songs, and her pure voice has surprised many by being so effective in what is romantic repertoire.

Songs:

Ah, Love but a day! Opus 44 (with Emma Lisney, violin)

Ich sagte nicht, Opus 51/1

Wir drei, Opus 51/2

Je demande a l'oiseau Opus 51/4

Canzonetta, Opus 48/4

Elle et moi, Opus 21/3

Chanson d'amour (1898) (with Joy Lisney, cello)

The Artists:



Emma Kirkby

Dame Emma, proudly 60 last year, was a student of Classics at University, but from singing for pleasure migrated rapidly to a wonderful professional career, and arguably as the ambassador for historical instruments and baroque music. In 2007 the BBC Music magazine polled her as the tenth greatest soprano of all time. Her music making is noticeable for

clarity, a purity of sound, and great technique allied to expressive vocal sound. She is a great example of art that conceals art.

Norfolk Concerts was privileged to present Emma last year, and this year she appears in new repertoire. She will tell you that she spends too much time away from home but is enjoying herself and so why stop? While she will always be most at home in the baroque field, she is constantly looking at other areas of music, with Mahler and Stravinsky even making the roster!

We are fortunate to know her, and have her sing for us.



James Lisney

James Lisney has been a popular artist at the concerts given by Norfolk Concerts. He is an international concert pianist who has recently appeared at the Carnegie Hall and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and is well known for his Schubertreise on the South Bank, and other recital series based on a defined theme.

James born in 1962, and was a pupil of Phyliss Sellick at the Royal College of Music, and he was a regular prize winner. He has collaborated with many orchestras and singers and well known instrumentalists, and is particularly well known for his recitals and recordings with the fine cellist Alexander Baillie.

James is also the father of our two other young soloists tonight:

Joy Lisney, cello, was born in 1993 and is just 17, and attends the Lady Eleanor Holles School, and now performs regularly in recital. She is considered to be a likely high achiever, and has much promise. **Emma Lisney** is 13, and plays the violin. She too is considered as likely high achiever, and is a Music Scholar at the Lady Eleanor Holles School.

Message from Douglas Gowan on behalf of Norfolk Concerts:



This has been a difficult year so far, not least due to the economy and its effects on the grant sector, as well as individual concertgoers. As you know we are committed to bringing music education to our youngsters in Norfolk, and to encouraging talent like that shown above. Our concerts form the platform for that programme by allowing visiting artists to stay on and give classes for local students at both state and independent schools. This costs us money, and so without apology I ask you to consider giving us a gift in these tough times, however modest. We are a charity so the gift is tax positive.

We are looking forward to a season of excellence, and after tonight's concert we host the prize winning violinist Agnes Langer in solo Bach (by candlelight) on July 31st, and then a French piano music recital by our own Roger Rayner, who few know was a pupil of the truly great Vlado Perlemuter. This is on August 7th. Then on August 21st the cellist Laszlo Fenyoe returns (a Casals prize winner and Rostropovich protégé) with Anne Shih and Connie Shih, to play romantic trios. Connie is playing as usual with Steven Isserlis, but also with Joshua Bell, the great violinist. Then on September 11th the Mainz Virtuosi arrive, to be conducted by Anne Shih, and they are featuring Jena Lee and Agnes Langer in concerti by Haydn and Mendelssohn. We hope that you will come!

Enjoy the concerts!

Douglas Gowan

Programme Notes by Douglas Gowan (c) 2010

Web Site: www.norfolkconcerts.org

We are grateful to the wardens and PCC at Salle Church for their support, and being again our host, and to the Columbia Foundation and CCF in London for critical grant support, and also to our Friends, many of whom went out of their way recently to gift us vital monies at a critical moment.