

***NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND MUSIC SCHOOL
SCHOLARSHIP CONCERT 2023***

Friday 23rd June 2023, Craigiebuckler Church, 7:30pm

Eve Begg soprano

Handel (1685 – 1759)

Tornami a vaheggiar, from Alcina

Hugo Wolf (1860 – 1903)

Ein Stundlein wohl vor Tag

Jake Heggie (b. 1961) Florida, USA

I shall not live in vain

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

Pierrot

Michael Head (1900 – 1976)

The Singer

Charlotte Slater violin

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Andante from Sonata No. 2 BWV 1003 (Third Movement)

Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Violin Concerto No. (1st Movement)

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)

It Ain't Necessarily So from Porgy and Bess

Arranged for violin solo by **Jascha Heifetz (1901 – 1987)**

Laura Smith clarinet

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921)

Sonata for clarinet and piano Movements 1 & 2

Jules Semler-Collery (1902 – 1988) born in Dunkirk

Reverie from Reverie et Scherzo

Francisco Gomez (1866 – 1938)

Lorito, Caprice (Little Chatterbox)

Olwenn Stewart piano

Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)

Variations in f minor Hob. XVII:6

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Romanze Op. 28

Guang Ren (1900 – 1941)

Silver Clouds Chasing the Moon

Aram Khachaturyan (1903 – 1978)

Sonatine

Chenhong Zhu piano

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Romanze, Op.118 No.5

Frédéric Chopin (1810 – 1849)

Nocturne in e minor Op.72 No.1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Piano Sonata No.14 in c sharp minor Op.27 No.2 Movement 1 The Moonlight Sonata

Piano accompaniments by Blair Cargill.

REVIEW:

The NESMS Scholarship Concert 2023 was introduced by the School's affable Manager, Colin Brockie. He made us all feel so welcome, ready to enjoy a marvellous evening of music, which it certainly was. I'm sure his presence made the five performers feel relaxed and happy to perform too. Yes, and every one without exception was splendid. This was surely one of the best ever Scholarship concerts. It opened with violinist Charlotte Slater playing the Andante from the *Solo Violin Sonata No. 2 BWV 1003* by **J. S. Bach**. It is indeed a solo sonata considering that it is performed by just one player, yet it sounded more like a violin duet because although the top melodic line was made to shine forth by Charlotte there is a continuing accompaniment line to which her playing gave equal prominence. Bach's music demands rhythmic clarity and steadiness. That is precisely what we got from Charlotte. This was followed by the first movement of **Mozart's** *Violin Concerto No. 4*. Much of the violin part in this movement is on the upper register of the instrument. This can be dangerous from the point of view of intonation, but Charlotte's performance was faultless. In this piece she was accompanied on piano by Blair Cargill.

Can I take time out to mention his performance here. He was sensational. The sheer musicality of his playing shone throughout such a huge variety of music from an operatic aria by **Handel**, through the jazzy show music of **Gershwin** arranged dazzlingly by **Heifitz**, the fun music of **Debussy's** *Pierrot* and so much more. Blair could be supremely delicate or else lively and outgoing just as required.

Soprano Eve Begg opened her section with an aria by **Handel** from his opera *Alcina*. This was the aria *Tornami a vaheggiar*. (Return to me to languish). Eve's voice had a delightful freshness and clarity. Handel's decorative writing was beautifully captured and controlled in this lively and outgoing performance. Eve's vocal control was even more evident in her second piece, *Ein Stundlein wohl vor Tag* (An Hour before Day) by **Hugo Wolf**. The song tells of a young girl who is wakened by a swallow singing on the branch of a tree by her window. The bird sings that her boyfriend is being unfaithful to her. In the final verse she angrily tells the bird to fly away. Eva began with beautifully well-controlled quiet singing gradually rising to a powerful finale. She delivered the story so well. Her final song in the first half of the concert was *I shall not live in vain* by the American composer **Jake Heggie**. Eve delivered the kindly words of this piece with a feeling of real commitment. Next to perform was the first of two pianists, Olwenn Stewart. Her performance of **Haydn's** *Variations in f minor* was magnificently clean and clear. There was a delicacy of touch to begin with then the performance developed in detailed animation and brightness. I was impressed by the crossed hands which were perfectly balanced. You could see when the hands were crossed but you could

not hear any difference and that is exactly what Haydn would have wanted.

Olwenn followed this first piece with a totally different one. This was *Romanze Op.28* by **Schumann**. Olwenn delivered the melody lines with both right and then left hands and her performance sang out with the proper romantic ardour. Clarinettist Laura Smith was accompanied by Blair Cargill in her performance of the *Sonata for clarinet and piano* by **Saint-Saëns**. She played the first and second movements. The first movement enjoyed beautifully lucid free-flowing playing from Laura while in the second jaunty movement she delivered just the right lively edginess of tone.

The second pianist of the evening was Chenghong Zhu. I read in his note that, 'he favours pieces of the romantic era the most' and this certainly shone through in his performances. He began with *Romanze, Op.118 No.5* by **Brahms**.

Strength and harmonic richness delivered exactly the right Brahmsian warmth in this performance. He followed with the *Nocturne in e minor, Op.72 No.1* by **Chopin**. Fluent, tuneful and once again with strength, he gave us a marvellously expressive account of this enticing work.

After the interval during which we enjoyed drinks and nibbles, Colin Brockie summoned us back to the Church to enjoy the second half of the concert which offered lighter and sometimes unusual music. Even at my age, I can be delighted to discover music that was entirely new to me. Eve Begg opened the second half with a splendid fun piece by **Debussy**. This was *Pierrot*. Blair Cargill gave us a fine choppy piano accompaniment in which Debussy borrows the French children's song *Au Clair de la lune* not to be confused with the same composer's *Clair de Lune*. The children's song starts thus: Au clair de la lune, Mon ami Pierrot. This was a lively and titillating performance. It was followed by a very different piece *The Singer* by **Michael Head**. Eve sang it unaccompanied and her clear voice was perfect for this song. It has an ethereal, indeed magical quality. It tells a story so the words are absolutely important. Eve delivered them perfectly. Who is the strange old man who refuses to sing even when offered a piece of gold. The song ends with these words: 'I watched the singer down the hill. My eyes went following after, I thought I heard a fairy flute And the sound of fairy laughter. How fascinating was that! Eve made us feel we were there within the song too.

This strange song was followed by one of the best known of all piano pieces. Chenghong Zhu gave us a performance of the famous first movement of **Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata**. He delivered it with carefully designed variations in tempo, dynamics and touch giving it such depth of feeling and reminding us that as well as being the last of the composers of the classical period, Beethoven is also the first of the romantic composers.

Charlotte Slater was back with her violin to give us her version of **George Gershwin's** song from *Porgy and Bess*, *It ain't Necessarily So*. The song was

arranged for violin by Jascha Heifitz. It is a dazzling showpiece. Charlotte and Blair sold it to us at full price.

Olwenn Stewart had chosen a most unusual piece for the first of her two offerings in the second half of the concert. This was *Silver Clouds Chasing the Moon* by **Guang Ren** a Chinese composer who studied Western music in Paris starting in 1919. It was a deliciously pictorial piece in which you could sense the moonlight and it had a very attractive Chinese melody. Olwenn gave it her finest attention. She followed it with the sparkling piano fireworks of *Sonatine* by **Aram Khachaturyan** in a stunning performance with crazy flying fingers. To complete the performance we were treated royally to a couple of fine clarinet pieces played by Laura Smith. The first was *Reverie* from *Reverie et Scherzo* by the French composer Jules Semler-Collery. Laura's playing was smooth and dreamy, exactly what was needed for a piece entitled Reverie. The final piece in the programme was by the Spanish composer Francisco Gomez. Both he and his brother were clarinetists. The brother played in the LSO and Francisco in the Belfast Orchestra but they came originally from Spain. *Lorito, Caprice* (Lorito means Little Chatterbox) had all the turns and twists of Spanish dance music and the ardour too.

Laura holds the Sandy MacDonald Award at NESMS. I notice that Laura is about to start work in August in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. I knew Sandy MacDonald well. He was also a doctor and a clarinet player but his forte was jazz. He also worked as a woodwind instrument repairer and was an all-round great guy. I think he would have been proud of Laura after her performance on Friday.

ALAN COOPER