

PHILIP HOWARD SOLO RECITAL, CORSHAM FESTIVAL.
10 PM, TUESDAY 22ND JUNE 2004.

PROGRAMME:

Franz Schubert **Impromptu in A flat, D.899 No.4**
Erik Satie **Prélude en Tapisserie**
Paul Newland **Zuihitsu** (First Performance)
Paul Whitty **The Lure of Salvage**
Michael Finnissy **Eadweard Muybridge-Edvard Munch**
Erik Satie **Avant-Dernières Pensées**
Philip Howard **Local News**
Erik Satie **Gnossienne No.3**
Iannis Xenakis **Evryali**

PROGRAMME NOTES

Franz Schubert: Impromptu in A flat D.899 No.4 (1827) 8'

Just as in his well-known song cycles, Schubert's piano music is full of rhythmic figures that seem to echo the rhythms of nature. In the songs we hear the wind whispering in the leaves of the lime tree, the rolling of the mill-wheel above the murmur of the stream, or the uncanny grinding of a hurdy-gurdy in the stark landscape of the end of the cycle 'A Winter's Journey'. In this Impromptu we meet some of the same sounds, although here there are no words to tell whether they are wind or water.

Erik Satie: Prélude en Tapisserie (1906) 2½'

Satie's 'Tapestry Prelude' is made out of bits of the common (or even bankrupt) currency of commonplace music. Unlike more 'musical' music, it doesn't start out with the belief that it is automatically going to be profoundly meaningful, and is probably all the more successful because of that. Satie is trying to turn lead into gold here, not the other way around!

Paul Newland: Zuihitsu (2004, First Performance) 8'

'Zuihitsu' is a Japanese word meaning 'miscellaneous writings' or 'random jottings'. The sense of it is that in such writing one is 'following the pen or brush'. The composer is suggesting (like in the Satie prelude) that ego and pre-arranged ideas about music and how it works should be forgotten, where possible. Just follow the brush, don't force it to go where you would like it.

Zuihitsu was commissioned by Philip Howard for this Corsham Festival performance with funds from the Britten-Pears foundation.

Paul Whitty: The Lure of Salvage (2003) 2'

A frantic search for meaning in the 'salvage' of our personal and collective musical memories (in this case, the piano sonatas of Schubert).

Michael Finnissy: Eadweard Muybridge-Edvard Munch (1997) 22'

This work is one chapter of Finnissy's large cycle 'The History of Photography in Sound'. The first part refers to Eadweard Muybridge's still photographs of horses and wrestlers in motion. They were intended as frozen, abstract scientific records but can appear to be fizzing with implied kinetic energy, or alive with tenderness.

Conversely, the photographs Edvard Munch took of himself in a sanatorium convey a sense of psychic unveiling as they attempt to go beyond the physical. Such an atmosphere of domestic psychological drama, quiet and benign yet full of dangerous tension beneath the surface, pervades the second, main part of *Eadweard Muybridge-Edvard Munch*.

Erik Satie: Avant-Dernières Pensées (1915) 3'

There are three of these 'Next-to-Last Thoughts': an Idyll dedicated to Debussy, an Aubade (Dawn-Song) dedicated to Paul Dukas, and a Meditation dedicated to Albert Roussel. Quite 'distinguished' company for Satie, so often dismissed as an eccentric. He writes in the score for the last piece:

*...And the Poet goes all red and humble.
He can muse no more.
He's got indigestion!
Terrible indigestion from bad blank verse and bitter disillusion!*

Philip Howard: Local News (2003) 9'

'Local News' tries to look beyond the surface details of music to the meaning locked away in the way they are put together - the way they are 'composed'. So its surface does not have a lot of melodic details - it's a bit more like a skeleton or a background. The idea is that behind the style or outward appearance of music there is something more valuable.

Erik Satie: Gnossienne No.3 (1890) 2½'

A Gnossienne is a girl of Knossos, on Crete, home of the Minotaur. The melody winds around and around like Ariadne's thread in the Labyrinth.

Iannis Xenakis: Evryali (1973) 9'

Remaining here in the world of Ancient Greece, Evryali is one of the three Gorgons. Even though her gaze turns the living to stone, there is a paradox in her name, which means 'the wide open sea'. Throughout the piece, this contradiction furiously attempts to resolve itself, as the teeming fertility of life is constantly opposed by the stony cold void that lies outside.