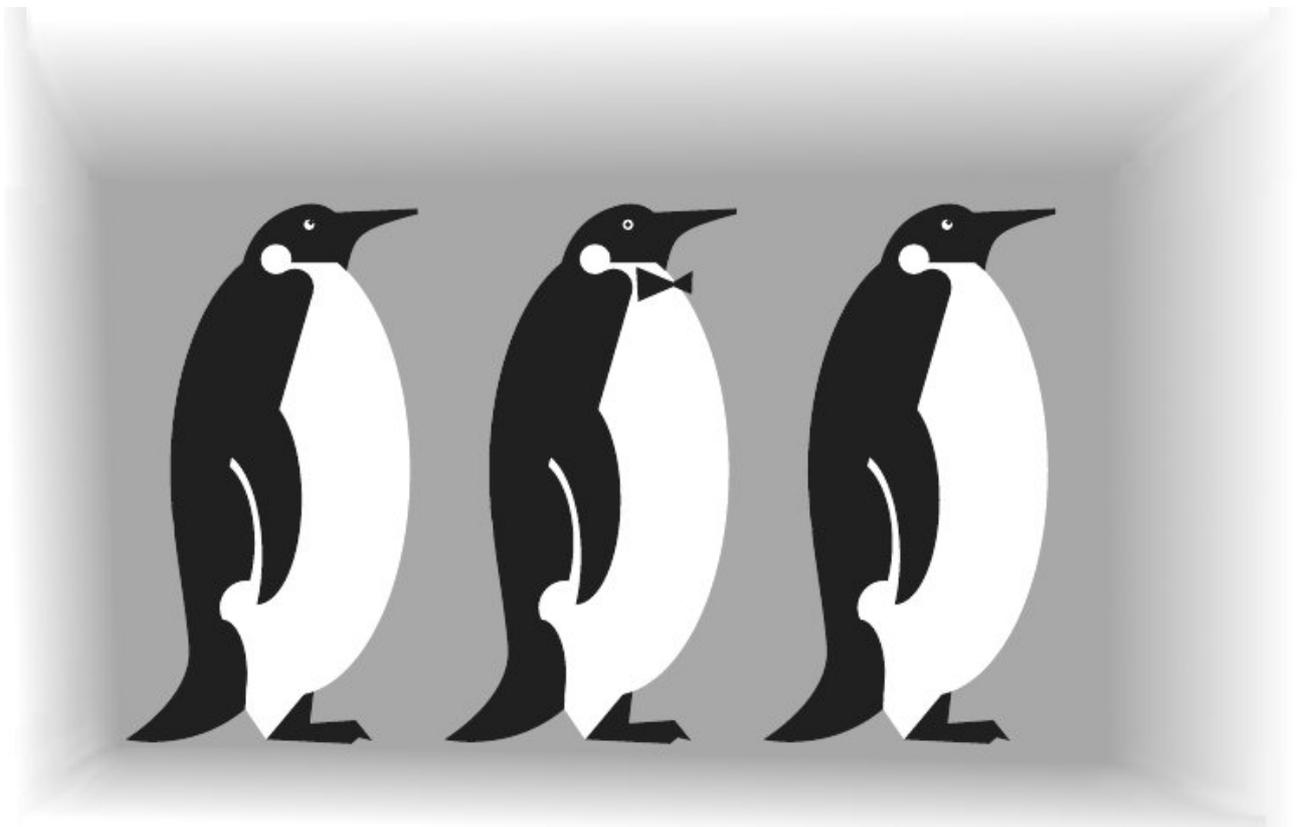


A piano recital by
Alexander Hanysz



Elder Hall, Friday 29th August, 2008

Programme

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| Sonata in D, K576
<i>Allegro</i>
<i>Adagio</i>
<i>Allegretto</i> | W. A. Mozart |
| Prelude and Sonata no. 12 | John Polglase |
| Sonata op. 26
<i>Allegro energico</i>
<i>Allegro vivace e leggero</i>
<i>Adagio mesto</i>
<i>Fuga: Allegro con spirito</i> | Samuel Barber |
| --- interval (approx 20 minutes) --- | |
| <i>Après une Lecture de Dante</i>
<i>(Fantasia quasi Sonata)</i> | Franz Liszt |
| Two transcriptions
Tchaikovsky, <i>Lullaby</i> | Sergei Rachmaninoff |
| Mendelssohn, <i>Scherzo</i> from
<i>A midsummer night's dream</i> | |
| Four studies
<i>Fanfares</i> (book 1, no. 4)
<i>Interlacing</i> (book 2, no. 12)
<i>Open Strings</i> (book 1, no. 2)
<i>Autumn in Warsaw</i> (book 1, no. 6) | György Ligeti |

Mozart, Sonata in D major, K576

Legend has it that the music of J. S. Bach languished, forgotten and neglected for nearly a century after his death, until it was “rediscovered” by Mendelssohn. Like many legends it contains a grain of truth: during those years, Bach’s music was not visible in the form of public concerts, but it was certainly known to a few connoisseurs and scholars. Among them was Mozart’s friend the Baron van Swieten, who introduced the composer to Bach’s music in the year 1782.

The encounter with the “learned style” of the High Baroque had a profound effect on Mozart’s composition. After many years of experimentation, he eventually reached a synthesis of the “old” and “new” in his music, most famously in the finale of the *Jupiter* symphony. We can also see the same elements in the D major piano sonata, his last major work for solo piano. The melodic contours, the rhythmic language, the formal structure, the lighthearted character of the whole, are all pure Mozart—but there is also a new contrapuntal richness, as the routine left hand accompaniments heard in many earlier piano sonatas are replaced by a wealth of countermelody.

John Polglase, Prelude and Sonata number 12

John Polglase writes:

For some reason I avoided writing solo piano music for a long time. This despite (or maybe because of) it being the instrument upon which I trained. The piano often featured prominently in

chamber music I composed but it had been some thirteen years between solo works. Then in 2003, after persistent badgering, I wrote what was to be a small sonata (after the model of Domenico Scarlatti, a composer of whom I never seem to tire) matched with a short prelude. Then there were six, then twelve, then more and more piano music followed; a large set of variations on a bagatelle of Bela Bartok (also premiered by Alexander), 3 Laments, the large and demanding 'With Bells and Bright Steel' and numerous other works.

Tonight sees the premiere of the twelfth Prelude and Sonata, which closes the second set of six of these paired movements. The prelude is a little study in black notes/white notes with the right hand on black and the left, white. Interruptions interlock the hands, tearing up and down the keyboard with great energy and the whole things over in under two minutes. The sonata, like the Scarlatti model, repeats each half and is a capricious, even quirky dance which seems to be forever falling over itself as it capers about until, its energy spent, it shuts itself down with an eccentric little cadence.

Samuel Barber, Piano Sonata

Samuel Barber's piano sonata gives an interesting perspective on a composer who was mostly renowned for his melodic gift. The first movement begins with a driving rhythmic figure, and makes liberal use of twelve-tone rows, although to a very different effect than the serial techniques used by other composers at that time. Later on, Barber does reveal some of his lyrical side, and also some playfulness, but the sonata is full of unpredictable changes

of mood and colour. The composer's original plan was to finish with what is now the third movement. Vladimir Horowitz, who gave the premiere performance, prompted him to write a virtuosic finale.

Franz Liszt, “Dante” sonata

The ponderous title of Liszt's *Dante sonata* was in fact taken from a poem by Victor Hugo, beginning: “When the poet paints hell, he paints his own life...” Liszt commenting on Hugo commenting on Dante commenting on heaven and hell—it is hard to understand what Liszt had in mind while composing this piece, and it is surprising that he did not provide a clear story to go with the music. Certainly there are episodes that many commentators have interpreted as the lamentation of the damned souls, and a lyrical theme that could be a love duet between Francesca da Rimini and Paolo (and this theme returns triumphantly at the end—perhaps Liszt disagreed with Dante's opinion that the illicit lovers deserved their punishment?) But in using the word “sonata” as part of the title, Liszt was also paying homage to his great idol Beethoven, and would surely have hoped that the work could make sense as absolute music, independently of the stories wrapped around it.

Rachmaninoff, two transcriptions

The next two works on tonight's programme give two very different perspectives on the art of transcription. Tchaikovsky's

Lullaby was originally a song for soprano voice with simple piano accompaniment. The text describes a baby with three nannies: the Wind, the Sun and the Eagle. Rachmaninoff's version preserves Tchaikovsky's original melody, but dresses it in a new accompaniment with lush chromatic harmonies of Rachmaninoff's own invention. On the other hand, Mendelssohn's famous scherzo (from his incidental music to Shakespeare's play) is already full of elaborate detail. Rachmaninoff felt no need to add to the complexity; this transcription is remarkably faithful to the original work.

Ligeti, four studies

Ligeti's studies for piano, numbering eighteen in total, represent one of the most significant contributions to late twentieth-century piano repertoire. At the time he began this series, the composer was fascinated by the mathematics of chaos theory and fractals: simple underlying structures give rise to fantastically complex patterns, often resulting in surprisingly beautiful pictures—and the pictures themselves can be enjoyed without any knowledge of mathematics.

Each of the studies gives a different musical analogue of this process. The beginning of each piece is a simple, almost innocent, musical motif, which leads to surprising results. It is impossible on a first hearing to follow every details of the composer's construction, but what stands out is Ligeti's sense of drama and suspense, and the dazzling variety of tone colours he is able to draw from the piano.

Alexander Hanysz enjoys a diverse career embracing many facets of the pianist's art—soloist, accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, chamber musician, repetiteur and orchestral pianist. He has performed throughout Australia, and recorded for ABC Classic FM and for MBS radio in several states. He has also appeared as soloist and chamber musician in the UK.

In Adelaide, Alexander has collaborated in concert with artists such as Thomas Edmonds, Elizabeth Campbell and Nicholas Milton, and was a repetiteur for Wagner's *Ring* cycle in 2004. He has a keen interest in contemporary music: he gave the South Australian premiere of John Adams' piano concerto with the Adelaide Art Orchestra, and has given world premieres of new works by Australian composers. His two piano arrangement of Carl Vine's piano concerto was published by Faber Music.

Alexander graduated with honours from the Flinders Street School of Music, and has participated in masterclasses with Jeremy Menuhin, Roy Howat and Michael Kieran Harvey. An Adelaide University medallist, his numerous prizes also include the Edith Leigh Piano Prize (Cambridge), the Geoffrey Parsons Award at the Barossa International Festival, and the Adelaide Eisteddfod concerto prize. He was a finalist in the Australian National Piano Award in 2004, and will be appearing in the finals again in September this year.

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