

Concert Five

# THE FIRM

# THE LANGBEIN STRING QUARTET

Michael Milton violin Melanie Radke violin Rosie McGowran viola David Sharp violincello

With Guest Artists:

Emma Horwood soprano Geoffrey Bourgault du Coudray clarinet

MONDAY OCTOBER 10, 2005

String Quartet No.3

Luke Altmann

The Heavens Shine

Quentin Grant

Largo Desolato from the Lyric Suite

Alban Berg

Interval

Decomposition for strings

Fiona Hill

Tre Ricercari

Raymond Chapman Smith

"Alles ist nur ein Sang ..."

Ernst Ludwig Leitner

"There was once, we know, an automaton constructed in such a way that it could respond to every move of a chess player with a countermove that would ensure the winning of the game. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table.

A system of mirrors created the illusion that this chessboard was transparent on all sides. Actually, a hunchbacked dwarf - a master at chess - sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophic counterpart to this apparatus. The puppet called 'historical materialism', is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight."

Walter Benjamin

"He (my father) was once asked "Aren't you proud of your son?" He replied:" I was not overly vexed that he remained an idler for 30 years. So I'm not overly honoured that he's a poet now! I gave him his freedom. I knew it was a long shot. I counted on his soul!"

Peter Altenberg, close friend of Alban Berg

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

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

# String Quartet No. 3

#### Luke Altmann

Almost all the material of the single movement of String Quartet No.3 is derived from the opening theme, which consists of a small cell stretched over expanding intervals. Throughout the course of the piece this theme is gently twisted into variations, each clearly identifiable with its prototype. All this is done with my current philosophy in mind - that music is at its best while lots of fun or deeply moving, and should never be written or performed perfunctorily. In this piece it is primarily the first of these notions upon which purposeful intention and punning Teutonic wit are concentrated.

He no longer can endure music, he is so full of unexploited noises.

A heaven alive with cosmic idiots. The yawning of the stars.

It is strange that one comes closer to truth only in the words that one no longer fully believes. Truth is a reanimation of dying words.

Every word he writes down gives him strength. No matter what it may be; it may be nothing, but writing it down gives him strength.

Music, the measure of man's capacity.

Elias Canetti

# The Heavens Shine six bagatelles for string quartet

#### **Ouentin SD Grant**

After working for some time on a set of ideas for a new string quartet but finding it a struggle to bring these ideas together with the rigor that the medium demands I had a late night revelation and gave up the fight! Instead of a fully formed quartet I have used some of these ideas in a less rigorous way and produced a set of six bagatelles.

- Con moto, grazioso
- 2. Moderato, leggiero
- 3. Moderato con moto
- 4. Allegro presto
- Andante
- 6. Moderato molto mosso moderato

I was nothing, I am nothing, I will be nothing. But I will live out my life in freedom and let noble, considerate souls share in the experiences of this free inner life, by putting them out in the most concentrated form on paper.

Peter Altenberg

# "De profundis clamavi" from the Lyric Suite Alban Berg

Largo desolato

Text by Charles Baudelaire

To you, you sole dear one, my cry rises Out of the deepest abyss in which my heart has fallen. There the landscape is dead, the air like lead And in the dark, curse and terror well up.

Six moons without warmth stands the sun.

During [ the other ] six darkness lies over the earth.

Even the polar land is not so barren 
Not even brook and tree, nor field and flock.

But no terror born of brain approaches The cold horror of this icy star And of this night, a gigantic Chaos!

I envy the lot of the most common animal Which can plunge into the dizziness of a senseless sleep. . . So slowly does the spindle of time unwind!

"I immersed myself entirely in this work. The Quartet had to be finished, and written down with these words: De profundis clamavi: to you, my dear, I cry.

In a feverish hurry I composed this song without words ( for nobody but you is to know that these tones of the last movement are underlaid by Baudelaire's words ), finished in the last night of September and therewith completed the entire Quartet."

Berg to Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, October 23, 1926

Prepared by the composer for his lover, Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, wife of a prominent Prague industrialist and sister of the poet, Franz Werfel, "for whom and only for whom - in spite of the official dedication . . . every note of this work was written," it contains meticulous insertions in the composer's own hand on almost every page. The annotations, in red, blue, and green ink, calligraphic in their elegance and neatness, unfold a secret program for each movement and for the work as a whole. Hanna's initials are combined with Berg's to create the Suite's central thematic cell, H F A B (b f a b flat). Berg calls Hanna's attention "to our numbers, 10 and 23," by showing these as factors of the number of bars comprised in each movement and in sections of movements. The musical cross-references and quotations are identified. The suppressed texts of a quotation from Zemlinsky and of the finale are restored and carefully laid out so that the implied vocal setting of each syllable is unmistakable.

Berg was a lover of secrets, and being himself secretive, never thought that this secret "song without words" would be unlocked, much less performed.

But Berg was also an inveterate devotee of the intensely Viennese practice of daily Jause gossip and we might speculate that he may have enjoyed the prospect of a safely posthumous 'outing'. The discovery of his Baudelaire setting in the finale of the Lyric Suite gives us nothing less than a libretto for the last act of what Theodor Adorno had called a "latent opera".

"He has undercut the negativity of the world with the hopelessness of his fantasy." Adorno on Berg

#### **Decomposition for strings**

Fiona Hill

This string quartet in two movements is a meditation on structure, decomposition and regeneration in the natural world. The first movement Decomposition reflects the swiftness of decay and the breaking down of matter into smaller cells. Here matter becomes ever simpler until it is essentially a fragment of its former self. The second movement Transpiration represents the rebuilding of matter from its original cellular form into entirely new structures. Transpiration takes its basis from osmotic principles and the seemingly static evolution of plants. As in nature, all cells are linked in an ever- changing process.

Language, grasped as a system, goes dumb.

Hide, otherwise you won't find out anything.

Oh, for a stethoscope, a fine stethoscope to identify the generals in their wombs!

The ear, not the brain, as the seat of the mind. (Mesopotamia)

He comforts himself with purity for his lack of success.

Elias Canetti

Tre Ricercari

Raymond Chapman Smith

Sopra

"Sub Specie Aeternitatis"

- 1. Moderato
- 2. Andante
- 3. Allegro

"The work of art is the object seen sub specie aeternitatis; and the good life is the world seen sub specie aeternitatis. This is the connection between art and ethics.

The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view sub specie aeternitatis from outside. In such a way that they have the whole world as background."

Ludwig Wittgenstein

"Further we do not let abstract thought, the concept of reason take possession of our consciousness, but, instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to perception, sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether it be a tree, a rock, a crag, a building, or anything else. We lose ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression . . .

It was this that was in Spinoza's mind when he wrote:

Mens aeterna est quatenus res sub specie aeternitatis ['The mind is eternal in so far as it conceives things from the standpoint of eternity']."

Arthur Schopenhauer

#### **Ernst Ludwig Leitner** "Alles ist nur ein Sang..." (1996/97) for Soprano, Clarinet and String Quartet

- Presto 1.
- Intermezzo I
- Andante 3.
- Notturno
- Adagio
- Intermezzo II
- Adagio

Texts by Josef Weinheber

#### Everything is but a song.....

1. Who has time? No-one has time. Who is immune? No-one is immune! Leave the house, leave everything behind, stranger amongst strangers. Quick, quick, quick, run! Fall on your knees and confess! Unsteady heart, unsteady steps, with, with, with, with!

Beauty...who now has the serenity for beauty? Close the door to God! It can't be anything but death!

Amen! German! Brave! Inside!!

I went. I passed by. Caress my steps.

I spent my days, I spent my days, I spent my days as with a violin.

Are not deafness and blindness a part of going? How then may I dare, how then may I dare, to hear and see?

A life passed by, unmoved by will.

The fount of the lament, the fount of the lament remains hidden.

When the Night seeks her sufferers, she falls softly through the window and asks, she sits on the bed and seeks, what the confessor stammeringly says. And it is not always death that is the talk between the two.

There is much, more terrible that threatens, and not all will be only confession.

There is grief and lament and madness-

One cannot regret however, what the night has done (to them):

Who has killed, never acted alone.

There is turmoil, and the bitter cries of a man who has no homeland,

distant from love, which he wearily stifles in tears.

And the sufferer speaks with the Night, made by the mothers, and she takes them to her heart.

She will be merciful, she will be merciful to them:

Like guilt is the pain, and it has long been paid for.

God is great, a great Patience, when the Night seeks her sufferers.

Don't wake me! Nothing is as difficult as waking. Mountains rise above the crushed bosom. Slowly does time drip away like congealing blood does a wound. Eternal sadness presses upon the hour. Once was laughter, was desire also in this world. The call of death I will hear many thousands of times, Before the final blow falls.

7. Every bitter need is only there, when it threatens. It is near, it is far, this is how things are. Never are we anxious. Go on, it is nothing. God creates and destroys. First in death is courage full of wisdom and good. Of course, life is long..... And the living takes a tithe from the dead. Whoever decides our fate will stand yet fall nevertheless. Everything is but a song......

"I am busy pointing my telescope through the bloody mist at a mirage of the nineteenth century that I am attempting to reproduce based on the characteristics it will manifest in a future state of the world, liberated from magic. I must first build this telescope myself and, in making this effort, I am the first to have discovered some fundamental principles of materialist art theory."

Walter Benjamin

The composers and musicians invite you to join us after the concert for complimentary drinks and tortes by Gabriele.

### **Upcoming concerts:**

Sunday October 23rd, 2.30pm
Schubert Afternoon
with
Emma Horwood, soprano
Jamie Cock, piano

Monday November 7th, 8pm
Zephyr String Quartet
with Emma Horwood, soprano
Featuring new works by young composers

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