

JULY 19th

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CONCERT THREE

Stefan Ammer

piano

Zwölftonspiel (Christmas 1946) **Josef Matthias Hauer**

8 Bagatelles **John Polglase**

Strange Places **Tristram Cary**

Coruscations **Richard Meale**

Six Bagatelles, Op.126 **Ludwig van Beethoven**

"It is equally fatal to have a system and not to have a system. One must try to combine them."

Friedrich Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragments

Pilgrim Church provides wheelchair access via the rear (northern) doors.

Toilets can be accessed through the door on the left of the performance area.

Zwölftonspiel for piano (Christmas 1946) Josef Matthias Hauer

"Hauer was in no way a dry theoretician. Quite the contrary - he was a great fan of the dithyramb; walking at night through the streets of Vienna, he would suddenly begin to recite Hölderlin with a loud and beautiful voice or even sing one of his 12-tone settings. He was always an enthusiastic man, who in apparent contrast to his character created these structurally rigid principles of composition which he, undeterred, continued to develop. In his work an ascetic, in life dionysian." Hermann Heiss (Interview without Questioner.)

8 Bagatelles for solo piano

John Polglase

These eight miniature pieces for solo piano were written in my first year as a student with Richard Meale back in the days when I could actually play the piano. Stylistically they are very different from the music I am writing these days, far more 'modern' if you like, which is entirely appropriate for a young student self consciously experimenting with and expanding their expressive repertoire. I don't remember much of the process of their composition except that each was to be entirely different from the last and spontaneity was a very important element. Their composition took place over a couple of weeks and I remain very fond of them. As such the 8 Bagatelles for solo piano is my earliest acknowledged work.

The piece can be regarded as normal abstract music with no programmatic content – for example as a five movement Sonata. The idea behind it, however, is to mirror the astonishing unity within complexity that is evident in the natural world around us. Both in the inanimate world of rocks, hills and bodies of water, and in the vast diversity of plants and animals, one is constantly struck with a sense of ordered randomness, of purposeful chaos, which I have tried to capture by finding a musical analogy for the phenomenon.

Outside the familiar modes of tonal music there are many other possible scale formations, still using whole and semitones but differently arranged to make scales of anything from seven to ten notes per octave. *Strange Places* explores a musical outback of 19 scales, which with transposed versions is presented as 141 different pitch formations.

Imagine that the explorer has arrived at a site with 141 similar but different features, and intends to investigate and map this apparently random arrangement of locations. Dividing the site into three sections to organize the search, the first two movements cover two of these in contrasting frames of mind (Site Surveys 1 and 2). Following this a first complete Tour (141A) is made, and afterwards the third section is seen again from a different angle (Site Survey 3). Finally, in the light of previous experience, a second Tour (141B) re-explores the whole site in a more intense way, making a third visit to each location.

T.C. June 1992

Richard Meale's 'Coruscations' was completed in March 1971 and remains his only mature work for solo piano.

'Coruscations' (a flashing or a flash of light) was commissioned by Roger Woodward who, by that time, had already established his international reputation as an intrepid and somewhat flamboyant exponent of the most virtuosic and radical new music.

In the years between the premiere of his 'Homage to Garcia Lorca' and the composition of 'Coruscations' Richard Meale had become a central figure in Australian new music, widely recognised as the most gifted and uncompromising representative of the High Modernist European style that had come to have such a depth and breadth of influence in the post-war years.

In many ways 'Coruscations', with all its fragmentary and frenzied intensity, is both the final and most essential example of Meale's impassioned concern with that deeply serious and, as he would have called it at the time, intellectually responsible manner.

The influence of Pierre Boulez was critical as a musical, aesthetic and even political impetus.

In particular the Second Book of Boulez's 'Structures' for two pianos - composed in 1961 but only available in print and recordings after 1965 - was Meale's principal point of technical reference while composing 'Coruscations' and the work that immediately preceded it, his 'Interiors/Exteriors' for two pianos and percussion.

Meale's fascination for the Boulezian world view will long be remembered by the many students who were introduced to these ideas during long, nocturnal, rite-of-passage discussions. Alleged dinner parties where food was never seen, fuelled by container loads of nicotine and reservoirs of something masquerading as red wine - taxis were sent out into the night when supplies began to dwindle - occasions which could only be done true literary justice by Marcel Proust on steroids.

1. Andante con moto *cantabile e compiacevole*
2. Allegro
3. Andante *cantabile e grazioso*
4. Presto
5. Quasi allegretto
6. Presto – Andante amabile e con moto

Among Beethoven's numerous short compositions for piano, there are twenty four that he himself gave the title "Small Things (Kleinigkeiten) or Bagatelles". There are three sets that were published separately: first, seven bagatelles, Op. 33 (in the year 1803); then the 11 new bagatelles, Op. 119 (20 years later); and shortly after (in the year 1825) the set that we are hearing tonight, "Six Bagatelles, Op. 126".

Beethoven wrote about these 6 Bagatelles in a letter to his publisher Schott in Mainz. In the letter, he speaks of "Six bagatelles, or "little things", for piano alone." He says that "many of them are the most worked out, and probably the best of the type, that he has yet written". In this letter Beethoven is self-conscious that the public might find these small pieces light and frivolous compared to his large scale works. But on listening closely one can hear that they are no mere set of small, throw-away incidental pieces. There is a concentration of ideas and a concentrated speediness in development in them that belie their brevity. Here the composer is experimenting with how suddenly he could juxtapose musical events whilst still achieving coherence. These concerns are not seen only here but also in his late piano sonatas and string quartets, but here they are certainly pushed to the limit. Potent ideas are introduced and then developed in the most

truncated fashion, and passages of starkly contrasted mood are presented without transition. But at no time do the pieces feel unbalanced or unsatisfactory: enough is done at all stages to satisfy the formal needs of each piece and the set as a whole.

"Since the Renaissance at least, the arts have been conceived as ways of exploring the universe, as complementary to the sciences. To a certain extent, they create their own fields of research; their universe is the language they have shaped, whose nature and limits they explore, and in exploring, transform. Beethoven is perhaps the first composer for whom this exploratory function of music took precedence over every other: pleasure, instruction, and, even, at times, expression. There was no doubt an element of good fortune in his arriving on the scene to find a universe, a language already so rich in possibilities and resonances as the one formed by Haydn and Mozart. His singlemindedness, however, is unparalleled in the history of music, and it is this unrelenting high seriousness which can still create resentment."

Charles Rosen, The Classical Style.

Next Concert:

Monday August 23

The Firm

presents

David Lockett, piano

Beethoven Five late piano pieces

Grant Eight Bagatelles

Hauer Zwölftonspiel

Chapman Smith Sonata III

Beethoven Sonata in E major Op.109

Please join the performers and composers after the concert for complimentary drinks and tortes by Gabriele.

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