



the firm 2009

concert three

Thomas Bernhard

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

Toccata **Malcolm Williamson**

Barcarole, and Sleepers Wake (2003)

Andrew Schultz

Sleepers Wake, Karalananga for solo piano was composed for Tony Gray in 2003. It is a short piece based on two excerpts from the cantata, Journey to Horseshoe Bend. The cantata is to a text by Gordon Kalton Williams based on the autobiographical novel of the same name by TGH Strehlow. The novel depicts the journey across Central Australia that the young Strehlow made with his mortally ill father, the Hermannsburg missionary Carl Strehlow, in the 1920s.. The cantata incorporates the Bach harmonisation of the Lutheran hymn 'Wachet Auf!' (or 'Sleepers Wake') throughout and draws on Aranda, German and English language texts.

This piano piece is comprised of two excerpts from the larger work. The opening and closing sections of the piano piece are drawn from the first part of the cantata, and depict a recollection of Hermannsburg and the arrival at Karalananga – a mountain seen from the dry bed of the Finke River – and a realisation of its mythical importance. The middle section is dance-like and is drawn from the third part of the cantata where the sudden arrival of storm rain symbolises a joyous transformation.

Nach der Natur (2008)

Raymond Chapman Smith

1. Allegro assai
2. Andante sostenuto
3. Allegro moderato

*For it is hard to discover
the winged vertebrates of prehistory
embedded in tablets of slate.
But if I see before me
the nervature of past life
in one image, I always think
that this has something to do
with truth. Our brains, after all,
are always at work on some quivers
of self-organization, however faint,
and it is from this that an order
arises, in places beautiful
and comforting, though more cruel, too,
than the previous state of ignorance.
How far, in any case, must one go back
to find the beginning?*

W.G. Sebald: After Nature (Nach der Natur)

A Fractured Landscape (In Memoriam Edward Said)

Michael Blake - first performance

The death in 2003 of the philosopher and musician Edward Said, and the posthumous publication of his book *On Late Style*, led me to consider afresh the notion of so-called late style in music. I looked particularly at piano music – late Beethoven, late Schubert, late Liszt and late Brahms – and given Tony Gray's special affinity with Brahms' four late sets of Klavierstücke, I set about composing (what might be) the first of a series of reflective essays for the same medium.

Said talks too about 'lateness' in the writings of Adorno, who – on the subject of late Beethoven – wrote: "his late works constitute a form of exile... the late works are relegated to the outer reaches of art, in the vicinity of the document... the power of subjectivity in the late works of art is the irascible gesture with which it takes leave of the works themselves. It breaks their bonds, not in order to express itself, but in order, expressionless, to cast off the appearance of art. Of the works themselves it leaves only fragments behind, and communicates itself, like a cipher, only through the blank spaces from which it has engaged itself... objective is the fractured landscape, subjective the light in which

– alone – it glows into life. He does not bring about their harmonious synthesis. As the power of dissociation, he tears them apart in time, in order perhaps, to preserve them for the eternal. In the history of art, late works are the catastrophes." (Adorno *Essays on Music*)

I composed *A Fractured Landscape* (in memoriam Edward Said) at Tony Gray's request for his concerts in Australia in August 2009. I started the piece in Hout Bay in June, wrote a good deal of it in London at Tony's piano, and finished it on tour in my hotel room in Pretoria on 21 July. MB



Adorno

Said

Four Inventions (from The Children's Bach)
(2008)

Andrew Schultz

1. Paradise Bar Prelude
2. Toccata in Two Parts
3. Little Interlude for Billy
4. Poppy's Fugue

Sonata No 1 in F

Malcolm Williamson (1957)

- 1 Allegro
- 2 Poco lento
- 3 Ben allegro ma misurato



Williamson

Sonatina (1954)

Peter Sculthorpe

For a child growing up in rural Tasmania in the 1930s, Jonathan Swift's Lilliput was not in some Antipodes, half a world away. On Swift's own say-so, it was just there, off the Tasmanian coast, over the horizon perhaps, but almost within coo-ee. Often barely less mythic was mainland Australia itself, whose physical "otherness" - of desert spaces and tropical exuberance - formed itself into another kind of Antipodes for the young Peter Sculthorpe. The Piano Sonatina (1954), the first work of his early maturity to venture into this world, charts a Ulysses-like journey, of a tribal leader, Yoonecara, to the land of his forefathers "beyond the setting sun".



Sculthorpe

Angels (2003)

Quentin Grant

.... beauty is nothing but
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,
and we revere it so, because it coolly disdains
to destroy us. Every Angel is terrifying.

... Early successes, creation's favourite ones,
mountain-chains, ridges reddened by dawns
of all origin – pollen of flowering godhead,
junctions of light, corridors, stairs, thrones,
spaces of being, shields of rapture, tempests
of storm-filled, delighted feeling and, suddenly, solitary
mirrors: gathering their own out-streamed beauty
back into their faces again...

... But the living
all make the same mistake: they distinguish too sharply.
Angels (they say) often don't know whether
they move among the living or the dead.

.... Praise the world to the Angel, not the unsayable: you
can't impress him with glories of feeling:
in the cosmos,
that shapes *his* feelings, you are a novice.
So show
him a simple thing, formed from
generation to generation
until its truly our own, that lives close to
hand and in sight.
Tell him things.



Duino Elegies, Rainer Maria Rilke

Toccata

Malcolm Williamson - first performance



"Art altogether is nothing but a survival skill, we should never lose sight of this fact, it is, time and again, just an attempt -- an attempt that seems touching even to our intellect -- to cope with this world and its revolting aspects, which, as we know, is invariably possible only by resorting to lies and falsehoods, to hypocrisy and self-deception, Reger said. These pictures are full of lies and falsehoods and full of hypocrisy and self-deception, there is nothing else in them if we disregard their often inspired artistry. All these pictures, moreover, are an expression of man's absolute helplessness in coping with himself and with what surrounds him all his life. That is what all these pictures express, this helplessness which, on the one hand, embarrasses the intellect and, on the other hand, bewilders the same intellect and moves it to tears, Reger said."

T.B.

Antony Gray

The London based Australian pianist Antony Gray has long been regarded as one of the most interesting and communicative performers of his generation. His career to date has encompassed solo and chamber music performances around the world, as well as regular recordings for CD and radio. He has been a (selective) champion of contemporary and, and has premiered many pieces written for him. He has also championed many neglected composers such as Enescu, Dussek, Martinu and Malcolm Williamson.

Recordings already released are the complete solo piano works of Eugene Goossens, Malcolm Williamson and John Carmichael, as well as the late piano pieces of Brahms, on ABC Classics (available from www.buywell.com). He also features in a performance of the John Carmichael piano quartet on the highly successful disc 'Sea Changes'. To be released in the near future will be a 3 disc set of Bach transcriptions, including several written specially for the recording, and a 5 disc set of the complete piano works of Poulenc, including a number of works recorded for the first time, all on ABC Classics. A recital disc for the Spanish label KNS Classical (www.kns-classical.com) was released early in 2005. He has also been involved in a disc of music by French composer Francois Sarhan ('Hell, a small detail') on the Zig Zag label (www.zig-zag-territoires.com) as well as the Chandos Grainger series. He has recently embarked on a major project to record all of Saint-Saens' piano music, including a large body of unpublished and previously unrecorded works.

"The matured idea is enough in itself to destroy most people."

T.B

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

Next concert:

8pm Monday, 28 September 2009

Robert Macfarlane *tenor* Leigh Harrold *piano*

Franz Schubert *Die schöne Müllerin*

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