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the Master and fellows



Nachtmusik: Harrison Cole, piano

Wednesday 7th June, 2023 | 8pm

Trinity College Chapel

PROGRAMME

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| JOHANN SEBASTIAN
BACH
(1685–1750)
arr. RACHMANINOFF | Gavotte
from <i>Partita No. 3 for solo violin, BWV</i>
<i>1006</i> |
| ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810–1856) | Arabeske, Op. 18 |
| AARON COPLAND
(1900–1990) | Piano Variations |
| CHARLES KOECHLIN
(1867–1950) | Les collines, au coucher du soleil (The
hills at sunset)
from <i>Les Heures persanes (The Persian
Hours), Op. 65</i> |
| RICHARD WAGNER
(1813–1883)
arr. LISZT | Liebestod
from <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> |

PROGRAMME NOTES

Thank you for coming to tonight's recital, which features an unashamed selection of some of my favourite works for piano, largely ones I've had in my mind for a long time and have only now got around to performing.

The central work here is Aaron Copland's Piano Variations, dating from 1930. It's a seminal work of 20th Century piano music, and still feels just as acerbic, brutal and neurotic (the whole piece is rigorously

derived from the first four notes that open it) as it did when it was first written, ninety-three years ago. I suppose if a novel like Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée*, with all its rage and frustration, is 'young man's literature', then this piece could be considered 'young man's music'!

Its inclusion tonight may well seem puzzling, being pitted against very different music like the *Liebestod*, but I have a couple of reasons: on the short-term, I've experienced a recent resurgence of interest in Copland's work. But looking back further, I recall a formative experience about seven or eight years ago playing Copland's equally fine, though far less turbulent, *Four Piano Blues*, a collection of miniatures written before and after the *Variations* were composed. I remember loving the unique sound world that Copland created by his harmonic language, rhythmic interest and by his technical writing for the instrument, and I've re-discovered the same fascination in these *Variations*. There is something very clean and uncontaminated in the tough, metallic sounds of the piece, to the point where, in some ways, it feels rather refreshing to hear. Moreover, its final pages rise to such volcanic intensity that it takes on a degree of power reserved to only a few pieces, of which the *Liebestod* is definitely one (for different reasons, of course!)

I think Bernstein, who always had a knack for making grand statements whether they be true or false, really hit the nail on the head when describing the *Variations* as a "synonym for modern music—so prophetic, harsh and wonderful, and so full of modern feeling and thinking".

I hope you enjoy it, along with the rest of the programme.

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