

### In this issue:

62nd season in green and brown: voices and baroque, wars and composers - page 2

Meet the committee: Jill House - page 7

Joyful Company of Singers performs Byrd and Berkeley - page 9

Panufnik 100 - a family celebration at King's Place - p. 10

Thomas Arne and the English cantata - page 10

Franz Berwald (1796–1868): 'liveliness and energy – feeling and reason' - page 14

UCLU Music Society presents six concerts this term - page 15

A dream of Germany: music's war-torn world 1914 - page 16

A non-hero's life – chamber music by Richard Strauss in context - page 16

Two counterpoints.  
Does UCL Chamber Music Club need folk?  
Whose songs are they anyway? - page 20

Notes on a collaboration:  
Rebecca Saunders and Séverine Ballon in music for solo cello - page 21

Some French Christmas carols - page 25

Composers on composers - page 26

### Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to Issue No.3 of the Chamber Music Club's Newsletter. We can, I think, look back with some satisfaction on the first year of the Newsletter venture and look forward with modest confidence to its successful continuation.

New in this issue is the first of what is intended to be a series of 'Meet the committee' interviews. The featured interviewee is Jill House, a loyal and long-standing member of the Club and committee, and a singer of remarkable versatility. Other items include reviews of last season's CMC concerts and of a seminar at the Institute of Musical Research; articles on two of 2014's anniversary composers, Richard Strauss (b.1864), who will be celebrated in a forthcoming CMC concert, and Andrzej Panufnik (b.1914); an introduction to the eighteenth-century composer Thomas Arne in the context of his own and later times; a note on the intriguing Swedish composer Franz Berwald; and an article 'Composers on composers' looking at some of the ways composers have paid homage to one another in their music. We hope you find it a 'good read'.

We hope also that you will feel inspired, dear readers, to put pen to paper and finger to keyboard, and consider offering something yourselves for a future issue (No.4 is scheduled for February 2015). As you see, we aim to cover a diverse range of musical topics. Please feel free to contact Dace Ruklisa (dd.rr.tt@btinternet.com), Helene Albrecht (Helene.Albrecht@gmx.net) or me (rabeemus@gmail.com) with your ideas and suggestions for articles and shorter items.

Finally, I must once again thank Dace and Helene for their hard work in producing this issue. Without their enthusiasm and dedication the Newsletter would not exist.

*Roger Beeson, Chair, UCL CMC.*

## Concert dates 2014-15

All concerts start at 5.30pm unless otherwise stated.

### *Autumn term*

Thursday 2 October

Tuesday 14 October

Wednesday 29 October  
(joint concert with Oxford and  
Cambridge Musical Club at 7pm)

Friday 31 October, lunchtime

Wednesday 12 November, lunchtime

Friday 21 November, lunchtime

Monday 1 December

Tuesday 9 December  
(Christmas concert in North Clois-  
ters at 6pm)

### *Spring term*

Thursday 22 January

Thursday 29 January

Thursday 5 February

Friday 13 February, lunchtime

Monday 23 February

Friday 13 March, lunchtime

Tuesday 24 March

### *Summer term*

Tuesday 28 April

Friday 22 May, lunchtime

Thursday 4 June

## 62nd season in green and brown: voices and baroque, wars and composers

Quiet and unassuming meetings of the committee, before the 62nd season began, barely betrayed the adventurous ideas those same people harboured regarding the forthcoming concerts. Throughout the 62nd season we have seen an extreme variety of musical interests manifested in concerts, fresh leaves growing on the stem of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century repertoire, a renewed interest in baroque music, contemporary music and music for winds, and a plethora of themed concerts. This has also been a rich year for vocal music in CMC, with both known and new soloists and both shorter and longer vocal pieces present in our concerts. But before turning to the examination of the exquisite and sometimes exotic leaves of music that were developing this year, let me turn to the stem.

The current frequency of CMC concerts would be impossible without skilled instrumentalists within our ranks; thanks to them many chamber music works belonging either to the core or the better known repertoire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been presented. A performance of piano pieces from *Romeo and Juliet* by Sergei Prokofiev evoked some of the lightest and most lyrical scenes from the ballet. A carefully considered and sometimes surprising

reading of Beethoven's Sonata for cello and piano in A major, Op. 69 delighted with the ease of interplay between performers. A performance of Duos for two violins by Béla Bartók (from 44 Duos) clearly revealed polyrhythmic patterns, and nimbly played with the polyphonic textures of the piece.

Solo songs have played a prominent part in this season as only two concerts have been purely instrumental. There have been several notable performances of larger vocal cycles. One of them was the long-awaited programme of Scandinavian song ('Let nature have you for a while') that explored the relationship between composers and Nordic landscape. It featured more familiar works by Jean Sibelius, Edvard Grieg and Frederick Delius alongside lesser-known pieces by Gunnar de Frumerie, Gösta Nystroem, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger and Wilhelm Stenhammar. Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* were sung in the opening concert of the 62nd season, the fourth song being in harmony with the trees outside the window of the Haldane Room on the 3rd October. Wide vocal amplitude and richness of intonation characterized the performance. A presentation of J.S. Bach's cantata *Ich habe genug* showed the performers' deep immersion in the music: recitatives assumed a form of ardent and impatient speech, while in the aria *Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen* a sense almost of timelessness was created by recurrent melodic phrases. However, memorable performances of shorter vocal pieces were not lacking either: extracts from Schumann's 12 Songs, Op. 35 and 12 Songs, Op. 39 evoked the contradictory world view of the Romantics, with lyricism next to irony; a performance of Rachmaninov's *From the Gospel of St John* captured unspoken premonitions in just a bit more than a minute; chromatic and mutable chords of Britten's *At day-close in November* were calmly navigated to reveal a scene of resignation.

It seems that many a dusty score has been pulled out in search of music for wind instruments throughout this season. Very diverse paths have been taken and quests undertaken to find a repertoire for winds, leading to interesting discoveries. In *Orange Dawn* by Ian Clarke the particular tuning of the flute added an unusual tint above the modal chords of the piano. *Contrafacta Hungarica* by Ferenc Farkas for wind octet abounded in dance rhythms, where old dance forms (gagliarda and saltarello) were combined with more localized types of entertainment (*Heiduckentanz*). The less frequently played Octet by Beethoven (Op. 103) was presented as well. However, the biggest concentration of music for wind instruments was witnessed by the author on a January evening when a concert of carols, chorales and canzonas took place. The programme included early music for winds, scored for cornetts, natural trumpets and sackbuts. The well-known Toccata from *Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi was performed as originally intended, but not often played due to the difficulties in arranging instrumentalists, by five natural trumpets. Pieces by a Venetian composer tightly associated with wind repertoire – Giovanni Gabrieli – were

played, together with the *Sonata a 7* by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer (for two trumpets, two cornetts and three sackbuts). Added enjoyment was provided by captivating comments on the peculiarities of technique of early instruments.

This season has seen a renewed interest in baroque music, with many players of period instruments looking for like-minded enthusiasts with whom to form ensembles. However, the first baroque item that found its way to a CMC programme this season was not a mere chamber ensemble, but a concerto grosso – at the Christmas concert Corelli's Concerto Grosso in G Minor, Op. 6, No. 8 was played. Flowing conversation between concertino and ripieno groups and subtle phrasing of brief motifs that were exchanged between instruments characterized the performance. The cantata *Uns ist ein Kind geboren* by Johann Kuhnau was presented on the same evening; the excellent performance of soloists, recorder players and oboists, most of them members of CMC, should be particularly noted. The next baroque piece played at a CMC concert was indeed a chamber ensemble – a transcription of J.S. Bach's Trio Sonata in E flat major, BWV 525 for recorder and basso continuo. A newly formed group of musicians delivered a joyful performance and made use of the Club's harpsichord after a period when the instrument has not been much used in CMC concerts. A month later another baroque group followed in the footsteps of the Bach ensemble, this time with scores of the best known cantata by Thomas Arne, *The Morning*, in their hands. The culmination of the activities of baroque musicians was the last concert of this season that included J.S. Bach's cantata *Ich habe genug*, and a number of chamber music pieces. Innovative interpretations of J.S. Bach's Suite for violoncello No.2 in D minor and C.P.E. Bach's Sonata for flute and basso continuo in E minor, H 551, showing the musicians' deep involvement in the compositions, sometimes led to qualities typically attributed to jazz. I can only hope that the tercentenary of the birth of C.P.E. Bach will be marked by performances of more chamber works by this composer and that we will hear one of J.S. Bach's cello suites in its entirety in one of the forthcoming CMC concerts. These initiatives are a good incentive to find a dedicated rehearsal room for the Club's harpsichord.

Compositions by Gabriel Fauré and Franz Schubert have been explored in separate CMC programmes. The concert dedicated to Fauré comprised works from different periods almost forty years apart. His late scores were represented by the Nocturne No. 13 in B minor, Op. 119, a work of several simultaneously developing layers and also of demanding piano technique. His middle-period songs (*Clair de lune*, Op. 46, No. 1 and *Mandoline*, Op. 58, No. 1) were delivered with unusual lightness and transparency. The programme ended with a significant early work, Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 15. CMC's Schubertiade was also based on the contrasts between different periods in the composer's output. One of Schubert's early songs (*Die Forelle*, D.550) was juxtaposed with

works written during his last year of life (songs *Auf dem Strom* D.943 and *Ständchen* D.957/4 from *Schwanengesang* and Fantasy in F minor D.940 for piano duet). Sensitive performances led us in the journey through Schubert's political views, romantic allusions and melancholy towards a posthumous tribute by Franz Liszt (a liberal transcription of *Ständchen* for solo piano, where emphasis seems to be slightly shifted between various motifs).

Themed programmes of the 62nd season have examined adolescence in music, music associated with places and place names, chamber music written during the First World War, and the passing of a day 'from sunrise to sunset'. This is a surprising richness of conceptual projects in addition to other concerts with a clear focus, either on a particular composer or a period in music or type of ensemble. The concert on adolescence included both works written for young people and compositions by young people. Three movements of *Pohádka* by Leoš Janáček traced the course of a fairy tale via a varied interchange between cello and piano. The fervour and intensity of the rarely played Piano Quartet in A minor by Gustav Mahler, written when he was only 16, made for captivating listening to its lengthy development. In the concert of places and place names *A Foggy Day in London Town* by George Gershwin was played in an arrangement by Michael Finnissy, a contemporary composer related to the new complexity movement: dense chords with recognizable jazz roots were aligned in seemingly improvisatory rhythmic patterns that were actually a result of careful planning and precise notation. *China Gates* by John Adams, played with both rhythmic energy and lightness, abounded with colourful changes of harmonies and vivid juxtapositions of piano registers – it is uncertain whether this piece is dedicated to a real place at all. The concert 'From sunrise to sunset' adjusted its mood as rapidly as it adjusted to the periods and styles of composers: pastoral scenery of *The Morning* (Thomas Arne) was quickly exchanged for the introspection of *Dusk* by C. Armstrong Gibbs, the sorrow of *With Darkness Deep* (G.F. Handel) was swept away by a brilliant flute choir of eight instruments in an arrangement of the Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*. Even larger contrasts were interwoven into the programme dedicated to the First World War: masters and disciples of divergent schools of composition (and conflicting countries) were put next to each other in unseemly alignments looking like a potential cause of a non-musical disaster, but actually creating a rich texture and intense dynamics, evocative of the time of writing of these pieces. The concert was introduced by an arrangement of two songs from *Siete canciones populares españolas* by Manuel de Falla for cello and piano that set a tone of directness and emotional suspense to the whole programme (an effect of displacement was achieved due to using of baroque cello in this repertoire). The first and the last 'Sarcasm' from Prokofiev's cycle (Op. 17) augmented the tension and was succeeded by an unusual match – *From the Gospel of St John* by Rachmaninov. After dwelling on grief and love in the third and the fourth part

of *Siete canciones populares españolas* there followed compressed textures of the rarely played Sonata for violoncello and piano by Anton Webern that were submerged by (peacetime) memories of the house of Alcotts by Charles Ives (the third movement of Piano Sonata No. 2).

Alongside the works of individual composers important literary milestones were also celebrated: Shakespeare's birthday has been remembered on several occasions, most notably at a concert of the CMC choir and soloists whose programme was solely based on compositions with Shakespeare's texts. An unusual range of compositional styles and periods was encompassed in this concert: renaissance songs by Robert Johnson and Thomas Morley (the familiar *O mistress mine*) were performed alongside the settings of Shakespeare's texts by Thomas Arne and expressive choral pieces from Victorian times (*Full fathom five* by Charles Wood and *Orpheus with his lute* by George Macfarren). The programme was enriched by a contribution of our own CMC composer Roger Beeson – a vivid rendition of the sonnet 73 in music (*That time of year* for choir and piano) led the choir through a contemplation of mortality in a sustained tempo. The concert was finished with the angular melodies of Lennox Berkeley written in praise of Shakespeare's talent (*Hymn for Shakespeare's Birthday* for choir and organ). The spirit of Shakespeare was summoned in yet another concert this spring: Erich Korngold's Suite from *Much Ado about Nothing* for violin and piano was played, together with favourite pieces of CMC members (a bright mixture of Prokofiev's Sonata for violin solo, Op. 155, Schumann's songs and Beethoven's Variations on 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen' from Mozart's *Magic Flute*). Among other compositions a work by the present author, *Dialogues*: diptych for piano solo, acquired a new interpretation – it was a pleasure to collaborate with curious and dedicated CMC performers in rehearsing a piece of contemporary music.

The plans for the forthcoming season imply that both brown branches and green sprouts of chamber music will continue to grow at UCL. There will be a concert fully dedicated to the works of Brahms, including some of his late piano pieces, Op. 118, and his Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60. The anniversary of Richard Strauss's birth will be marked by a concert combining his vocal and instrumental chamber music. Series of themed concerts will continue with a programme 'Composers on composers' comprising pieces that have been inspired by other composers. The opening concert of the 63rd season will be yet another celebration of baroque music, this time with two major works - Thomas Arne's cantata *School of Anacreon* and J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G major with a concertino of two recorders and a violin. Hopefully these initiatives will be augmented by plenty of CMC members searching for company to play chamber music with.

*Dace Ruklisa*

## Meet the committee: Jill House

*A long-standing member of CMC and also a member of the current committee, Jill House, is interviewed by Helene Albrecht.*

Helene Albrecht: *Jill, you are one of the most experienced and most active members of the UCL Chamber Music Club. We are delighted that you are willing to open our new series: 'Meet the committee/Meet the members'. When exactly did you join the CMC and what was the trigger?*

Jill House: Helene, thank you for inviting me to open this series. I must have originally joined the Chamber Music Club in the mid-1980s. The trigger was the enthusiasm of a departmental colleague, David Howard, a brilliant musician who was active on the Club's committee for several years. He was recruiting singers for one of the small choir events that he used to conduct.

HA: *Overall, what is your musical background?*

JH: I was a piano player at school (alas, my skills peaked at age 18 and have undergone a downhill slide ever since!), and a choir singer for many years. Then I got a taste for solo singing when I started taking private lessons in the '90s, supplemented by Lieder and song classes at Morley College, an opera diploma at Birkbeck, and various summer schools. I have also kept up my choir singing, including with ensembles which specialise in avant-garde contemporary music.

HA: *And when did you join UCL and in what role?*

JH: I first came to UCL in 1981 as a Research Assistant in the (then) Phonetics and Linguistics Department, and following a series of temporary and part-time posts became a full time Lecturer in Phonetics in 1990. I've been lucky in that phonetics and singing complement and inform each other very usefully.

HA: *Indeed! I am wondering whether other members feel similar links between their fields of expertise and involvement with the Chamber Music Club. Would you say that the Club has changed over the years in terms of repertoire, members, and its overall profile?*

JH: There has always been a healthy mix of staff and student members – one of the Club's great strengths. Over the years it is my impression that we have expanded and enriched the membership, for example by encouraging alumni to become/remain members, and by fostering links with the UCLU Music Society. The repertoire changes to reflect the interests and abilities of the membership but there is a core of favourite works.

HA: *And what do you like most about chamber music at UCL?*

JH: The way the CMC brings people together from all parts of UCL; the opportunities it provides for performers to show what they can do and for listeners to enjoy and learn. I do believe the Club enriches the UCL experience!

HA: *What were the most remarkable performances you have heard at UCL?*

JH: There have been a great many stunning performances and performers over the years. But remarkable? I have to mention the piano recital by Sir James Lighthill (former Provost). I can't remember what he was playing, but such was his passion and power on the Steinway that the whole room shook! Another remarkable (but very different) event was the workshop performance we did a few years ago of Terry Riley's *In C* – it was a great way to get performers together.

HA: *In summary, in which formations have you been singing at UCL and what musical style(s) did you cover?*

JH: I've sung in a number of CMC concerts involving a small choir, most notably at Christmas, but also madrigals and early music ensembles (singing with baroque trumpets was rather special). We have covered a wide range of styles, including contemporary, thanks to recent Christmas compositions by our Chair Roger Beeson. Otherwise I've done a number of solo recitals with some wonderfully capable and patient pianists.

HA: *What was your favourite concert at UCL with regard to your own contributions?*

JH: I'm hopeless at picking favourites! But I have been grateful to the Club for giving me so many chances to sing to a supportive audience (the first time was nerve-racking but I survived). I have also much valued the opportunity to sing repertoire involving piano and viola: the well-known viola songs by Brahms and Frank Bridge, and premieres of works by Roger Beeson and Rupert Bawden.

HA: *Would you please tell us, Jill, what role chamber music plays in your private life?*

JH: An important one. I have got to know and love a wide range of repertoire through membership of the CMC, both as an audience member and as a performer. Instrumental chamber music was not part of my background growing up, so I am grateful for the education the CMC has provided.

HA: *Based on such a huge knowledge of music, are there any favourite composers or pieces of music?*

JH: Impossible to choose! Anything by Monteverdi or Bach; lots of Mozart, Brahms, Mahler; Schubert's songs and the wonderful Quintet; string quartets by Debussy and Ravel; Poulenc...

HA: *Jill, you are not only member of the Chamber Music Club but have also served as Acting Chair and then Chair between 2006 and 2010. Currently you are Deputy Chair and have played an active role as committee member*



*for many years. Would you please give us some ideas what it means to be member of the committee?*

JH: The committee has to make it all happen, and make sure the wider community knows that it's happening. It's a privilege to take on an 'enabling' role within such a joint enterprise.

HA: *And where do you see the CMC in 10 or 15 years' time?*

JH: It has recently been going from strength to strength, and I hope that will continue. Explicitly opening our concerts to the public (through entries in Brain Food) has brought in a significant and appreciative new audience. But we need to keep our profile well raised to ensure that UCL will continue to support us with practice and performance space.

HA: *Would there be a dream piece for you to be performed by CMC members in the nearest future?*

JH: Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*? I really need to see if I can get that together!

HA: *Finally, what are you next musical projects, both within and outside UCL Chamber Music Club?*

JH: At UCL I will be performing songs by Byrd, Gershwin and Satie in the 'Composers on Composers' lunchtime concert on 21 November. Outside the CMC, I'm most immediately involved in a Taverner premiere at the Barbican on 28 September; then in October, a semi-staged performance of *Elisir d'Amore*, a choir concert featuring Rachmaninov's *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, and a concert of contemporary music. So I'm keeping busy!

HA: *This sounds very exciting! Jill, thanks a lot for this most interesting talk.*

## Joyful Company of Singers performs Byrd and Berkeley

On Saturday 18 October Joyful Company of Singers will sing the Mass for five voices by William Byrd and also anthems and motets by Byrd, Lennox Berkeley and Michael Berkeley. The Recorder Sonatina Op. 31 by Lennox Berkeley will be performed as well. The conductor is Peter Broadbent and the recorder will be played by James Risdon and the piano by Trevor Hughes.

The concert begins at 8pm, with a pre-concert interview with Michael Berkeley starting at 7pm. It takes place at St Sepulchre-without-Newgate, Holborn Viaduct, EC1A 9DE.

Special ticket price has been negotiated for CMC members: £10! You must show a proof of current (2014-15 season) membership at the door to obtain discount. Normal ticket rates are £15 / £12. More information about the Joyful Company of Singers at [www.jcos.co.uk](http://www.jcos.co.uk)

## Panufnik 100 - a family celebration at King's Place

As this year marks the centenary of a Polish born composer and conductor Sir Andrzej Panufnik, King's Place presents a remarkable series of concerts to honour his work. Chamber music spanning his life time will be presented alongside works written by his daughter Roxanne. The latter include in particular her *quartet pieces* that have been commissioned in order to be played between Andrzej Panufnik's string quartets from 1976, 1980 and 1987. His chamber music also includes a piano trio, two string sextets, several works for piano solo, a wind quintet and a piece *Triangles* for three cellos and three flutes in addition to chamber music for young players. Most of this music was written in Britain, after the composer had left his home country in 1954 due to worsening conditions for artists in emerging socialist countries.

The festival takes place on the 30th of November: it starts at 2.30pm and will end with a Warsaw cabaret evening at 9pm that presents popular Polish songs from the 1930s and music by Witold Lutosławski, Andrzej and Roxanne Panufnik and George Gershwin.

For details, contact Sarah Trelawney Ford at Hazard Chase Ltd. on 01223 706416 or email [sarah.trelawny@hazardchase.co.uk](mailto:sarah.trelawny@hazardchase.co.uk) The festival is supported by the Arts Council England, Polish Cultural Institute, RVW Trust, John S. Cohen Foundation, Hinrichsen Foundation and Fidelio Charitable Trust.

## Thomas Arne and the English cantata

Thomas Arne (1710 – 1778) was arguably the greatest English-born composer of the eighteenth century. Several misfortunes have however led to his relative obscurity and lack of recognition to this day. His first misfortune was to have lived in the shadow of that other great English composer (albeit German-born) G.F. Handel. The second was to have been born a Catholic and thus to be excluded from church appointments and from the patronage of the Protestant Hanoverian court that ruled the country and set the tastes of the aristocracy in Georgian England. Confined to working in the London theatres and pleasure gardens for much of his life, his third misfortune was to have many of his large-scale theatrical works destroyed in the fire that swept through the Drury Lane theatre in 1809. The decline of the pleasure gardens, such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh, into notoriety during the latter part of the eighteenth century and their later collapse would not have endeared his work to the more conservative tastes of Victorian England. His final misfortune was to have composed not only *God Save the King* but also *Rule, Britannia!*, so that it is largely for these alone that he is remembered today. His output of several hundred songs is

largely forgotten, except for his settings of Shakespeare – *Where the bee sucks*; *Blow, blow thou winter wind*, and so on – many of which appear in anthologies of English song, and several of which have been performed at recent UCL Chamber Music Club concerts.

Among his finest and most carefully crafted works are the dozen or so cantatas that he wrote for the London pleasure gardens and theatres. The musical resources available to him in these places were quite substantial and included many of the finest singers of the day as well as a host of professional instrumentalists. These were not simply parlour songs, but were designed to exploit all vocal and instrumental resources available.

The cantata in the eighteenth century had evolved from its beginnings in seventeenth century Italy, when it was simply a song with instrumental accompaniment, to become a much more complex structure, usually involving recitative and several ‘airs’ linked together to express some grand theme. It was typical for an eighteenth century cantata to have more or less lavish instrumental accompaniment, often with demanding obbligato parts for the instruments. The cantatas of J.S. Bach are probably among the best-known works of this genre. For example, the well-known *Ich habe genug* for bass voice, strings and obbligato oboe are among his most popular and frequently performed works. This cantata has featured at several of our concerts in the past, and most recently in our end-of-term concert in June of this year. But many other composers made serious efforts in this medium, including Thomas Arne, Henry Carey and John Stanley among the English composers of the eighteenth century, and others more recently.

In its more extended forms the cantata merges into the oratorio. The genuine cantata, however, is essentially chamber music. It is usually written for a single voice, a small group of instruments, and sometimes a small chorus. It need not, of course, have a religious theme: among Bach’s 200 plus cantatas, some 20 or more are secular, celebrating weddings, university inaugurations or the delights of coffee. But the theme must usually be on some high-minded subject, often classical. Thomas Arne’s cantatas are all of this kind, re-telling the stories of Bacchus and Ariadne, Cymon and Iphigenia, Anacreon, and so on. The choice of accompanying instruments generally relates to the specific text or to the general narrative. One of the few that remains in the current repertoire is the *Morning Cantata* (again performed recently by the Chamber Music Club) in which the sound of the skylark rising is rendered by a ‘small flute’ or piccolo, while the whistling shepherd wending his way up the hill is likewise imitated by a flute. This artifice of ‘scene painting’ by means of instrumental colour is very much in keeping with the aesthetic of the pleasure gardens themselves, where all was contrived to create an artificial ‘paradise’ for the delight of the urban middle classes seeking relief from the toils and smells of city life.

Baroque music in general, and cantatas in particular, often employed wind instruments not only because of their tonal colour, but also because of their symbolism. Flutes, horns, oboes and trumpets carried a rich symbolic overlay to the eighteenth century ear, one that has been lost to a large extent to a modern audience. The natural horn, for example, and its association with hunting and other rural sports would have carried much greater resonance to an eighteenth century audience than does the modern (valved) French horn to a modern audience; the fully chromatic ability of the modern horn has obliterated the harmonic simplicity and rustic associations of the original instrument. The same is true of trumpets and even flutes and oboes. Trumpets no longer automatically conjure up images of royal processions, but are just as likely to be associated with sleazy jazz cellars or the theme tune from *The Godfather*, just as horns are now more likely to be associated in the popular mind with the music of Westerns or of TV dramas such as *Dallas*. There is no obvious solution to this problem – modern ears are just not the same as eighteenth century ears, they hear different things in the music.

Nevertheless, we can still make a good guess as to the original intentions. In Arne's cantata *Bacchus and Ariadne*, the entry of Bacchus is announced with a great flurry of notes from the two horns, not so much a royal fanfare as a call to witness the arrival of a rudely elemental figure, Bacchus, who has come to seduce Ariadne (with wine, of course) and distract her from her grief and rage at being deserted by Theseus. The horns play much the same role in his cantata *The School of Anacreon*, which the Chamber Music Club will perform at its opening concert on 2nd October. Here again the delights of wine (along with the obligatory women and song) are celebrated with rousing blasts from the two horns.

Anacreon was a court poet in sixth century BC whose poems, 'anacreontics', were used to entertain patrons in Teos and Athens. Dubbed 'the convivial bard of Greece', Anacreon's songs often celebrated women, wine, and entertainment. In eighteenth century London, along with many other places, Anacreontic societies sprang up among the emerging middle classes as a civilized way of indulging in the delights of alcohol without the degrading associations of Gin Lane and its low class clientele. Although drink was an important component of these societies, it usually went hand in hand with music. Glee, catches and even more sophisticated songs would have been a regular feature. You were expected to bring (or pay for) coal for the fire and candles for lighting, along with songs to sing. Many well-known songs had their origins in such establishments, including much of the bawdy repertoire that came from Henry Purcell and his drinking buddy Tom D'Urfey (of *Pills to Purge Melancholy* fame). This was also the milieu of Thomas Arne and the other theatre composers. Not surprisingly these societies proved a source of considerable

creativity – the tune for the American national anthem *Star Spangled Banner* (if not the words) originated in this way, and it seems possible that Arne's other patriotic contributions (*Rule, Britannia!* and *God Save the King*) may well have started their life in the same fashion. The London Anacreontic Society presented regular concerts of music, and included among their visitors such important musicians as Joseph Haydn, who was the special guest at their concert in January 1791.

Reception studies on Thomas Arne have revealed a surprising reversal of fortune for the composer after the great popularity that he appeared to achieve in his lifetime. Current theories relate this to the predilection of nineteenth century Romantics (and their later followers, including the musicologists) for the 'sublime' over the merely 'beautiful'. Handel's best work, for example, falls into the 'sublime' category, whereas the *galant* style practised by Arne achieves great beauty, but has little pretence to profundity. This may in part be due to the religious texts often chosen by Handel for his greatest work, against which Arne's secular texts (though often by well-regarded poets, including Dryden) may seem rather superficial. On the other hand, Bach and Handel with their great and sublime works (including the perhaps too often – and too casually – performed *Messiah*) can actually become a bit tiresome and it is something of a relief to retreat to the merely beautiful! This is a line of thought that is presented in detail in a major new work on Thomas Arne by the Yale academic Todd Gilman. It will be interesting to see if this has the effect of re-evaluating the work of Arne, along with that of other English composers of the eighteenth century.

Already there appears to be a flurry of activity within the recording and publishing industry in an effort to bring to public notice much of this long-neglected repertoire. Currently, however, few of the cantatas of Thomas Arne are available, either as recordings or as published scores. The only recording of the complete set of six cantatas published originally by John Walsh in 1755 is by the Hungarian soprano Maria Zadori and the American tenor Timothy Bench, with the Hungarian ensemble Capella Savaria – so much for the concern of the English to preserve their musical heritage!

The UCL Chamber Music Club will be presenting Thomas Arne's cantata *The School of Anacreon*, along with his Shakespeare setting of the Dirge from *Cymbeline* 'Fear no more the heat of the sun...' at its opening concert on Thursday 2nd October in the Haldane Room, Wilkins Building at 5.30pm (entry free).

*Bill Tuck, September 2014*

## Franz Berwald (1796–1868): ‘liveliness and energy – feeling and reason’

Trained as a violinist from the age of five, and giving his first public concerts from the age of nine, Franz Berwald was a performer, a teacher, the director of a glassworks and of a highly successful orthopaedics institute, and has been called the leading Scandinavian composer of the early nineteenth century. His compositions include four symphonies, two major operas, three string quartets, four piano trios and many other works for orchestra and chamber groups. Accused of ‘incomprehensibility’, Berwald’s works did not gain mainstream appreciation in his native Sweden until late in his career, following successes elsewhere in Europe, notably Vienna. He became a major influence on the next generation of Swedish composers, such as Wilhelm Stenhammar and Hugo Alfvén, and in 1905 the Swedish music critic and composer Wilhelm Peterson-Berger described him as ‘our most original and modern composer.’

Unlike the nowadays better-known Nordic composers of the generation after him, such as Jean Sibelius and, to some extent, Carl Nielsen, Berwald appears to have been uninterested in forging a national identity in his music. However, formal and expressive preoccupations common to the works of other Nordic composers can be noticed in his works: an obsessive concern with large scale structure and a heightened sensitivity to the timbral characteristics of the sound object so that the music is often conceived in terms of specific sonorities rather than more dynamic process-oriented forms. In a motto dated 17 August 1838 Berwald declared:

*‘Art may be coupled only with a cheerful frame of mind. The weak-willed should have nothing to do with it. Even if interesting for a moment, in the end every sighing artist will bore listeners to death. Therefore: liveliness and energy – feeling and reason.’*

A scathing review in the newspaper *Argus* of a benefit concert given in March 1821, including a symphony, a violin concerto and a piano quartet, all by Berwald, gives an impression of the resistance he encountered in his early career in Sweden: ‘... it seems as if Herr Berwald’s hunt for originality and his constant striving to impress with great effects has deliberately banished all melodiousness from his compositions.’ Berwald’s reply shows an admirable bluntness and conviction:

*‘It was without the least surprise that I read the review Argus offered to the public in respect of my recent compositions; [the writer] can, on the contrary, be convinced that I had myself foreseen the least favourable impression these works, written in an entirely original style, should leave. But the reviewer should remember that all attempts to establish an uncommon sys-*

*tem, a new handling of the instrumentation and its employment will always begin with numerous difficulties.'*

On 1 December, players from the Chamber Music Club and collaborating groups will come together to perform Berwald's Grand Septet in B flat major for violin, viola, violoncello, double bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon, alongside Beethoven's well-known Septet in E flat major Op. 20, for the same forces. The work, premiered in the Exchange Hall, Stockholm, on 6 December 1828, was well received by critics and is highly likely to be a revision of a similar septet performed ten years earlier. At this previous performance a review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (4 March 1818) observed how 'one might wish the young, truly talented man would become more friendly with the rules of harmony and composition; that will take him more surely and quickly to his goal'.

*Daniel Heanes*

## UCLU Music Society presents six concerts this term

UCLU Music Society will be very active this term: there are six concerts planned in five different venues. Masses and symphonies will be played, and most of the events will involve UCLU Symphony Orchestra.

Saturday 25th October, 7pm, All Hallows Church, Gospel Oak. UCLU Symphony Orchestra and Chorus present: Schubert – Mass in E Flat Major, Dvořák – Symphony No. 8.

Saturday 15th November, 7pm, St Mary Magdalene's Church, Munster Square. UCLU String Orchestra presents their 'Autumn Concert'.

Friday 21st November, 7pm, Our Lady of the Victories Church, Kensington. UCLU Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and Chamber Choir present: Macmillan - *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*, *Benedictus Deus* and *Tremunt Videntes Angeli*, Schubert – Mass in E Flat Major.

Friday 28th November, Events Pavilion, UCL. UCLU Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Choir present: Macmillan - *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*, *Benedictus Deus* and *Tremunt Videntes Angeli*, Mozart – Mass in C K167, Schubert – Minuet and Finale D72.

Saturday 29th November, 7pm, St Mary Magdalene's Church, Munster Square. UCLU Concert Band presents their 'Autumn Concert'.

Saturday 6th December, 7pm, St Pancras Parish Church, Euston. UCLU Symphony Orchestra and Chorus present: Vaughan Williams – Tuba Concerto and *Toward the Unknown Region*, Brahms – *Song of Destiny*, Rachmaninov – *Isle of the Dead*.

## A dream of Germany: music's war-torn world 1914

A series of four concerts explore the links between English composers and Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that were torn apart by the Great War. The concerts are presented by Joseph Spooner (cello), Mark Wilde (tenor) and David Owen Norris (piano). This may be of especial interest to UCL CMC members, since Joseph Spooner is a UCL alumnus: he did an MA and PhD from 1986 to 1990 (his doctorate was on Greek papyrology!), and he was an active member of the CMC during this time (which he still remembers fondly). Some of you may have heard him play for us a few years ago in a typical programme of rare and hitherto undiscovered music.

The concerts take place on Sunday 5th October 2014 (11.30am, 3pm, 5pm, 7.30pm) at St. John's, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HA.

Ticket for a single concert: £15 (£5 for students & young friends). Combined ticket for all four concerts: £40 (£15 for students & young friends).

You can find further details at the St John's website ([www.sjss.org.uk](http://www.sjss.org.uk)) and on Joseph Spooner's website ([josephspooner.net](http://josephspooner.net)).

## A non-hero's life – chamber music by Richard Strauss in context

Of the countless multi-faceted attributes that make up the life and work of one of this year's anniversary composers, Richard Strauss's chamber music is possibly one of the least known. Born in 1864 in Munich, the son of one of Germany's finest horn players, Richard Strauss in his lifetime witnessed Germany's political unification, the Franco-Prussian War and modernism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism alike. He survived both World Wars while acting in a tripartite capacity as composer, conductor and music executive. Musically connecting to Wagner, Brahms and Mahler, Strauss created 'a new way of relating music to extra-musical realms of experience' (Charles Youmans) and was committed to the promotion of avant-garde works by Bartók, Debussy, Kodály, Hindemith, Dukas and many others, often against reactionary voices in French, German and Austrian cultural centres. In the last third of his career Strauss raised controversies regarding his involvement with Nazi Germany. He held the position of the President of the Reichsmusikkammer (equivalent to the National Music Council) from 1933 to 1935 and was dismissed when the Nazis intercepted a letter to his Jewish friend and librettist Stefan Zweig. He never openly opposed the regime but lived in its shadows, his musical creativity being in decline since the First World War. However, Strauss's musical merits led to the establishment



of the 'Richard Strauss Festival' in Britain under the patronage of Sir Thomas Beecham as early as 1947. The latter also conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in three sold-out concerts of Strauss's works in the Royal Albert Hall the same year. Strauss died in 1949.

With reference to the 'extra-musical realms of experience' Strauss reflects many occupations and tensions characteristic of European societies in his tone poems and operas. The former explore characteristics of sometimes more and sometimes less successful 'heroes' (*Don Quixote*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *A Hero's Life*); the latter are concerned with fate and the destiny of women (*Salome*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Elektra*). However, his musical talent was formed in a typical German middle-class scenario where music-loving family members, amateurs and visiting colleagues engaged in playing string quartets, piano duets, in singing and other forms of chamber music. Strauss's musicality was also sparked by the relationship with his father, comparable to that of Leopold and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Both men indulged in a lively correspondence on contemporary musical life. In addition the young composer was provided with an unconventional musical education through friends and colleagues of his father. Many melodies and musical patterns of Strauss's later orchestral works and operas can be found in the huge body of his chamber music which is of varied significance. UCL Chamber Music Club will launch its own investigation into the roots of Strauss's undisputed craftsmanship in a concert in late October 2014 presented by its members.

Aged 16 Richard Strauss began to appear on the public stage in addition to the domestic one which had already provided opportunities to present numerous remarkable works dedicated to family members and friends. Four public performances in 1881 presented the young composer's chamber and orchestral music side by side with works by Brahms, Spohr and Beethoven to an audience in Munich. Strauss's String Quartet in A major Op. 2, also played in these concerts, still follows the tradition of the classical Viennese masters, in particular Joseph Haydn, and also reveals the influence of Felix Mendelssohn. However, the audience acknowledged 'a physiognomy of its own' and enthusiastically applauded after each of the four movements of the almost 30-minute-long work, whose third part is particularly rich in beautiful melodies. Serenade in E flat major Op. 7 for wind instruments possesses similar melodiousness. It is a composition of moderate pace, though spiced with dramatic moments, that fully explores the expressivity of oboe, horn and clarinet. The Serenade was premiered by Hans von Bülow as conductor in 1883, a musician who had previously dismissed piano pieces by Richard Strauss as 'immature and precocious... at best a talent, with 60% aimed to shock'; it can therefore be considered as a true breakthrough. An intense friendship between von Bülow and Strauss followed as well as Strauss's first paid engagement as the conductor's assistant.

Although the Five Piano Pieces Op. 3, the *Stimmungsbilder* Op. 9 and Two Piano Pieces Op. 30 are strongly reminiscent of Robert Schumann's musical language, there is 'little to find fault with' (in the words of Karl Klindworth, an accomplished pianist and pupil of Franz Liszt). The tender polyphonic texture and melodic richness of these piano pieces not only anticipate Strauss's later orchestral works but might also have served as a preparation for writing of the Sonata in B minor Op. 5 (1880-1), a work much loved by the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould. In Gould's view, Strauss's place in music history is based on the processing of the Wagnerian heritage and adherence to tonality and the cadence. These characteristics led to architectural clarity and the development of a logical system that offered valuable solutions to the contemporary struggle with abundance of harmonic possibilities and the dissolution of form and tonality. It is worth mentioning the Piano Quartet in C minor Op. 13 that followed after the *Festive March* in D major Op. 178 for the same instrumentation, written for a family celebration. The C minor quartet received the first prize in a competition launched by the *Berliner Tonkünstlerverein* in 1885. This recognition was followed by enthusiastically received performances in Dresden and Meiningen, where the piece was played from manuscript and Strauss himself played the piano. Readers are warmly invited to contrast the language of its four movements with Brahms's Piano Quartet in C minor Op. 60, which will be the central piece of another UCL CMC concert in October 2014. For the leading analyst of Strauss's work, Norman Del Mar, 'the style is no longer that of Mendelssohn, but is almost pure and unadulterated Brahms, a wholly new influence and exactly what Strauss needed.' Moreover 'the opening Allegro is not only long, but builds up a tremendous dramatic tension which at times oversteps the true province of chamber music.' Strauss's piano passages, however, use a texture very different from Brahms's style: they are frequently located in the descant and include capricious gestures typical of Strauss and reminiscent of *Der Rosenkavalier* and the *Alpensinfonie*. Another major work emanated from the origins of the Piano Quartet that is still a part of the chamber music concert repertoire. The Sonata in F major for cello and piano Op. 6 was drafted between 1881 and 1883, an unusually long period for the composer (it is possible that he followed the paternal advice 'to write less and to think harder'). Upon its completion the sonata received much praise from the violinist Joseph Joachim, Brahms's duo partner, leader of the Joachim Quartet and the first President of the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club (!). To Del Mar, Strauss's cello sonata reminds one of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* and the second movement of Mendelssohn's Piano Trio Op. 66. The cello sonata also includes a reminiscence of the second Act of Wagner's *Parsifal* and anticipates passages from Strauss's opera *Elektra*.

Apart from an apparent preference for the horn in his compositions Strauss considered his collection of 220 songs as his best music. The *Eight Songs* Op.

10 from 1885 contain two pieces so popular that their inclusion in any recital programme is almost forbidden: *Zueignung* Op. 10 No. 1 and *Allerseelen* Op. 10 No. 8; both songs look forward to Strauss's *Four Last Songs* from 1948. The entire Op. 10 collection is based on the poems by the popular poet Hermann von Gilm and introduces two decades' exploration of the song before the heyday of operas that began with *Salome* in 1905.

Richard Strauss concluded his creative life with the *Metamorphosen* Op. 142 for 23 solo strings, the *Four Last Songs* Op. 150 for high voice and orchestra, and the Oboe Concerto Op. 144. The titles of later, less popular chamber music works reveal a sense of humour, self-awareness and belief in reclusive and systematic work: the Sonatinas Op. 135 No. 1 in F major and Op. 143 No. 2 in E flat major for 16 woodwinds from 1943 and 1946 respectively ('*Aus der Werkstatt eines Invaliden*' – 'From the Workshop of an Invalid' and '*Fröhliche Werkstatt*' – 'Happy Workshop'); '*Wer tritt herein so fesch und schlank?*' – 'Who is entering there so smart and tall?' Op. 36 for one voice, and *Des Esels Schatten* Op. 300 ('The Donkey's Shadow'), a comedy in six scenes, are just a few among these works. In Richard Strauss's diary from 1945 the following entry can be found: 'Our future lies in art, especially in music. In times when spiritual goods are rarer than material ones, and egoism, hatred and envy govern the world, music will do much to re-establish love among mankind.'

*Helene Albrecht, September 2014*

The complete chamber music of Richard Strauss is available in a collection of 9 CDs by Brilliant Classics (2011); notable biographers include Matthew Boyden (*Richard Strauss*, London 1999), George R. Marek (*Richard Strauss - The Life of a Non-Hero*, London 1967) and Norman Del Mar (*Richard Strauss - A Critical Commentary on his Life and Works*, Vol 1-3, Eastbourne, Faber and Faber 2009); furthermore see Glenn Gould, *A Personal View on Richard Strauss*, a television broadcast from 1962 that is available [here](#).

## Counterpoint No. 1.

### Does UCL Chamber Music Club need folk?

Should we include folk-singing in our programmes? I think not. The Club is here to present well-prepared amateur performances of instrumental music and song from the classical Western tradition. We have a loyal audience for this music, which can include folk-song settings by composers from Britten to Bartók. Occasionally we have had unaccompanied folksongs, done beautifully. I remember some delicate songs in Spanish which were nearly drowned out by loudspeaker music from the Slade School party in the quadrangle outside the Haldane Room windows.

Specialist folk-clubs exist to perform newly collected pieces, often in unconvincing styles (forcing Norfolk dialect into Ewan MacColl's 'scouser' style). Those clubs also encourage audience participation. Would our audiences join in with raucous choruses, even though they are happy to sing carols with us at Christmas?

DJM

## Counterpoint No. 2. Whose songs are they anyway?

I was brought up to regard 'But who may abide the day of his coming' from *Messiah* as a bass aria. But it is now more often sung by a contralto, probably reflecting the shift between the voices available to Handel after castrati left the scene. I would be sorry to lose this powerful aria from my repertoire but should I follow fashion and stop singing it?

Woman singers have grumbled to me that there are very few songs in the great art-song tradition which are intended to be sung by women. Among song-cycles *Frauenliebe und Leben* comes to mind first because of its text. Unsurprisingly, I have never attempted it myself, though I have been tempted to look at Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. And only recently have I thought about Richard Strauss, though it is hard to find good male voice recordings of some of his songs. Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* is a constant battleground where the mezzosopranos seem to be winning.

Alice Coote has started giving recitals of Schubert's *Winterreise* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe* but, to my mind, with her rather operatic phrasing she makes them sound too much like Mahler. I concede that she copes with the latter half of 'Ich grolle nicht' better than many baritones do.

And then there are the cellists. How many people realise that Fauré's 'Après un rêve' is really a song, not a study for cello and piano?

DJM

## Notes on a collaboration: Rebecca Saunders and Séverine Ballon in music for solo cello

‘Between the time I hear the sound and the time I use the sound I need a few years.’ With these words began the last seminar of the Institute of Musical Research in the last academic year. The speaker was cellist Séverine Ballon who was remembering conversations with composer Rebecca Saunders during the time when a piece for solo cello *Solitude* was being written. Overall the writing took four years, from 2009 until 2013, and it seems that it involved plenty of interaction, sessions of improvisation where the composer herself participated with a violin, and repeated editing. The result is a 15-minute-long piece full of unusual sounds, intrigue and suspense, executed in extremely precise and detailed notation.

The music of Rebecca Saunders possesses a wide range of intonations: it can be extremely expressive or calm and introspective. Her compositions show an interest in the nature of sound, in the way a sound is heard in space and in the alignments of instruments in space. She likes to draw inspiration from literature, in particular *Ulysses* by James Joyce and short stories by Samuel Beckett (*crimson* for solo piano, *miniata* for accordion, piano, choir and orchestra, violin concerto *still*), and various physical phenomena, like the shooting and the subsequent flight of an arrow (string quartet *fletch*). Interestingly enough the composer does not work with electronics and prefers to explore the acoustic possibilities of various live instruments instead, often in close collaboration with a performer. Several instruments seem to be recurrent in her works, for example accordion that is never used in fast passages, but whose long-held chords in higher registers can be instantly spotted as a trademark of the instrumentation. A characteristic way of structuring a composition can be recognized in a number of works: a dynamic and often poignant and charged exploration of instrumental timbres and sounds is followed by a tranquil and almost static section based on repeating motifs and slightly varied phrases in several instruments (*miniata* for accordion, piano, choir and orchestra, *QUARTET* for piano, violin, double bass and accordion, *still*, a violin concerto, *fletch*, a string quartet, adhere to this pattern).

When *Solitude* was played in the Chancellor’s Hall, Senate House the first acoustic effect that immediately caught attention was a dry sound in the lowest possible cello register that was reminiscent of sawing a medium sized tree. It was soon followed by two extremely agile notes with a metallic tone without any pause in between them. A recurrent element of the piece was a tremolo of a double note, often either ascending or descending in pitch. Sometimes a tremolo

was gradually augmented with harmonics. Swift passages tended to follow loud and forceful pizzicatos of isolated notes, usually in low register, creating a considerable contrast between registers and a sense of a vast space circumscribed by sounds. An unusual effect was achieved when a pizzicato was immediately preceded by a strong beat on a string with a bow. The energy was sustained by a consistent use of trills. After a while patterns and structures began to emerge: systematic use of the lowest string in producing the dry sawing sound, phrases that go from piano to forte, but rarely the opposite way, association of certain movements of a bow with particular dynamics or register, ascending tremolos of double notes.

In the discussion following this performance the methods of creating some of the sounds were explained. The low sawing noise was linked to *sul ponticello* applied to the lowest string retuned a fourth below its usual pitch. Trills in the left hand were played simultaneously with tremolos in the right hand yielding a more energetic version of these elements with a slightly disturbing intense tone. Natural multiphonics were used to produce a strange vibration of a string; a sound with a slightly metallic tone distinct from an effect of *sul ponticello*. Because of the large resonance of multiphonics they are particularly well suited for trills. In order to obtain multiphonics a bow has to be located on a string so that it is tilted sideways at an extremely precise angle, the resulting sound is more fragile than anything related to *sul ponticello*. Multiphonic transition was used widely in the composition: when a longer note was played the bow was gradually adjusted so that this note ended as a multiphonic. Articulation was almost always moving towards the more intense of the two sounds within a transition, seemingly complementing frequent phrasing from piano to forte. I did not count upwards and downwards movements in the score, but the impression was that ascending figures, for example tremolos of double notes, were dominating the work.

An important role in creating the acoustic landscape of the piece was played by pauses and silences that delineated phrases and emphasized resonance. The score contains numerous indications to stop a bow on a string – resonance remains beyond the movement and a subdued and quickly fading sound is heard without playing. Is this a reminiscence of the piano, an instrument that is famously lacking opportunities for prolonging the sound after a key is pressed (with some concession allowed to the piano pedals)? The approach to resonance and silence in *Solitude* is evocative of Rebecca Saunders's works for other instruments. In *Choler* for two pianos pauses between clusters of chords give space to appreciate various aspects of resonance. Piano pedals are used to modulate the length of the resonance: sometimes the effect of a serene cluster is nimbly removed, in other cases the residual sound is elongated and overlaid with new chords or individual notes that are well separated in terms of regis-

ter. The composer herself speaks about the ‘weight of the sound’ framed by a silence whose length and timing is extremely important as silence defines how the sound is heard.

According to Rebecca Saunders writing a piece for a solo instrument is the longest and hardest of all compositional works. Sounds and techniques specific to an instrument have to be explored in other contexts, in chamber music or concertos, while the solo piece is being written. It is therefore of interest to look at some of the pieces composed in parallel with *Solitude*. Are similar sounds used in compositions that are close to each other in time? Does the context of other instruments change how a certain sound is heard? Does using the same instrumental techniques lead to a language and structure of a composition that is alike? I will look more closely at one concerto (violin concerto *still*) and one piece of chamber music (string quartet *fletch*) from the four year long period of writing *Solitude*.

A violin concerto *still* was premiered in 2012 and is closely related to *Solitude* in terms of style. *Sul ponticello* playing is widely used in this concerto thus creating a broad range of overtones. Trills and tremolos are frequently combined with *sul ponticello* – these can be clearly distinguished at the beginning of the piece by their metallic sound. Expressive phrases of long notes are interspersed throughout the piece, like brief glimpses of a cantilena. Microtonality arising from a D string retuned for a quartertone can be appreciated within these fragments. Although the two parts of the concerto provide a stark contrast, the methods of producing sounds are consistent throughout the piece: slow melodic phrases that become slightly longer in the second part and tremolos with *sul ponticello* that become calmer and more subdued towards the end of the piece. In the meantime the orchestral context is changing: restless passages of trills and tremolos moving in all directions are extended by an equally restless percussion ensemble in the first part, violin tremolos are overtaken by tremolos of a brass subsection, while in the second part the orchestra elongates violin sounds against a mild background of a still, high chord on an accordion. Techniques of making sound are sufficiently similar to those of *Solitude*, but note that only a subset of acoustic elements is used in the concerto in comparison with the language developed and explored in chamber music.

The main element of composition in a string quartet *fletch* is a glissando of a double harmonic trill, beginning in piano dynamic and quickly moving towards fortissimo via the vigorous physical gesture of a performer. Overlapping glissandos of several instruments create a texture of the piece. A more delicate version of the low sawing sound of the cello is present. Long notes are coloured by moderate and seemingly restrained (in comparison with double harmonic trills) changes in dynamics. The structure of *fletch* is sufficiently different from the structure of *Solitude*: *fletch* has two sections, the second of

which is considerably quieter than the first. Long notes dominate the latter part and most glissandos are deprived of simultaneous trills (remaining glissandos of trills are strictly contained within piano dynamic). A listener is immediately thrown into the myriads of trills at the beginning of *fletch*, while in *Solitude* building up of tension is more gradual.

So far we have looked at the sounds, structures and language of compositions by Rebecca Saunders, but how is such a piece written? How are these sounds invented and what is the path 'between the time I hear the sound and the time I use the sound'? Séverine Ballon shared some insights into the compositional process in the seminar. In the beginning composer and cellist tried out various techniques of playing and experimented with approaches to making sound. At another meeting the composer often asked to hear certain sounds again. Rebecca Saunders also took part in jam sessions with future performers of her music where she played a violin. The interpreter was very much a co-creator of the piece, especially in the early (sic!) stages of the work. Séverine Ballon admitted that she prefers long collaborations with composers that allow for such gradual explorations. A composer from the audience was enquiring whether she would be ready to participate in the writing of a piece that takes four years, if the composition was less sound-based and more pitch-based. The answer was that it would still be the cellist's preferred style of work. This came as a pleasant surprise, because the lack of time for staging of a piece of contemporary music can hinder (and often does hinder) appreciation of its complexity and detail.

Séverine Ballon also described how a collaboration with a contemporary composer can affect the way of playing the instrument. She devotes more time to improvisation now, mostly on her own. Her warming up begins with playing long notes, which are followed by Bach and then by improvisation. She mentioned several contemporary pieces that had changed her approach to the cello: *Pression* by Helmut Lachenmann and works by Brian Ferneyhough. (The score of *Pression* is not written on traditional staves, instead it contains detailed instructions on how each sound has to be produced, written in a specific notation and also verbally. The notation used by Brian Ferneyhough is a bit more conventional, nevertheless he creates works of large complexity by combining a broad range of elements and techniques of playing, often in a polyrhythmic manner: see for example *Time and Motion Study* for solo cello.) Another piece, not highlighted by Séverine Ballon, seems to be related to the landscape of *Solitude – Nomos Alpha* for solo cello by Iannis Xenakis, where characteristic ascending tremolos of double notes are used and the treatment of sound is similar, although Xenakis employs less detailed notation. A vivid discussion arose about the ways of playing Beethoven, at the end of which it was agreed that there is a lot in common between working with sounds in contemporary



music and performing Beethoven's works on period instruments: in both cases the way of creating sound has to be rethought, if not reinvented. With this nod to music of different times followed by playing of *Solitude* again ended a June afternoon.

*Dace Ruklisa*

## Some French Christmas carols

French Christmas carols are traditional and modern: 'Rudolph, the red nosed reindeer' becomes 'Le petit renne au nez rouge'; 'Vive le vent' is a version of 'Jingle Bells'. But some of the most loved are from the fifteenth century, often with a regional identity: 'Jésus est né en Provence'; 'C'est le jour de la Noël' is from the Auvergne, and 'Patapan' from Burgundy; 'Pastourelles, pastoureaux' - beloved by French Canadians - is from Anjou, as is the famous 'Noël angevin'. Medieval carols celebrating the birth of Christ dwell on the countryside: the ox, the ass and the shepherds. The star of Bethlehem becomes 'Bel astre que j'adore'; 'Entre le boeuf et l'âne gris' is a lullaby; and 'Un flambeau, Jeanette, Isabelle' calls villagers to worship the nativity. But 'traditional' has a wide meaning and many carols were composed or 'reconstructed' in the nineteenth century when their melodies, if not the same lyrics, became popular in France and England. 'Douce nuit' is 'Silent Night'; 'Viens, peuple fidèle' is 'O, Come all ye Faithful'; 'Aujourd'hui le roi des cieux' is 'The First Noel'. A very few such Anglo-French carols date from the Middle Ages: 'Noël nouvelet' is 'Sing we now of Christmas', and 'Falalalala' is 'Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly'. But the origin of many traditional carols is not always clear: 'Quelle est cette odeur agréable' is probably from the fifteenth century, but 'Ah, quelle grande mystère' is a nineteenth-century carol, as is 'Il est né, le divin enfant', composed and written in 1875. By then it was fashionable to compose carols. In 1847 Adolph Adam wrote the music for a new poem: 'Minuit, Chrétiens: cantique de Noël', which crossed the Channel to become 'O Holy Night'. Other composers followed, rearranging the melody, as Tchaikovsky famously did for a 'Carol from Anjou' in his 1878 *Album for the Young*, Op. 39. César Franck would have known of this: shortly before he died in 1890 he made two arrangements of 'Noël angevin' in his *L'Organiste*, works for harmonium published posthumously in 1891. He used other French carols, but his two arrangements of the Angevin carol are so famed that the lyrics of the piece are forgotten. A comparison is interesting: both use arrangements in G minor, though Franck tries a more elaborate version in G major. Both keep the work short. Tchaikovsky's arrangement in 2/4 time is tuneful and melodic, while Franck used 3/4 for Angevin Carol 1 and 3/8 for Angevin Carol 2, and relied more on chords and harmonies, a more sophisticated device. The piano and Beethoven inspired him and these little pieces are his 'bagatelles' - and possibly a reminder to his Russian colleague that French carols are not a childish matter.

*Clare Taylor, Summer 2014.*

## Composers on composers

### BORROWING, EDITING, DEDICATING

Arrangements, transcriptions, ‘variations on a theme by...’ – these are some of the obvious ways in which one composer has responded to the music of another. There was a time, indeed, when a composer might help himself to another’s work without compunction; the technique of the ‘parody mass’ of the Renaissance period, for example, involved taking musical ideas and sometimes whole passages from a pre-existing polyphonic piece, a motet or madrigal, and using them as the basis for a setting of the mass – and while of course a piece of one’s own might be the source, someone else’s might equally well be employed. A piece of music at this time could be thought of as common property, and if it offered useful or interesting possibilities for adaptation, elaboration or recomposition, then one was free to utilise it. This contrasts with musical borrowing by composers of recent times, which seems to be a much more self-conscious procedure: examples are the third movement of Luciano Berio’s *Sinfonia* (1968–69), a collage which has as its constant background the third movement of Mahler’s Second Symphony, and John Tavener’s choral piece *Coplas* (1970), derived from the ‘Crucifixus’ of Bach’s B minor Mass.

It is worth mentioning that over the past two centuries composers’ direct engagement with the music of their predecessors has sometimes seen them in the role of editors. Brahms had a deep interest in what we now call ‘early music’, and he contributed to the collected edition of Handel’s works and to an edition of Couperin’s keyboard music, as well as to the complete editions of Chopin and Schumann. Anton Webern, for his 1906 doctoral thesis at the University of Vienna, edited Volume II of the *Choralis Constantinus* of Heinrich Isaac (c.1450–1517); the study of Isaac’s complex polyphonic writing no doubt influenced Webern’s own strict and ingenious compositional practice, especially in his later rigorous application of twelve-note technique. In France in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the revival of interest in French music of an earlier period resulted in a collected edition of the works of Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) under the direction of Saint-Saëns, to which composers including Vincent d’Indy, Reynaldo Hahn and Debussy contributed. Debussy was also involved in 1914–15 in preparing a French edition of Chopin’s works; his editing of Chopin’s Studies provided inspiration for his own last major work for piano, the *Douze Études* of 1915, which he dedicated to the memory of Chopin.

The practice of dedicating goes back to the early days of music printing in the sixteenth century. For a long time the dedicatees were patrons and employers, actual or potential; but by the time Mozart dedicated six string quartets to Haydn (1785) the idea of dedication to fellow-musicians, teachers and friends was becoming common. There are numerous well-known examples from the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Schumann's dedication of his *Kreisleriana* Op.16 and *Fantasie* Op.17 to Chopin and Liszt respectively, to Ravel's dedication of his String Quartet '*à mon cher maître Gabriel Fauré*' and Berg's of his Three Orchestral Pieces Op.6 to Schoenberg.

#### IN MEMORIAM

Debussy's dedication of his *Études* to the memory of a long-dead composer was by way of homage to a source of inspiration; but of course commemoration of the more recently deceased has a more personal significance. Vaughan Williams completed *A London Symphony* in 1913; when published in 1920, he dedicated it to the memory of George Butterworth, a fellow-composer killed in the First World War. Frank Bridge's remarkable Piano Sonata (1921-24) was dedicated to the memory of Ernest Farrar, another composer of promise who died in the War. Neither Vaughan Williams's symphony nor Bridge's sonata were written as direct reactions to their dedicatees' deaths, but there are numerous cases in which a death has been the specific occasion for a composition. Schumann's *Erinnerung* (Remembrance), from his *Album for the Young*, carries a sort of subtitle: '4. November 1847' – the date of Mendelssohn's death; likewise, fifty years later, Max Reger's *Resignation* Op.26 No.5 is subtitled '3. April 1897 – J. Brahms+'. Half a century on, in his collection of keyboard pieces *Howells' Clavichord*, Herbert Howells marked the death of Gerald Finzi with 'Finzi's Rest', headed 'for Gerald: on the morrow of 27th September, 1956'.

Reger's piano piece adopts some of the stylistic features of Brahms's late piano music, and ends with a brief quotation from the second movement of Brahms's Symphony No.4. Quotation also features in Manuel de Falla's *Homenaje*, composed in memory of Debussy: a characteristically Spanish piece, using the *habañera* rhythm, it incorporates, just before the end, a phrase from one of Debussy's own piano works in Spanish style, 'La soirée dans Grenade' from *Estampes*.

Falla's piece, in its original version for guitar (he later transcribed it for piano) first appeared in *Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, a collection of pieces by ten composers, published in 1920 as a supplement to the *Revue Musicale* (Debussy having died in 1918). A number of these pieces formed parts of 'works in progress': Stravinsky contributed a piano version of the chorale which ends his *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*; Bartók's became the seventh of his *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs*, Op.20; Ravel's Duo for violin and cello became the first movement of his Sonata for that combination. The shortest piece in the collection, at just 12 bars, is by Erik Satie – an effective and quite intense setting of a single stanza from *L'Isolément* by the Romantic poet Lamartine.

A later collection of pieces specially commissioned in memory of a composer appeared in the journal *Tempo* (published by Boosey and Hawkes) in 1971 and 1972, commemorating Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). In this case the brief followed by most of the seventeen contributors in these two sets of 'Canons and Epitaphs' was rather specific: to write for some or all of the instruments employed in two 'memorial' pieces from 1959 by Stravinsky himself, *Epitaphium* for flute, clarinet and harp, and *Double Canon* for string quartet. The composers ranged from venerable figures like Copland and Milhaud to comparatively young avant-gardists such as Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle, and they undertook the task in their own highly individual ways. Alexander Goehr's contribution incorporated material from Stravinsky's Three Pieces for string quartet (1918) – this is one of a number of instances in which Goehr has made direct use of a predecessor's music, as a 'taking-off' point for his own invention rather than as an incidental quotation.

The tradition of mourning the death of an admired contemporary goes far back in musical history. John Blow's 1696 *Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell* (to a poem by John Dryden) is a case in point from the Baroque era, and the Renaissance period furnishes further examples. In 1585 William Byrd wrote *Ye Sacred Muses* in memory of his teacher and colleague Thomas Tallis, ending with the memorable line 'Tallis is dead, and music dies'. Earlier, Nicolas Gombert's lamentation on the death of Josquin des Prez (d.1521), *Musae Jovis*, calls on the Muses (as did Byrd's piece), combining this with the plainchant *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis* ('The sighs of death have encompassed me'). A similar combination of secular (or at least, classical) and sacred is found in Josquin's own *Nymphes des bois*, an elegy on the death of Johannes Ockeghem (d.1497). This sets a poem by Jean Molinet which includes classical allusions; in Josquin's five-voice composition, four voices sing the poem while a fifth intones the plainchant *Requiem aeternam* as a cantus firmus.

The compositional approaches taken by composers of 'memorial' pieces have varied. Quotation has already been mentioned, and on occasion, without actually quoting, a composer may adopt some features of the dedicatee's style: for example, Howells's tribute to Finzi catches the free-flowing contrapuntal side of Finzi's music; again, Toru Takemitsu's *Rain Tree Sketch II*, written in 1992 in memory of Olivier Messiaen, is definitely reminiscent of Messiaen's own music in both the musical material and its deployment, but without any direct quotation. Howells's own personal style, however, is not too distant from Finzi's, and the same is true of Takemitsu's in relation to some aspects of Messiaen's. Grieg's 'Gade', from Book 5 of his *Lyric Pieces* (1893), pays tribute to the Danish composer Niels Gade who died in 1890, but not by imitating Gade's own music; rather, it has been described as a 'portrait' of Gade, 'mildly impulsive, earnest and warm-hearted'.

‘...ON THE NAME OF...’

Interestingly, in this piece Grieg did not take the opportunity to use the notes G–A–D–E as a musical motif – too obvious, perhaps? On the other hand, Maurice Duruflé, in his *Prélude et fugue sur le nom d’Alain*, an organ piece composed in memory of the organist and composer Jehan Alain, who was killed on active service in 1940, does create a musical idea, which pervades the piece, from the letters A–L–A–I–N. Since only the letter A in the name corresponds to a note in standard musical notation, an extension of the musical alphabet is necessary. The letter H is ignored (as being the German equivalent of B natural), so as to restart the alphabet with I = A, continuing J = B, K = C, L = D, M = E, N = F, O = G and so on. Thus A–L–A–I–N becomes A–D–A–A–F, a musical motif which, handily, outlines a chord of D minor.

Such derivation of a musical idea from the letters of a name is not uncommon, the best-known example being B–A–C–H, the German version of B flat–A–C–B natural. J.S. Bach himself used this figure as the third subject of the incomplete Contrapunctus XIV of his *Art of Fugue*. Subsequent composers have written works based on this motif, one of the most famous being Liszt’s Prelude and Fugue for organ on the name Bach (two versions, 1856 and 1870). More unexpected, perhaps, though characteristic of the composer, and typically French, is Poulenc’s *Valse-Improvisation sur le nom de Bach* for piano (1932).

The French repertoire indeed contains various examples of such ‘letter-name’ music. In 1909 the publishers Durand commissioned pieces based on H–A–Y–D–N from various composers to mark the centenary of Haydn’s death. In this case H is used in the German way and the musical alphabet is extended thus: I/J = C, K = D, L = E, M = F, N = G, O = A, P = B, Q = C, R = D, S = E, T = F, U = G, V = A, W = B, X = C, Y = D, Z = E; so H–A–Y–D–N becomes B–A–D–D–G. Composers who responded to this commission included Debussy and Roussel, but perhaps the gem of the set is Ravel’s short, exquisite *Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn*. Ravel loved technical challenges, and in this piece he incorporates the H–A–Y–D–N motif in its original form, in retrograde (i.e. backwards) and in retrograde inversion (i.e. backwards and upside down) without any sense of contrivance.

To celebrate Fauré’s 75th birthday in 1920, Durand commissioned pieces on the name F–A–U–R–É, which, using the same code as for the ‘Haydn’ pieces, becomes F–A–G–D–E. The responses, published in 1922 and 1923, included some substantial works – Roger-Ducasse produced nothing less than a symphonic poem for large orchestra! Ravel, however, writing for violin and piano, again created a miniature, this time in a rather austere style similar to that of the Duo from the nearly contemporary Debussy tribute discussed above. As the title *Berceuse sur le nom de Gabriel Fauré* suggests, Ravel, not content with the

five-note motif, also includes his old teacher's first name. The continuation of the musical alphabet after G ignores the German significance of H and proceeds H = A, I = B, J = C and so on. The first four bars lay out, in two phrases, the name G-A-B-R-I-E-L F-A-U-R-É, and Ravel adds an extra note at the end – this is obviously for musical reasons, to round off the phrase, though it is tempting to look for some way in which it might encode the acute accent! The result is G-A-B-D-B-E-E F-A-G-D-E-B.

#### HOMAGE, TRIBUTE, CELEBRATION

Of course, composers do not need the excuse of a memorial work or the stimulus of a musical code to pay tribute to or celebrate each other. Such tribute sometimes takes the form of imitation: Schumann's *Carnaval* contains pieces entitled 'Chopin' and 'Paganini' which reflect the styles of these two contemporaries. Ravel's talent for pastiche is shown in his piano pieces *À la manière de Borodine* and *À la manière de Chabrier*; in the latter he even writes a Chabrier-style version of an aria by Gounod, giving us two composers for the price of one (or three for the price of two)! Many of the pieces in *Howells' Clavichord* are written in imitation of Howells's composer colleagues, or at least catch the spirit of their music – for example 'Ralph's Pavane' and 'Ralph's Galliard' (for Vaughan Williams) and 'Walton's Toy' (which takes as its starting-point the opening chords of Walton's famous march *Crown Imperial*). When, on the other hand, Bartók wrote 'Hommage à J.S.B.' and 'Hommage à R.Sch.' in Book 3 of the pedagogic piano pieces *Mikrokosmos*, there was no attempt to imitate the styles of Bach and Schumann beyond the adoption of characteristic keyboard textures. Debussy's 'Hommage à Rameau' from his *Images* Book 1 for piano bears no particular resemblance to Rameau's own music; but with its sarabande-like rhythm and its sometimes archaic harmonic language, it pays a general tribute to a previous golden age of French music. Likewise, Ravel wrote of his piano suite *Le tombeau de Couperin*: 'The tribute is directed not so much to the individual figure of Couperin as to the whole of French music of the eighteenth century.'

François Couperin himself paid homage to an older contemporary and an illustrious predecessor in, respectively, *L'apothéose de Corelli* (1724) and *L'apothéose de Lully* (1725). Both works are essentially trios, but while the former is entitled a trio sonata, the latter has the more typically French designation of 'concert instrumental'. Corelli's trio sonatas were enormously influential on composers of the day, establishing both the genre and a style of harmonically based counterpoint and clear tonal structure that is characteristic of the late Baroque. In celebrating Corelli, Couperin was not so much imitating a single composer's style as expressing his admiration for Italian music at a time when the two national styles, French and Italian, were often considered to be at odds with each

other. He wrote: 'The Italian style and the French style have for a long time divided between them (in France) the Republic of Music; for my part, I have always held in esteem those things which merited it, without excluding any composer or nation.' The fanciful headings of the various movements – 'Corelli at the foot of Parnassus requests the Muses to receive him' etc. – are, however, typically French. *L'apothéose de Lully*, a longer work than its predecessor, features Lully in the Elysian Fields, with a number of movements in distinctly French style; Lully is welcomed by Corelli and the Italian Muses; Apollo 'persuades Lully and Couperin that the union of the French and Italian tastes will make for perfection in music'; and the two composers, with their muses, play together in an overture (French) and a trio sonata (Italian). Throughout the score, Couperin distinguishes French and Italian by means of notation, with the distinctive clefs and ornamentation signs of the two national repertoires.

Finally, no survey of 'composers on composers', however incomplete, should fail to mention one great popular composer's witty tribute to another, George Gershwin's song 'By Strauss'. The lyrics by Ira Gershwin (George's brother) jokingly dismiss contemporary Broadway in favour of nineteenth-century Vienna and Johann Strauss II; the music, which manages to incorporate a near-quotation from *Die Fledermaus*, has all the charm and lilt of the Viennese waltz with just a flavour of brash twentieth-century New York.

#### IN CONCLUSION...

This article has not been about the arrangements, transcriptions and variations mentioned at the start – perhaps they need little introduction. Rather, the aim has been to draw attention to some other areas of repertoire, and to provide a broad context for the Chamber Music Club's lunchtime concert on 21st November, which will include a number of the works discussed here.

*Roger Beeson*