

MOZART'S JUPITER

7.30PM, Thursday 1 May
Auckland Town Hall

Programme Notes

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Suite No.4 'Mozartiana' (1887)

- I. *Gigue*
- II. *Menuet*
- III. *Preghiera*
- IV. *Thème et variations*

DURATION: c.24'

"A large number of Mozart's outstanding short pieces are, for some incomprehensible reason, little known," wrote Tchaikovsky in his preface to his suite of Mozart orchestrations, dubbed 'Mozartiana'. Tchaikovsky wanted to bring greater recognition to these "gems of musical art, unpretentious in form, but containing incomparable beauties."

Tchaikovsky's selections are curious — the angular first movement is based on Mozart's *Eine Kleine Gigue*, which features the imitative counterpoint lines we more readily associate with J.S. Bach a generation earlier. The *Menuet* is a standalone sonata fragment published posthumously.

While *Preghiera* (prayer) is not a title Mozart used, the reverent *Ave verum corpus* that this movement is based on is probably the most well-known of all of Tchaikovsky's selections. The influences behind 'Mozartiana' becomes even more complex when we consider that the finale stems from a theme by Gluck on which Mozart created variations. Tchaikovsky makes full use of the variation form to showcase the orchestra, featuring glockenspiel in one variation and various solo instruments such as clarinet, flute and solo violin in vivacious and characterful solos.

Elena Kats-Chernin (1957-)

Re-inventions (after Bach) (2004)

- No.1 (based on Invention No.8)
for Descant Recorder
- No.2 (based on Invention No.4)
for Tenor Recorder
- No.3 (based on Invention No.13)
for Descant Recorder
- No.4 (based on Invention No.1)
for Tenor Recorder
- No.5 (based on Invention No.6)
for Bass Recorder
- No.6 (based on Invention No.10)
for Sopranino Recorder

Duration: c.27'

Famed for her hypnotic ballet *Wild Swans*, Uzbekistan-born Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin was brainstorming with virtuoso recorder soloist Genevieve Lacey when the idea sparked to reflect on some of the Bach inventions for keyboard.

"The task turned out to be quite daunting because Bach is Bach, and is sacred ground for all composers," wrote Kats-Chernin. "However, in the end I chose six inventions that I found the most inspiring to work with and that would be able to feature different

Conductor Leo Hussain
Recorder Genevieve Lacey

recorders."

In the opening movement, looping contrapuntal patterns slide to the background as a recorder melody emerges, while the second movement implies a fantasia, starting with atmospheric flutter-tonguing on the tenor recorder. Kats-Chernin was drawn to the machine-like energy of Bach's Invention No.13 in her third movement, while the tenor recorder's mellow tones shine again in the fourth.

Kats-Chernin used the breathy tones of bass recorder in the fifth movement to evoke a 'mysterious tango'. The last bar of Bach's Invention No.10 is quoted at the start of the finale but Kats-Chernin's reflection on these notes is anything but meditative as the sopranino recorder revels in glittering melody.

INTERVAL

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

trans. **George Benjamin** (1960-)

Three Consorts (1680, trans. 2021)

- I. *In Nomine of Six Parts*
- II. *Fantazia 7*
- III. *Fantazia Upon One Note*

DURATION: c.11'

Purcell's 1680 set of Fantazias and In Nomines were most often played by a consort of viols. Like the violin family which superceded them, viols came in a set or 'consort' containing different sizes but had frets, flat backs, and more strings.

"Fantazia 7 changed my path as a composer," said British composer George Benjamin, referencing its "mesmerising intersection of line and harmony." Benjamin put this movement at the heart of his set of three transcriptions for chamber orchestra.

'In Nomine' refers to an excerpt from a 16th-century mass by John Tavener which Purcell took as his cantus firmus — the cantus firmus is played at a slow pace, while other instruments weave more complex lines around it. Benjamin gives the cantus firmus to brass with another medieval technique called hocketing, where the melody is traded note-by-note between two instrumentalists (to allow for breathing). The Fantazia on one note carries a static middle C throughout the entire duration, a celebration of Purcell's invention, displaying a "wide and enchanting diversity of moods."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Symphony No.41 'Jupiter' (1788)

- I. *Allegro Vivace*
- II. *Andante cantabile*
- III. *Menuetto: Allegretto – Trio*
- IV. *Molto allegro*

DURATION: c.35'

Unpublished at the time of his death, Mozart's 'Jupiter' symphony

Programme Notes cont.

is the longest of all his symphonies. The nickname referencing the Roman god Jupiter is apt in this regard, but has little else to do with Mozart's intentions, added later by concert promoters.

The symphony is filled with drama befitting Mozart's career as opera composer, opening with a statement of contrasts: bold punchy gestures first alternated and then combined with lyric phrases. The slow movement again features contrast as a velvety violin melody is punctuated with brass chords and veers off into unsettled rhythmic patterns.

The minuet retains all the grace and elegance of this courtly dance, at a tempo suitable for dancers in elaborate costumes and towering headdresses. The finale, a triumph of contrapuntal writing which nonetheless retains a sense of lightness and lyricism, left even the ever-eloquent composer and critic Robert Schumann at a loss for words: "About [this movement] there is simply nothing to be said."

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