

OCT 25th

The Firm presents

Lauri Harrell

piano

Program

Introduction, Theme and Variations

Angie Carson

Three Landscapes

John Faldut

Songs & No. IV

Raymond Chapman Smith

Four Pieces for Firm

Sebastian D. Gray

Short interval

Seeds in Cycles

the firm 2004
CONCERT SIX

The Firm presents

Leigh Harrold
piano

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Introduction, Theme and Variations

Anne Carwse

Three Laments

John Polglase

Sonata No. IV

Raymond Chapman Smith

Four Pieces for Piano

Grahame Dudley

short interval

Sonata in C minor, Op.111 (1822)

Ludwig van Beethoven

"The wealth of critical writing on Beethoven's last sonatas and quartets reveals a greater preponderance of nonsense, not to mention contradiction, than any comparable literature. Beethoven, according to this hypothesis, has spiritually soared beyond the earth's orbit and, being delivered of earthly dimension, reveals to us a vision of paradisiacal enchantment. A more recent and more alarming view shows Beethoven not as indomitable spirit which has o'erleapt the world but as a man bowed and broken by the tyrannous constraint of life on earth, yet meeting all tribulation with a noble resignation to the inevitable. Thus Beethoven, mystic visionary, becomes Beethoven, realist, and these last works are shown as calcified, impersonal constructions of a soul impervious to the desires and torments of existence. The giddy heights to which these absurdities can wing have been realized by several contemporary novelists, notable offenders being Thomas Mann and Aldous Huxley. These sonatas perhaps do not yield the apocalyptic disclosures that have been so graphically ascribed to them."

Glenn Gould

Pilgrim Church provides wheelchair access via the rear
(northern) doors.

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

Introduction, Theme and Variations *Anne Cawrse*

It was with much delight and enthusiasm that I accepted the Firm's kind offer to write a piano piece for Leigh Harrold and the October Firm Concert, to be based in some way upon the final Piano Sonata of Beethoven. Delight soon turned to despair as I found myself with a nearing deadline and no inspiration other than, as Beethoven wrote for Piano, so would I!

The resulting work is a collection of six variations, imitating the loose variation style and techniques used by Beethoven in the final movement of his Sonata. The Introduction serves as a virtuosic establishment of key (an unstable C natural minor/Phrygian) and the motivic basis for the theme. Of particular interest to me in Beethoven's sonata are his fascination with trills and double dotted rhythms, and his commitment to the opening key until the penultimate variation joyously modulates to the major. These ideas are all exploited as developmental and variation techniques throughout my piece, which I hope to act as stimulation for a musical and emotional journey, as well as an exercise in variation technique, and a workout for the pianist!

Many, many thanks to Leigh for his beautiful, thoughtful interpretation, for bringing my piece to life, and for appearing to enjoy doing so!!

Three Laments

John Polglase

During 2002 Australia was an eager partner in a war of aggression engineered by the United States of America and Great Britain against a people brutalised by decades of vicious dictatorship, a dictatorship put there and actively supported by earlier US governments.

With justifications based on falsehoods and exaggeration we as a nation proudly tugged our forelocks and did as we were bid by our masters, again. Weapons of Mass Destruction were never found but plenty of oil was. An army of occupation stood by as world cultural treasures were callously sacked while two city blocks away (and within site of the museum of antiquity) US tanks and soldiers with orders to shoot to kill guarded the Oil Ministry.

The result is a nation ruined, with essential infrastructure deliberately targeted by both the invaders and later by insurgents, a people ruled in turns by a foreign army (of which we remain a part) which tortures with impunity, and armed thugs, violent religious extremists and a puppet government of dubious credentials.

On the first day of the second Gulf war I sat down and wrote the first of these three laments, dedicated to all who suffer in war. In the days which followed I added others to make the set.

And our reaction as a nation? To re-elect with an increased majority the political party who so willingly involved us, with most voters believing we were brazenly lied to by the incumbents but steadfastly voting for them anyway. Within only a couple of years Australians have gone from a people who could travel the world with impunity, greeted with affection wherever they went to now being greeted with suspicion and mistrust throughout most places outside of North America. Quite an achievement really.

I feel a need to write some more laments ...

Sonata No. IV

Raymond Chapman Smith

1. Adagio, ma non troppo
2. Allegretto
3. Adagio molto

Four Pieces for Piano

Grahame Dudley

1. Proposal.
2. Psalm.
3. Dance.
4. Amen.

These short pieces all grew out my habit of composing/improvising at the keyboard.

During this process I discovered that the pieces could be played in different orders including the repetition of part or all of some pieces.

The arrangement of the pieces tonight has been made by Leigh Harrold to whom the pieces are affectionately dedicated.

1. Maestoso - Allegro con brio ed appassionato.
2. Adagio molto semplice e cantabile.

"And then Kretschmar talked about the Sonata in C minor, which indeed it was not easy to see as a well-rounded and intellectually digested work, and which had given his contemporary critics, and his friends as well, a hard aesthetic nut to crack. These friends and admirers, Kretschmar said, simply could not follow the man they revered beyond the height to which at the time of his maturity he had brought the symphony, the piano sonata, and the classical string quartet. In the works of the last period they stood with heavy hearts before a process of dissolution or alienation, of a mounting into an air no longer familiar or safe to meddle with: even before a *plus ultra*, wherein they had been able to see nothing else than a degeneration of tendencies previously present, an excess of introspection and speculation, an extravagance of minutiae and scientific musicality - applied sometimes to such simple material as the arietta theme of the monstrous movement of variations which forms the second part of this sonata. The theme of this movement goes through a thousand vicissitudes, a hundred worlds of rhythmic contrast, at length outgrows itself, and is finally lost in giddy heights that one might call other-worldly or abstract. And in just that very way Beethoven's art had outgrown itself, risen out of the habitable regions of tradition, even before the startled gaze of human eyes, into spheres of the entirely and utterly and nothing-but personal - an ego painfully isolated in the absolute, isolated too from sense by the loss of hearing; lonely prince of a realm of spirits, from whom now only a chilling breath issued to terrify his most willing contemporaries, standing as they did aghast at these communications of which only at moments, only by exception, they

could understand anything at all.

So far, so good, said Kretschmar. And yet again, good or right only conditionally and incompletely. For one would usually connect with the conception of the merely personal, ideas of limitless subjectivity and of radical harmonic will to expression, in contrast to polyphonic objectivity (Kretschmar was concerned to have us impress upon our minds this distinction between harmonic subjectivity and polyphonic objectivity) and this equation, this contrast, here as altogether in the masterly late works, would simply not apply. As a matter of fact, Beethoven had been far more 'subjective', not to say far more 'personal', in his middle period than in his last, had been far more bent on taking out all the flourishes, formulas, and conventions, of which music is certainly full, and consuming them in the personal expression, melting them into the subjective dynamic. The relation of the later Beethoven to the conventional, say in the last five piano sonatas, is, despite all the uniqueness and even uncanniness of the formal language, quite different, much more complaisant and easy-going. Untouched, untransformed by the subjective, convention often appeared in the late works, in a baldness, one might say exhaustiveness, an abandonment of self, with an effect more majestic and awful than any reckless plunge into the personal. In these forms, said the speaker, the subjective and the conventional assumed a new relationship, conditioned by death.

Where greatness and death come together, he declared, there arises an objectivity tending to the conventional, which in its majesty leaves the most domineering subjectivity far behind, because therein the merely personal - which had after all been the surmounting of a tradition already brought to its peak - once more outgrew itself, in that it entered into the mythical, the collectively great and supernatural.

He did not ask if we understood that, nor did we ask ourselves. When he gave it as his view that the main point was to hear it. We fully agreed. It was in the light of what he had said, he went on, that the work he was speaking of in particular, Sonata op III, was to be regarded.

At last he laid his hands in his lap, was quiet a moment, and then said: 'Here it comes!' and began the variations movement, the '*adagio molto semplice e cantabile*'.

The arietta theme, destined to vicissitudes for which in its idyllic innocence it would seem not to be born, is presented at once, and announced in sixteen bars, reducible to a motif which appears at the end of its first half, like a brief soul-cry - only three notes, a quaver, a semiquaver, and a dotted crotchet to be scanned as, say: 'heav-en's blue, lov-er's pain, fare-thee well, on a-time, mead-ow-land' - and that is all. What now happens to this mild utterance, rhythmically, harmonically, contrapuntally, to this subdued formulation; with what its master blesses and to what condemns it; into what black nights and dazzling flashes, crystal spheres wherein coldness and heat, repose and ecstasy are one and the same, he flings it down and lifts it up; all that one may well call vast, strange, extravagantly magnificent, without thereby giving it a name, because it is quite truly nameless: and with labouring hands Kretschmar played us all those enormous transformations, singing at the same time with the greatest violence, 'Dim-dada!' and mingling his singing with shouts. 'These chains of trills!' he yelled. 'These flourishes and cadenzas! Do you hear the conventions that are left in? Here - the language - is no longer - purified of the flourishes - but the flourishes - of the appearance - of their subjective - domination - the appearance - of art is thrown off - at last - art always throws off the appearance of art. Dim-dada! Do listen, how here - the melody is dragged down by the centrifugal weight of the chords! It becomes static, monotonous - twice D, three times D, one after the other - the

chords do it - dim-dada! Now notice what happens here -'

It was extraordinarily difficult to listen to his shouts and to the highly complicated music both at once. We all tried. We strained, leaning forward, hands between knees, looking by turn at his hands and his mouth. The characteristic of the movement of course is the wide gap between bass and treble, between the right and the left hand, and a moment comes, an utterly extreme situation, when the poor little motif seems to hover alone and forsaken above a giddy yawning abyss - a procedure of awe-inspiring unearthliness, to which then succeeds a distressful making-of-itself-small, a start of fear as it were, that such a thing could happen. Much else happens before the end. But when it ends and while it ends, something comes, after so much rage, persistence, obstinacy, extravagance: something entirely unexpected and touching in its mildness and goodness. With the motif passed through many vicissitudes, which takes leave and so doing becomes itself entirely leave-taking, a parting wave and call, with this D G G occurs a slight change, it experiences a small melodic expansion. After an introductory C, it puts a C sharp before the D, so that it no longer scans 'heav-en's blue', 'mead-owland', but 'O-thou heaven's blue, 'Green-est meadowland', 'Fare-thee well for aye'; and this added C sharp is the most moving, consolatory, pathetically reconciling thing in the world. It is like having one's hair or cheek stroked, lovingly, understandingly, like a deep and silent farewell look. It blesses the object, the frightfully harried formulation, with overpowering humanity, lies in parting so gently on the hearer's heart in eternal farewell that the eyes run over. 'Now for-get the pain,' it says. 'Great was - God in us.' 'Twas all - but a dream.' 'Friendly - be to me.' Then it breaks off. Quick, hard triplets hasten to a conclusion with which any other piece might have ended.

Kretschmar did not return from the piano to his desk. He sat on his

revolving stool with his face turned towards us, in the same position as ours, bent over, hands between his knees, and in a few words brought to an end his lecture on why Beethoven had not written a third movement to op.III. We had only needed, he said, to hear the piece to answer the question ourselves. A third movement? A new approach? A return after this parting - impossible! It had happened that the sonata had come, in the second, enormous movement, to an end, an end without any return. And when he said 'the sonata', he meant not only this one in C minor, but the sonata in general, as a species, as traditional art-form; it itself was here at an end, brought to its end, it had fulfilled its destiny, reached its goal, beyond which there was no going, it cancelled and resolved itself, it took leave - the gesture of farewell of the D G G motif, consoled by the C sharp, was a leave-taking in this sense too, great as the whole piece itself, the farewell of the sonata form."

Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus.

Next Concert:

Monday November 15
The Firm
presents
The Settembrini Piano Trio

Hauer Zwölftonspiel
Chapman Smith Serenade
Polglase Horn Trio
Grant Piano Trio No.1
Beethoven Allegretto in Bb

Please join the performers and composers after tonight's concert for complimentary drinks, and tortes by Gabriele.

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