

the firm 2007

five Adelaide concerts

concert five

Tranquil peace is the music we love best; our life is hard, we are no longer able, even on occasions when we have tried to shake off the cares of daily life, to rise to anything so high and remote from our usual routine as music Josephine is the sole exception; she has a love for music and knows too how to transmit it; she is the only one; when she dies, music—who knows for how long—will vanish from our lives.

Is it in fact singing at all? Is it not perhaps just a piping? We all pipe, but of course no one dreams of making out that our piping is an art, we pipe without thinking of it, indeed without noticing it, and there are even many among us who are quite unaware that piping is one of our characteristics. Perhaps it is much the same with Josephine's singing; we admire in her what we do not at all admire in ourselves; in this respect, I may say, she is of one mind with us. . . .

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

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

Langbein String Quartet

Graeme Norris (guest), Hilary Bruer,

Rosi McGowran and David Sharp

String Quartet No. 5

Luke Altmann

String Quartet No. 3

Quentin Grant

Choshoku no Odorimas

David Kotlowy

Officium breve

in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky op.28 (1988/89)

György Kurtág

String Quartet No. 5

Luke Altmann

In this fifth attempt at composition for String Quartet I have tried to create a performance environment in which a system of cues sets up a dialogue for four. This allows each musician to concentrate on the communication of their own part with rhythmic independence from the others. However, this is done with dependence on the completion and reiteration of the other parts and the introduction of new material from them before further development can take place. The central sequence involves a steady progression towards resolution on the notes of the open strings of the instruments, and a gesture of ascension concludes the piece.

... Then Josephine holds that her time has come. So there she stands, the delicate creature, shaken by vibrations especially below the breastbone, so that one feels anxious for her, it is as if she has concentrated all her strength on her song, as if from everything in her that does not directly subserve her singing all strength has been withdrawn, almost all power of life, as if she were laid bare, abandoned, committed merely to the care of good angels, as if while she is so wholly withdrawn and living only in her song a cold breath blowing upon her might kill her.

Among our people there is no age of youth, scarcely the briefest childhood. We cannot shelter our children from the struggle for existence, if we did so, it would bring them to an early grave. These depressing considerations are reinforced by another, which is not depressing: the fertility of our race. One generation—and each is numerous—treads on the heels of another, the children have no time to be children. ...

String Quartet No. 3

Quentin Grant

1. Andantino
2. Moderato
3. Con moto

... Yet our people are not only childish, we are also in a sense prematurely old. We have no youth, we are all at once grown-up, and then we stay grown-up too long, a certain weariness and hopelessness spreading from that leaves a broad trail through our people's nature, tough and strong in hope that it is in general. Our lack of musical gifts has surely some connection with this; we are too old for music, its excitement, its rapture do not suit our heaviness, wearily we wave it away; we content ourselves with piping; a little piping here and there, that is enough for us. Who knows, there may be talents for music among us; but if there were, the character of our people would suppress them before they could unfold.

At her concerts, in the brief intervals between their struggles, our people dream. It is as if the limbs of each were loosened, as if the harried individual once in a while could relax and stretch himself at ease in the great, warm bed of the community. And into these dreams Josephine's piping drops note by note; she calls it pearl-like, we call it staccato; but at any rate here it is in its right place, as nowhere else, finding the moment—wait for it—as music scarcely ever does. Something of our poor brief childhood is in it, something of lost happiness that can never be found again, but also something of active daily life, of its small gaieties, unaccountable and yet springing up and not to be obliterated. And indeed this is all expressed not in full round tones but softly, in whispers, confidentially, sometimes a little hoarsely. Of course it is a kind of piping. Why not? Piping is our people's daily speech, only many a one pipes his whole life long and does not know it, where here piping is set free from the fetters of daily life and it sets us free too for a little while. We certainly should not want to do without these performances. ...

Choshoku no Odorimas

David Kotlowy

First light, touching these bricks
as if they were the skin of the world;

fingers of gold,
their weathered chalk-grey forms;

so I imagine it is when grace
finally enters the mind

and plays with all those old
worn out desires

as if they were child's toys –
the building blocks of the world.

(from "First Light" by Ratnagarbha)

... But the latest is that she has disappeared, just at a time when she was supposed to sing. Josephine has vanished, she will not sing; she will not even be cajoled into singing, this time she has deserted us entirely. Of her own accord she abandons her singing, of her own accord she destroys the power she has gained over people's hearts. How could she ever have gained that power, since she knows so little about these hearts of ours? ...

Officium breve

in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky op.28 (1988/89)
György Kurtág

I Largo – II Piu andante – III Sostenuto, quasi giusto –
IV Grave, molto sostenuto – V (*Fantasie über die
Harmonien des Webern-Kanons*) Presto – VI (*Canon a 4*)
Molto agitato – VII *Canon a 2 (frei, nach op. 31/VI von
Webern)* Sehr fließend – VIII Lento – IX Largo –
X [*Webern: Canon a 4 (op. 31/VI)*] Sehr fließend –
L'istesso tempo – Sehr fließend – XI Sostenuto –
XII Sostenuto, quasi giusto – XIII Sostenuto, con slancio –
XIV Disperato, vivo – XV *Arioso interotto (di Endre
Szervánszky)* Larghetto

The title of Kurtág's third quartet of 1989, *Officium breve*, not only recalls the liturgy of the Catholic Church but is a memorial written in honour of the Hungarian composer Endre Szervánszky.

Kurtág has called it a "Mini-Requiem" – a somewhat oblique reference to another composer who had called his last composition, the *Requiem Canticles*, a "pocket requiem": Igor Stravinsky.

In Kurtág's score, the title is complemented by the words, "This officium also commemorates Tibor Turcsányi, Zolt Baranyai, Gabriella Garzó and György Szoltsányi [in movements I, II, VII and XI]."

The quartet also honours another great composer: Anton Webern. Both Szervánszky and Webern are present in Kurtág's composition with their own music. The tenth movement is a transcription for quartet of the last movement of Webern's *Second Cantata*. The fifth

movement is titled "Fantasy on the harmony of Webern's Canon"; the sixth, a retrograde canon only five measures long, is also an *Hommage to Webern*, as well as the following "Canon a 2 (freely after op.31/VI by Webern)".

The fifteenth and last movement ("Arioso interrotto") of the *Officium* quotes the first twelve measures in C major from the third movement of Szervánszky's *Serenade* for strings of 1947/48.

... Josephine's road, however, must go downhill. The time will soon come when her last notes sound and die into silence. She is a small episode in the eternal history of our people, and the people will get over the loss of her. Not that it will be easy for us; how can our gatherings take place in utter silence? Still, were they not silent even when Josephine was present? Was her actual piping notably louder and more alive than the memory of it will be? Was it even in her lifetime more than a simple memory? Was it not rather because Josephine's singing was already past losing in this way that our people in their wisdom prized it so highly?

So perhaps we shall not miss so very much after all, while Josephine, redeemed from the earthly sorrows which to her thinking lay in wait for all chosen spirits, will happily lose herself in the numberless throng of the heroes of our people, and soon, since we are no historians, will rise to the heights of redemption and be forgotten like all her brothers.

The Mouse Folk, by Franz Kafka (abridged by E.C. Überbrech)

You are invited to join us after the concert for complimentary drinks and a selection of Tortes by Gabriele.

The Firm warmly invites you to join us for our 2008 season which will feature Robert Schumann as our Posthumous-Composer-in-Residence.

Please refer to our web site for further information.

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Sheila Bryce Publicity

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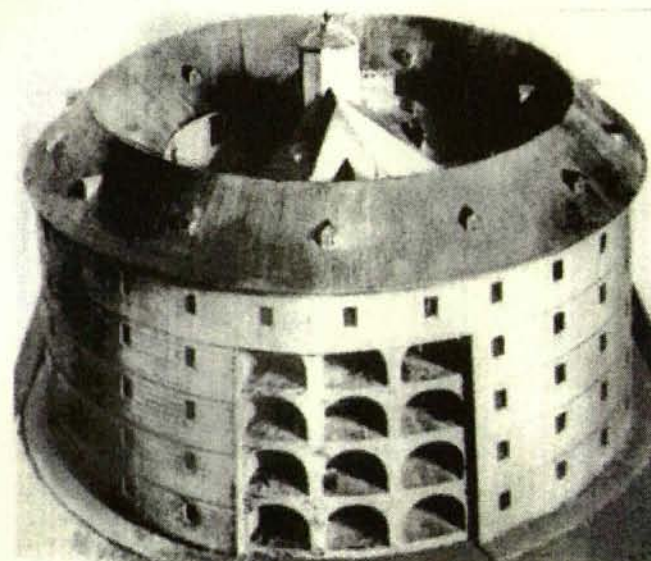
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