

Late Music Concert Series 2016

7th May 7-30pm

Unitarian Chapel, St
Saviourgate, York

Ian Pace – Piano

Beethoven: *Rondo in A*
Percy Grainger: *My Robin is*
to the greenwood gone
Michael Finnissy:
Beethoven's Robin Adair –

LM commission

**Andrew Toovey: *First Out* -
WP**

**Luke Stoneham: *Magenta
Cuts* - WP**

**Steve Crowther: *Piano
Sonata No.3***

**Laurence Crane: *Slow Folk
Tune: Sheringham***

PROGRAMME NOTES

Beethoven: *Rondo in A*

Beethoven's Rondo for Piano in C is among his first works, perhaps even the earliest to survive. This rondo, in A major, must have been composed shortly afterward, since its publication date (1784) came just a year after the Rondo in C appeared. There were, of course, three piano sonatas (in E flat, D, and F minor) that also come from this time, when the composer was about thirteen. Both rondos are obviously works of a young artist, but each shows good thematic talent and a grasp of form. The present work also divulges hints of the composer's greater skills to come. It features an attractive, joyful opening melody and a second theme of similar character. There follows a third one, this time of sterner mien, which already looks

ahead to that manic seriousness often found in the mature piano sonatas and symphonies. The first melody reappears, and there follows some fairly sophisticated development of the third theme. The first two themes reappear, and the work closes with a reprise of the opening melody. Beethoven demonstrates a quite satisfactory handling of the rondo form throughout. At this early age, he must already have been thinking on a grander scale than these rondos and the little piano sonatas would indicate.

Percy Grainger: *My Robin is to the greenwood gone*

The earliest extant score of the ballad appears in William Ballet's Lute Book (c. 1600) as My Robin Hood is to the Greenwood Gone. References to the song can be dated back to 1586, in a letter from Sir Walter Raleigh to Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester saying "The Queen is

in very good terms with you now, and, thanks be to God, will be pacified, and you are again her Sweet Robin."

Michael Finnissy: *Beethoven's Robin Adair* – LM commission

Part of my ongoing project to visit and compositionally re-claim the entirety of Music, including the darker corners, and - of course - mostly my eccentric enthusiasms: Beethoven's folksong arrangements, the 'objet trouvé' of folk music, not field-work and slowed-down wax-cylinder recording, but the paper transcription. A conversation of sorts between Western European intellectual training (or just intelligent and curious listening, if the word 'training' seems too sinister) and the rigorous (often secretive and closely-guarded) conventions of

traditional folk performance. Dislocation, re-contextualisation, aesthetic corruption - and, put like that - who doesn't have any amount of this going on all the time? 'Robin Adair' might be an Irish tune (as Beethoven thought), maybe Scots. Basic gestalt - a rising scale, tiny rhythmic syncopations. I am not excited by the notion of re-cycling this and tidying it up, polishing and veneering for the concert-hall, but engaging with it as raw (?) compositional-matter which is heavily-laden with socio-political significance (from the circumstances of the song's original inspiration, to the current view of folk music). Seven different versions (2012 - 16).

Andrew Toovey: *First Out* - WP

First Out is dedicated to Michael Finnissy on the occasion of his 70th Birthday year. First Out was a friendly, almost 'family' LGBT café, just off Tottenham Court Road in London that I frequented for certainly

over twenty years, and is now gone and not replaced. I wanted to mark its existence, project a little anger (at the loss), nostalgia and pose the question are aspects of our lives really so integrated, accepted and normalised that such places are truly no longer needed?

Luke Stoneham: New Work – WP

Steve Crowther: *Piano Sonata No.3*

The piece paints a Romantic picture of a very unromantic day out at the seaside (Scarborough). From crashing elemental waves, tides coming in and out, seagull commentaries and a farcical retreat to civilisation at the end...

Laurence Crane: *Slow Folk Tune: Sheringham*

Biographies

Michael Finnissy

I was born on 17th March 1946, at roughly 2 in the morning, at 77 Claverdale Road, Tulse Hill, London SW2. My parents were Rita Isolene (nee Parsonson) and George Norman Finnissy. At that time my father worked for the London County Council, assisting through his photographic documentation the assessment of damage to and re-building of London after the war. I started to write music almost as soon as I could play the piano, aged about four and a half, and was tutored in both by my great aunt: Rose Louise Hopwood (Rosie).

I attended Hawes Down Infant and Junior schools, Bromley Technical High, and Beckenham and Penge Grammar schools. Music was not taught in any formal or examinable way, though not discouraged either. My best subjects were graphic art, mathematics and English literature.

I received the William Yeats Hurlstone composition-prize at the Croydon Music Festival, a factor which assisted my parents decision to let me apply to music college. I was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music.

My composition teachers at the Royal College were Bernard Stevens and Humphrey Searle. I was subsequently awarded an Octavia travelling scholarship to study in Italy with Roman Vlad.

I earned money for my studies by playing the piano for dance-classes: Russian-style classical ballet with Maria Zybina, John O'Brien and Kathleen Crofton; and jazz with Matt Mattox. After my studies in Italy, and with no formal qualifications, I continued to work in dance. Freelancing, and at the London School of Contemporary Dance - where, with the encouragement of its course-director Pat Hutchinson, I founded a music department. During these years I worked

with the choreographers Jane Dudley and Anna Sokolow from the pioneering era of modern dance, and in more experimental work by Richard Alston, Siobhan Davies, Jackie Lansley and Fergus Early.

My concert debut as a solo pianist was at the Galerie Schwartzes Kloster in Freiburg, playing a concert mostly of first performances, Howard Skempton and Oliver Knussen as well as my own.

In the meantime I had started to appear in Europe, firstly at the Gaudeamus Music Week in 1969 and thereafter until 1973, at Royan Festival (1974-6) and Donaueschingen. In many of these events I was twinned with Brian Ferneyhough, a friend since student days. My initial attempts at serious composition teaching, at Dartington Summer School in the mid-seventies, were also partnered by him.

In England my early work had received encouragement from Ian Lake, Colin Mason and Martin Dalby. Two pieces had

been published by International Music Publishers (Ascherberg), some others by edition modern in Munich and two by Suvini Zerboni in Milan. With the support of Bill Colleran I signed a contract with Universal Edition (London) in 1978, and subsequently with United Music Publishers and (in 1988) with my principal publisher Oxford University Press. Other works are available from Tre Media Verlag (Friederike Zimmermann) in Karlsruhe.

I had been a member of the ensemble Suoraan (founded by James Clarke and Richard Emsley) and then its artistic director since the early 1970s, I joined Ixion (founded and still directed by Andrew Toovey) in 1987 - in both of these groups I not only played the piano but also conducted concerts. In the late 1980s I was invited by Justin Connolly to join the British section of the ISCM, and from 1990 until 1996 I served as its President, travelling widely to Europe, Asia and Latin America. I have since been elected to Honorary Membership of the society.

I have been attached to C.O.M.A. (initially known as the East London Late Starters Orchestra) since its inception, and been in residence as composer to the Victorian College of the Arts (in Melbourne, Australia) and to the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney. My principal teaching has been at the Royal Academy of Music (London), Winchester College, the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven (Belgium), and at the Universities of Sussex and (currently) Southampton. My work has been recorded for CD by Metier, NMC, and Metronome in the UK, and Etcetera and BVHaast (Holland), CRI (USA), Artifact Music (Canada), and ABC Classics (Australia).

Andrew Toovey

Andrew Toovey (b. 1962 London) is a recipient of composition awards including the Tippett Prize, Terra Nova Prize, the Bernard Shore Viola Composition Award and an RVW Trust Award. Two portrait CDs of his music were released on the

Largo label in 1998, and many individual pieces are represented on others CD labels including NMC. His music is partially published by Boosey and Hawkes, and most of his output is available to view on YouTube on his own channel. Toovey was associate composer for the Young Concert Artists Trust (YCAT) from 1993-5 and has been the artistic director of the new music ensemble IXION since 1987. He was composer-in-residence at the Banff Centre, Canada for four successive years with his two operas and music theatre works. He has worked extensively on education projects for Glyndebourne Opera, English National Opera, Huddersfield Festival, the South Bank Centre and the London Festival Orchestra, and has been composer-in-residence at Opera Factory and the South Bank Summer School. He currently teaches composition at the Birmingham Conservatoire part of BCU, and has been awarded an M3C PhD research grant in composition.

Andrew Toovey studied composition with Jonathan Harvey, Michael Finnissy and briefly with Morton Feldman. After completing his BMus(hons) music degree at Surrey University he went on to take both an MA and MPhil at the University of Sussex, specialising in both composition and aesthetics.

Toovey's work embraces a huge diversity of influences, from musical extremes such as Feldman and Finnissy, or the poetry of Artaud, Cummings and Rilke, to a passion for 20th-century art - especially that by Bacon, Beuys, Davies, Hayter, Klee, Miro, Newman, Rauschenberg, Riley, Rothko and many more.

He is currently writing a series of concertos for various performers including Andrew Smith (clarinet), Charles Mutter (violin), and Michael Finnissy (piano). Also pieces for the Thallein Ensemble – Verboten and Euonia, Project Instrumental – Holding You for 11 string players, Ej upp for recorder quartet, First Out for Ian Pace (solo piano) - and vocal

settings, with viola - The way it is now. Longer term compositions include an opera *Narrow Rooms* based on a novel by James Purdy to a libretto by Michael Finnissy.

Luke Stoneham

'...it's tempting to try to validate a composer by constructing a genealogy of teachers and influences - if only to avoid getting to grips with the music itself. And it's especially tempting in Stoneham's case, not only because of his reluctance to dress his music up in the verbal legerdemain expected of composers, but by his similar disinclination to arrive at anything like a finished work list. The provisional nature of his creations might cause headaches to publishers eager to promote a marketable product, but is as much part of his aesthetic outlook as any choice of musical 'style'. Indeed he's quite happy with the notion that there might be as many versions of a work as there are performances, even if the detail with which the scores are notated suggests

that such freedoms remain firmly in the gift of the composer.' Antony Bye

Steve Crowther

Steve Crowther was born and brought up in Bradford. The gritty character of the city and its communities is still 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.

Laurence Crane

Laurence Crane was born in Oxford in 1961 and studied composition with Peter Nelson and Nigel Osborne at Nottingham University. His music is mainly written for the concert hall, although his output includes pieces initially composed for film, radio, theatre, dance and installation.

His list of works predominantly consists of instrumental chamber and ensemble music. He has worked with many ensembles in the UK and abroad, including Apartment House (UK), Plus-Minus Ensemble (UK/Belgium), Ixion (UK), London Sinfonietta (UK), Ives Ensemble (Netherlands), Orkest de Volharding

(Netherlands), Cikada Ensemble (Norway), asamisimasa (Norway), Ensemble Kore (Canada) and 175 East (New Zealand). He is currently writing a work for solo contrabass clarinet and ensemble, for Norwegian clarinetist Rolf Borch and Cikada Ensemble. Michael Finnissy has recorded Crane's complete piano music, a disc that was released by the Divine Art/Metier CD label in 2008. Further portrait CD's are planned by Cikada Ensemble, Ives Ensemble, Apartment House and asamisimasa.

Laurence Crane works as a freelance editor for music publishers and is on the staff of the composition department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London

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