

# Late Music Concert Series 2014

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August at 7.30pm

Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York

Ian Pace (piano)

Michael Tippett: *Piano Sonata No. 2*  
Ralph Bateman: *Study in E*  
*Study in the 7<sup>th</sup> Byzantine Mode*  
Michael Parkin: *Piano Sonata*  
Edward Caine: *wild flowers*

Interval

Steve Crowther: *Piano Sonata No. 2*  
John Adams: *Phrygian Gates*

Pre-concert talk: composers Edward Caine and Ralph Bateman in conversation with Michael Parkin. This begins at 6.45pm and includes a complimentary glass of wine.

# PROGRAMME NOTES

## **Michael Tippett: *Piano Sonata No. 2***

Piano Sonata No. 2, a one-movement work of thirty-eight sections in eight different tempi, is approximately eleven minutes in length. This work best illustrates Tippett's mosaic style of synthesizing what at first may appear as fragments or pieces of a collage. In fact, Tippett originally intended to title the piece "Mosaics" because of the constant transformation of ideas, but determined that the work more closely resembled the sonata form. The unexpected shifts in tempi, musical ideas, and abrupt pauses without transition create enormous tension throughout. Tippett reiterates material and modifies some sections: Tempo 3 (mm. 8-14 and 258-264); Tempo 4 (mm.15-20, 30-35, 154-160); and Tempo 5 (mm. 22-29 and 162-169).

Tippett concludes the sonata with an approximate repetition of the opening Tempo 1 mm. 1-5 in measures 301-308, creating a circular effect. A brief coda follows and concludes the movement.

## **Ralph Bateman: *Study in E* *Study in the 7<sup>th</sup> Byzantine Mode***

If these pieces appeared in a piano tutor, they would perhaps have the subtitles "For evenness of touch and balance between the hands" and "For accuracy in the performance of octaves".

The first work begins very much in the style of a traditional study working on a single technical challenge, exploring different dynamics between the two hands. This is interrupted by short bird-like chirrup that develop into longer passages. An extended version of the opening returns, and the note E is eventually reached.

For some years I have been acting as cantor for a Greek Orthodox community in York, and much enjoyed exploring this rich musical repertoire, with its fine sense of pacing and contour as well as its intense expressive qualities. This study is freely based on a Cherubic Hymn by Hieromonk Gregory of Simonos Petras. The 7<sup>th</sup> mode is also called the Grave Mode because it lies unusually low in the voice.

RB

**Michael Parkin: *Piano Sonata***

A great deal of my music is based on feedback techniques; pitches, rhythms or even complete motivic ideas become the basis or outline skeleton for subsequent cycles in a continuous feedback process. With each new cycle, additional pitches, rhythms or chords are superimposed or incorporated into an expanded version of the previous pattern, and this re-invented version then becomes the skeleton for the next expansion.

As each new cycle has to be re-invented, nothing is ever strictly repeated, although the overall pattern remains essentially the same (albeit in enlarged form) from first to last.

In the Piano Sonata, these feedback techniques are clearly audible. Three fragmentary ideas introduced on the first page generate all the material in the Sonata. Through spiralling repetitions, each fragment is systematically pushed and stretched until it assumes an identity and character all of its own. By the same process, each fragment moves away from the centrifugal repeated A's in a specific modal direction; the first fragment via G and E, the second (in opposition) to B and D#, and finally, the last fragment settles on a cadential chord of F.

The opening is marked 'with relentless energy' and, except for a brief and uneasy calm in the centre of the work, there is little respite for either the pianist or the listener in this one movement work.

MP

**Edward Caine: *wild flowers***

*wild flowers* is essentially a piano etude ("study"). The composition of the piece was informed originally by the mechanical action of creating a complicated pianissimo texture by having one hand play the black keys and the other playing the white, as inspired by a couple of György Ligeti's piano etudes, for example "Desordre". The piece also explores another part of piano technique, that of piano clusters performed by using the whole or parts of the hand to hit a number of keys at the same time. In my mind these clusters can be quite beautiful, and there are some prominent composers, for example Frederic Rzewski and Salvatore Sciarrino, who use them in their piano writing. The structure and narrative of the piece is inspired by my own experiences of running

along the embankment by the river Ouse one evening, just as the summer flowers were coming into bloom and the light was shifting across the scene. Whenever I run through wild flowers I see a shifting pattern of many blades of grass and then occasional flashes of colour which are most vivid against the background. I started to associate flashes of colour with high piano clusters and I invented a texture made up of many “blades of grass”, each consisting of a left and a right hand run, of constantly shifting sizes, speeds, and overlapping each other. You might consider it an impressionist’s painting of a country scene, and certainly the piece is inspired by Claude Debussy’s *Images* (specifically *Poisson D’or*).

EC

### **Steve Crowther: *Piano Sonata No. 2***

My second piano sonata was written in response to the death of my father-in-law, Roger McMeeking. There are four movements. *Momentum* takes the form of a musical rollercoaster ride and one which, after many twists and turns, eventually crashes headlong into the second movement. *Meditation* is in three sections, each taking the form of a ‘call’ and ‘response’, with the music dropping down (a minor third) each time. Whereas the ‘call’ material is developed, eventually dissolving into a cascade of tears, the ‘response’ is simply restated, albeit varied: a constant, a cadence? *Invocation* is a kind of physical prayer, but one which ushers in the Blues rather than any higher spiritual calling. *Boogie (sans Woogie)* is a hair-raising homage to the piano blues of the 30’s and 40’s. Like the opening movement, the music is fast and furious and there are also aspects of development over a manic Boogie ostinato. However, the sheer weight of musical momentum cannot be sustained, the music derails and crashes into the first movement ...which now guides the sonata towards a (hopefully) touching resolution. The work is dedicated to the memory of Roger and Ileana McMeeking.

SC

**John Adams:      *Phrygian Gates***

The piece is written in a minimalist style, and based on a repetitive cell structure. Simultaneously, Adams' desire to move away from the conventional techniques of minimalism is noticeable. The composition is set in the Phrygian mode, and cycles through half the keys throughout its roughly 20 minute duration, starting in A Lydian (four sharps), followed by A Phrygian (one flat), then E Lydian (five sharps) and E Phrygian (no flats), etc. In this way, the piece shifts following the circle of fifths, alternating between the Lydian and Phrygian mode of each key. As claimed by Adams, it is "in the form of a modulating square wave with one state in the Lydian mode and the other in the Phrygian mode". Gradually, the amount of time spent in the Lydian shortens and shifts more to the Phrygian. The "Gates" in the title is an allusion to the electronic music gates, a term for rapidly shifting modes.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Michael Tippett**

After leaving Morley College, Tippett devoted himself almost entirely to composition, earning a small secondary income from radio talks. He completed his First Symphony in 1945 and then embarked on his first opera, *The Midsummer Marriage*; like his next three operas, it was first produced by the Royal Opera House. They exerted a considerable influence upon his subsequent symphonies, sonatas, concertos and quartets.

Tippett's international reputation blossomed from his sixties onwards, partly through a proliferation of recordings of his music. He was especially esteemed in America, and some of his most significant works (such as his Fourth Symphony and *The Mask of Time*) were US commissions.

Throughout his eighties, Tippett remained exceptionally active, composing, conducting and travelling worldwide. His fifth opera, *New Year*, commissioned jointly by Houston Grand Opera, Glyndebourne and the BBC, received its première in 1989, was toured all over the UK the following year and the BBC screened their own television production in

1991. Immediately after the opera came *Byzantium*, for soprano and orchestra (premiered in Chicago in 1991 and repeated the same year at the Proms) and a Fifth String Quartet (1992). His last orchestral work, *The Rose Lake*, was premiered by the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis as part of a two-week long festival celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Barbican Centre, London. Subsequently, during a two-month tour of the USA and Canada, Tippett heard this greatly acclaimed work performed eleven times.

Also in 1995, following upon his autobiography, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (1991), his definitive collection of essays, *Tippett on Music* was published, and he wrote an idiosyncratic contribution to the Purcell tercentenary celebrations, *Caliban's Song*, for the BBC.

In November 1997 the Stockholm Concert Hall presented a 12-day Tippett Festival which included all his music except the stage works.

Tippett travelled to Stockholm but was taken ill with pneumonia.

Although he was able eventually to return to the UK, he never fully recovered and died peacefully at his home in South London on 8 January 1998.

### **Ralph Bateman**

Ralph Bateman studied composition at the universities of Nottingham, King's College London and York, including Nicola Lefanu and Roger Marsh among his teachers. Recent performances of his works have included *8 Trigrams and a Finale for Piano and Chinese Percussion* (Shanghai 2010), *Zeitoun for Flute* (Ludwigsburg 2011) and *Ruins for Choir* which was performed by The 24 as part of the York Festival of Ideas in June this year.

### **Michael Parkin**

Michael Parkin's work has been broadcast and widely performed in Britain, Europe and the US. Prizes include the Yorkshire Arts Young Composers' Competition (1978), the MidNAG award (1979), the Match TM Award (1996) and *Elegy* for solo flute, which was one of only two British works selected for the 1984 Gaudeamus International Musicweek in the Netherlands. In 1994, along with Henryk Gorecki and Peter Sculthorpe, he was one of the featured composers at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival, and in 2006 he received a prestigious Creative Wales Award to enable him to write orchestral music. CD recordings are

available on the Prima Facie (ASC), Meridian, Metier and Composers of Wales labels.

His work ranges from a chamber opera to a large body of music for chamber ensembles, including four string quartets. BBC National Orchestra of Wales have recently premiered his orchestral works *Still Life* and *Srebrenica* at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff.

He is currently director of the Young Composer of Dyfed scheme in West Wales and lives in Pembrokeshire.

### **Edward Caine**

Dr Edward Caine PhD is a composer, pianist, singer and conductor who for the last 11 years has been working and studying in York but will soon be moving down to Stourbridge, near Birmingham. Edd has worked as a composer with some of the most prominent performers and festivals on the UK music scene and has had his works performed nationally and internationally, and has received a doctorate in composition from the University of York. He has had a longstanding relationship with Late Music, working as composer, page turner, organiser, technician, compère and performer with them over 8-9 years. Recently Edd has been focussing on performance, putting on solo and chamber concerts of classical and contemporary music with fellow musicians, and performing with contemporary music groups *Distractfold* and the *Late Music Ensemble*. Edd has also been working as Musician in Residence at Bootham School, York, and will be moving on to the same position in *Old Swinford Hospital School*, Stourbridge.

For more information please visit [www.edwardcaine.com](http://www.edwardcaine.com)

### **Steve Crowther**

Steve Crowther was born and brought up in Bradford. The gritty character of the city and its communities still is a major influence in his music. He studied music at Sussex University with both Jonathan Harvey and Michael Finnissy. In 1991 Steve and composer David Power formed the acclaimed Late Music Festival, which has now simply become Late Music.

Samples of Steve Crowther's music can be heard at [www.soundcloud.com](http://www.soundcloud.com)

## John Adams

Born in 1947 in Massachusetts, John Adams is 10 years younger than Steve Reich and Philip Glass, with whom he is often classified as a Minimalist. His success has much to do with an espousal of modality and regular pulse – musical elements reintroduced by the Minimalists in reaction to much modernist music. Yet Adams's approach since the late 1970s emphasises two things that early Minimalism is generally said to have rejected. One is direct emotional expression; the other concerns allusions to, and even direct quotations from, other musics. Adams himself has described his development as an alternation between 'two opposing polarities: along with every dark, introspective, "serious" piece there must come the Trickster, the garish, ironic wild card that threatens to lose me whatever friends the previous composition might have gained'. Thus *Harmonium* (1981), settings of John Donne and Emily Dickinson, was followed by *Grand Pianola Music* (1982).

Allusion and quotation played an increasing role in Adams' output from 1978 – when *Shaker Loops* drew on the spiritual ecstasy of America's 18th-century fundamentalist movement – up to the late-1980s works *Nixon in China* and *Fearful Symmetries*. Since then, such references have generally been less overt, though the *Chamber Symphony* (1992) alludes both to Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1* and to American cartoons.

With *Nixon in China*, his first opera (1987), Adams achieved international fame. The director Peter Sellars, librettist Alice Goodman and the choreographer Mark Morris were integral both to this project and to his next opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), based on the 1985 hijacking of a cruise-liner. An event from recent history – the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake – was likewise the starting point for the 'songplay' *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* (1995). By contrast, *El Niño* (2000) is a 'Nativity oratorio' featuring film as well as stage action. Adams' most recent operatic collaborations with Sellars are *Doctor Atomic* (2005) and *A Flowering Tree* (2006), both seen in London during the past two years. The *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, extensively recasting and extending the opera, was premiered at the 2007 BBC Proms. Adams' works include *Son of Chamber Symphony* (2007), also choreographed for San Francisco Ballet by Mark Morris, and *City Noir* (2009).



## Ian Pace

Ian Pace is a pianist of long-established reputation, specialising in the farthest reaches of musical modernism and transcendental virtuosity, as well as a writer and musicologist focusing on issues of performance, music and society and the avant-garde. He was born in Hartlepool, England in 1968, and studied at Chetham's School of Music, The Queen's College, Oxford and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the Juilliard School in New York. His main teacher, and a major influence upon his work, was the Hungarian pianist György Sándor, a student of Bartók.

Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing in 24 countries and at most major European venues and festivals. His absolutely vast repertoire of all periods focuses particularly upon music of the 20th and 21st Century. He has given world premieres of over 200 pieces for solo piano, including works by Julian Anderson, Richard Barrett, James Clarke, James Dillon, Pascal Dusapin, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy (whose complete piano works he performed in a landmark 6-concert series in 1996), Christopher Fox, Volker Heyn, Hilda Paredes, Horatiu Radulescu, Frederic Rzewski, Howard Skempton, Gerhard Stäbler and Walter Zimmermann. He has presented cycles of works including Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke I-X*, and the piano works of Ferneyhough, Fox, Kagel, Ligeti, Lachenmann, Messiaen, Radulescu, Rihm, Rzewski and Skempton. He has played with orchestras including the Orchestre de Paris under Christoph Eschenbach (with whom he premiered and recorded Dusapin's piano concerto *À Quia*), the SWF Orchestra in Stuttgart under Rupert Huber, and the Dortmund Philharmonic under Bernhard Kontarsky (with whom he gave four highly critically acclaimed performances of the Ravel Left Hand Concerto in 2008). He has recorded over 25 CDs; his most recent recording of Michael Finnissy's five-and-a-half hour *The History of Photography in Sound* (of which he gave the world premiere in London in 2001) was released by Divine Art in October 2013 to rave reviews from critics.

He is Lecturer in Music and Head of Performance at City University, London, having previously held positions at the University of Southampton and Dartington College of Arts. His areas of academic expertise include 19<sup>th</sup> century performance practice (especially the work of Liszt and Brahms), issues of music and society (with particular

reference to the work of Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School, and their followers), contemporary performance practice and issues, music and culture under fascism, and the post-1945 avant-garde, in particular in West Germany, upon which he is currently completing a large-scale research project.

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