

PROGRAMME



Reg Charity 1118886

SALLE CHURCH ON AUGUST 7th 2010

Roger Rayner, Piano

Price: £1

The Music:

Couperin (1668-1733)

Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou les Maillotins (18thieme Ordre)

Le Dodo, ou l'amour au Berceau (15thieme Ordre)

Musete de Taverni (15ieme Ordre)

One of the pleasures of French music is its connections with the past and future. No major composer ignored his origins, and pride was taken in linking a suite of pieces, such as the *Pieces Pittoresques* by Debussy played later tonight, to the suites of Rameau or Couperin.

Couperin did not like to dictate to the listener what he or she should be imagining, so in the title he gives an alternative, albeit ambiguous! The second piece is a lullaby, and the third a rousing outdoor gig alternating major and minor keys over a drone bass. Tavern life indeed!

Rameau (1683-1764)

Three Pieces from the suite in E minor

Le Rappel des Oiseaux

1ier Rigaudon; 2ieme Rigaudon

Le Tambourin

These three pieces are well known, and Rameau like his successor Ravel is very clear sighted and uncomplicated, with the intellect in charge of the emotions, whereas Couperin and his successor Debussy are more fanciful. The E minor suite was written in 1724, and published in 1726.

Chabrier (1841-1894)

Two Pieces from Pieces Pittoresques

Mauresque

Scherzo-Valse

These two pieces come from a set of ten, and illustrate a very original manner of writing for the piano. The 'Dance from Mauritius' has immense grace and charm but it is also a good example of why the finest French music is often neglected. The rhythm and melody is uncomplicated, yet the control required of the pianist is immense, even if easily unnoticed by the audience. Chabrier marks nearly every note with articulation, and the balance between the hands – and as to different parts of the hands – is constantly shifting as the colours in the music alter.

The next piece is not complex, but the audience should note how the opening bass disappears to become somewhat uncertain as to direction.

Chopin (1810-1849)

Sonata No.3 in B minor, Opus 58

Allegro Maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Finale: Presto, non tanto

While not neglected like some of the music presented here tonight it is nonetheless not as popular as it should be, often being described as not being in the style of Beethoven! In fact Chopin was a fine craftsman, and displays immense contrapuntal skill.

The first movement displays great contrasts of emotion. The opening is tragic, and foreboding, but yields to a long limbed cantabile melody. This is followed by a reverie leading to a development section that moves from apprehension to an eruption and then back to a dreamy melody heard earlier, and then a recapitulation. These improvised themes illustrate an immense skill and profound logic.

The second movement is one of contrast, with fluttery outer sections and an easy going central melody. The following Largo is a funeral march, but in a major not minor key! There

is a profound stillness and the movement ends with a luminous restfulness. The finale appears in the guise of a heroic national song, announced by a soloist and then taken up by the crowd. It is repeated on three occasions, ever more thrilling. This work is celebratory and triumphant, and entirely apt in this his anniversary year.

INTERVAL

Roussel (1869-1917)

Sonatine

I - Modere – Anime – Tres energique – vif et tres léger

II – Tres lent – En aminant – Vif

A major element in French music is colour, exemplified splendidly in this sonatina, composed in 1912. The sound simply washes over you. Again the work is neglected because it is deceptively difficult. Shimmering harmonies mix with wonderful melodies. Tempi gradually build up in each movement, and Roussel's control of time is masterful. Regret and troubles are all dispelled by the final pages.

Dukas (1865-1935)

Variations, Interlude et final sur un theme de Rameau.

Dukas destroyed most of the music he composed, but in the present work he captures the imagery and atmosphere of Beethoven's late quartets and piano sonatas while still sounding French! In this work not too much of Rameau's minuet remain, and the variations reflect far more the composer's personality.

The first variation has a string quartet texture; the second similarly; and the third becomes nebulous, and the fourth light and closest to Rameau. The fifth is a lament; the sixth warm and singing; the seventh poisonous; and the eighth mysterious. The ninth variation is an elphin dance, teasing, and it leads to the tenth, sombre and in texture like a late Beethoven piano sonata.

The Interlude introduces melodies, and again reflects Rameau more closely. The finale is reminiscent of bells, but is not at all bombastic.

Debussy (1862-1918)

La Cathedrale engloutie

The legend behind this famous piece of music concerns a submerged city in Brittany where the disaster was caused by the impiety of the inhabitants. The city rises each dawn as a lesson to others! Thus the piece begins with a misty dawn leading to the rise of the cathedral with bells ringing. A choir sings a chant, and then waves wash around, and then the cathedral is sucked back into the depths, with the chanting choir slowly vanishing into the distance, leaving behind just the dawn mist.

Ravel (1875-1937)

Alborado del Gracioso (from Miroirs)

The famous repeated notes of this piece recall those heard at the beginning of this concert. The title means 'Morning Song of the Jester'. A wild Spanish dance by the Jester is accompanied by a guitar and castanets. Then the Jester sings and as he does so he sees a beautiful girl peeping through the curtains, and his renewed dance now incorporates the song with its melody!

The Artist:



Roger Rayner

We are very privileged to have Roger take us on this linked journey through French piano music, and among his teachers was the very great French pianist Vlado Perlemuter who was himself called 'great' by the legend of French music, Cortot.

I was fortunate enough to hear Perlemuter. I also have many of his records, and when I heard Roger play I was at once transported, but Roger is no imitator, having his own individual voice. He is an exemplary artist of great sensitivity and a real sense of colour, and that is why he can play French music when others cannot.

Roger studied piano with Professor Vivian Langrish and organ with Dame Gillian Weir, and took master classes with Vlado Perlemuter. He gained the Principal's Discretionary Prize at the Royal Academy, and was an Exhibitioner in Music at Trinity College, Cambridge. He lectures for the University of East Anglia, and has a varied career in education, music tours, and performance. He also writes for The Musical Times; Music and Musicians; and The Organ. He has a passion for the theatre, be it Shakespeare or Miss Saigon!

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 enjoying a season of excellence, and after tonight's concert, 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 and Roger Rayner (c) 2010

Web Site: www.norfolkconcerts.org

We are grateful to the wardens and PCC at Salle Church for their support, and being once 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.