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RADIUS: PURCELL ROOM AT QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
MONDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2008, 7.45PM

Tim Benjamin: *Three Portraits* (2007)  
John Traill: *Horn Trio (Hommage à Ligeti)* [2008] *  
Györgi Ligeti: *Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano* [1982]  

– Interval, 20 minutes –

Anna Meredith: *hex I, hex II* [2001-2002]  
Charlie Piper: *Bakcheia* [2008] *  
Tim Benjamin: *Eine Erscheinung aus den Wäldern* [2008] *

* - world premiere

Violin: *Alexandra Wood*  
Cello: *Oliver Coates*  
Horn: *Jocelyn Lightfoot*  
Piano: *John Reid*

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off.

Please stifle coughing as much as possible and ensure that watch alarms and any other electronic devices which may become audible are switched off.

When turning pages during the performance, please do so as quietly as possible.
These three short pieces are affectionate portraits of friends of the composer. They may hear themselves (in various ways) in these pieces, and indeed those who know them might guess at these hints. For those who don’t know who the pieces are about – and that may include the subjects themselves, for I have no plans to tell them who they are – the descriptive tempo markings are intended to provide a short introduction to my writer’s-eye view in the music which follows.

I composed these Three Portraits in the year of what would have been Elgar’s 150th birthday, and I tip my hat to the great composer and his Enigma Variations, which similarly are portraits of friends, and many movements of which also use simple initials to title the movements. There, as far as I know, the similarities end!

Tim Benjamin

1. “S.F.”
   With humour, and unexpected flashes of temper.

2. “H.U.”
   Calm and very sustained.

3. “A.Y.”
   Quite agitated, impatient.
ABOUT TIM BENJAMIN

Tim Benjamin has studied with Anthony Gilbert at the Royal Northern College of Music, privately with Steve Martland, and with Robert Saxton at Oxford University. He is the founder and Director of the critically acclaimed contemporary music group Radius.

Tim Benjamin was winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Composer’s Award in 1993, at the age of 17, with his work Antagony. He also won the Stephen Oliver Trust’s Prize for Contemporary Opera, for his first opera The Bridge. Benjamin’s music has been widely performed, by groups including the London Sinfonietta, the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and at the BOC Covent Garden Festival, and broadcast on BBC 2 and BBC Radio 3.

Past commissioners include the European Community Chamber Orchestra (Möbius), the Segovia Trio (Hypocrisy), the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra (Un Jeu de Tarot), and the London Design Festival (his second opera, The Corley Conspiracy). Tim Benjamin lives and works in London, and also plays the trombone.
Inscribed by the Brahms Trio op.40 and Ligeti’s *Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano “Hommage à Brahms”*, the latter an iconic example of the composers return to traditional principles (harmony, melody, rhythm) in the early 1980s, this trio engages with evolving melodic fragments and motivic memory (both striking features of the Ligeti). The Ligetian ingredients are the recurring *Lebewohl* motive, the structural characteristics of the third movement, the textural language of the first movement (exploring nuance between instrumental colours), and the tension between expression and emotion.

A solitary violin cadenza precedes a game between violin and horn, competing in parameters other than pitch, while the piano can be heard in the distance, nonsensically referring to motivic fragments from the Ligeti. As the game becomes increasingly more chaotic (akin to the development of material of Ligeti’s third movement scherzo and trio), the piano evolves into an expressive counterpoint with both violin and horn, respectively. The exuberant 7/8 figure that follows, beginning in rhythmic unison (again referencing Ligeti’s third movement), rapidly unwinds into a broad, lamenting, piano solo. This is accompanied by oscillating violin and horn dyads that recall the earlier game, through the use of varied techniques and dynamics. The return of the opening material is then obfuscated by a more raucous game, rapidly leading to an inversion of instrumentation when the expressive two-part counterpoint returns (a reference to both Brahms and Ligeti). The concluding bars dissolve continuity and, intentionally, prepare a listener for the Ligeti *Trio* that this work is written to precede. In further homage, to both Ligeti and Brahms, there are background motivic gestures in the ‘building blocks’ of this composition which, at times, float to the surface.

John Traill
ABOUT JOHN TRAILL

John Traill is Director of Music at St. Anne’s College, Oxford, and principal conductor of the City of Southampton Orchestra, the Oxfordshire County Youth Orchestra, and Ensemble ISIS. As a composer, he studied with Robert Saxton, becoming the youngest person to gain a DPhil in composition at the University of Oxford in 2006. John also studied with Rossen Milanov at the Mt. Vitosha International Conducting Institute in Bulgaria, and has subsequently been hailed as ‘one of the most promising conductors of his generation’ that is also known for his ‘strong interpretative instinct’ performing new music (Guardian, 2008). He has performed premieres internationally with orchestras in the UK, France, Bulgaria, Russia, the Ukraine, and the USA, won 2nd prize at the 2006 Vakhtang Jordania International Conducting Competition, and was a prize-winner at the 8th Leeds Conductor’s Competition.

In 2008, John’s new works include Five Piano Miniatures for Gregory Martin (USA), Little Concertino for Six for the LCMG, and this evenings Horn Trio (Hommage à Ligeti). John has devoted much of his time to writing orchestral music, most notably his 3 Interludes and Postlude for Bruckner Symphony No.7 for the Peabody Conservatoire Symphony Orchestra, and he has previously completed commissions for the Wymondham Symphony Orchestra, the Norwich Mozart Orchestra, Marios Papadopoulos and the Oxford Philomusica, and a stage work, Interference, for Hethersett Old Hall School.
TRIO FOR HORN, VIOLIN, AND PIANO [1982]

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923 - 2006)

Premiered on August 7, 1982 (Hamburg - violinist Saschko Gawriloff, hornist Hermann Baumann and pianist Eckart Besch).

The relationships between Ligeti’s Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano, and Brahms’ Trio, op.40, are many in number. Emblazoned with the dedication Hommage à Brahms, and written for the Brahms instrumentation, this is a work that intentionally returned to a concern for what, in 1982, must have seemed almost unthinkable. For Ligeti, a composer whose autonomy from ‘convention’ had previously been revered, as demonstrated in earlier works such as Atmospheres, Lux Aeterna, Requiem, and Poème Symphonique for 100 Metronomes, returning so directly to the parameters of melody, harmony, and rhythm, was a bold choice. Borne out of fours years of relative inactivity, and the style arrived at in the passacaglia finale to his only opera, Le Grand Macabre (1978) – with its absolute rhythmic regularity and rediscovery of consonant, albeit paradoxically Ligetian, harmony – Ligeti’s Trio engages expansively with both rhythm and motif. The use of clearly articulated structures, metre, and a focus on each instruments identity, rather than shared thematic continuity, also points towards a conscious desire to exaggerate that a choice was being made to re-open the concerns of days gone by. Ligeti’s genius in this respect was to do so by using the basic ingredients of ‘tonal’ music, but in such a way as to obfuscate harmonic anticipation, resulting in a non-sensical language, simultaneously both tonal and unknown.

The first movement provides separate identities for each instrument, flowing independently, but as the product of meticulous rhythmic organisation. A more urgent passage, consisting largely of unison rhythms, provides a brief departure from this discourse half way through the movement. Ligeti referred to the second movement “as a dance inspired by various kinds of folk music from non-existent peoples; as if Hungary, Rumania and all the Balkan countries lay somewhere between Africa and the Caribbean.” The Vivacissimo molto ritmico indication is not to be taken lightly here, not least because Ligeti also added the inscriptions of fresh, sparkly, gliding, and dancing. The Bulgarian ostinato of 3+3+2, which is
present throughout this movement, forms the base from which a more provocative language develops in the solo instruments. The third movement immediately evokes Bartókian comparison, not least from the Alla Marcia indication, also employing the scherzo and trio structure. The unanimously stated opening rhythmic gestures in this movement are the foundation on which displacement and disruption can evolve – the violin becoming increasingly unsynchronized and the horn contributing further chaotic interruptions. The Lamento of the fourth movement concludes the work with a more literal reference to bygone days, not only through the influence of European folk traditions, and the older designs of Monteverdi, but also the Transylvanian and Romanian music that Ligeti experienced as a younger man. This underlines the fact that this trio, through both its return to ‘traditional’ concerns and use of expressive language, of which motivic memory is also a striking feature, was the most overtly emotional music that Ligeti wrote. Expressionism now aborted, the fatalism of the language in this work linked perhaps directly to the slow movement of the trio by Brahms.

This trio was Ligeti’s response to a personal loss of direction in the late 1970s, and the foundation from which heightened productivity ensued. The work is often considered to have been a final attempt to shock the avant-garde community, but more likely is that it represents Ligeti forging a resolute identity at a time when he felt he was not part of the emerging ‘new expressionism’.

© John Traill

Interval: 20 minutes
HEX I, HEX II [2001-2002]

ANNA MEREDITH

I wrote hex I and II during 2001 and 2002. I’m very fond of both pieces, hex I is slower and more lyrical and I can see lots of seeds of the way I’m writing at the moment in the big gestures and obsessions with a few intervals.

hex II is one of the first high-energy pieces I had written and aims to sustain this energy throughout, making lots of use of open string sonorities. The piece begins with only Cs and adds a new fifth above this note at expanding intervals until all twelve pitches are reached and the work concludes with a driving coda section.

ABOUT ANNA MEREDITH

Anna Meredith is a composer of acoustic and electronic music as well as a performer, animateur and drum teacher.

As a concert composer she has written for Ensemble Modern, the LSO, the BBC Philharmonic, the SCO, the Smith Quartet, orkest ‘de ereprijs’ and Horses Brawl amongst many others and was the BBC SSO’s Resident Composer between 2004-2007.

2007 saw the culmination of Anna’s part in the London Sinfonietta’s Blue Touch Paper project where she was mentored by Matmos. For the final performance, Anna created a new work flak with live electronics as well as a new purely electronic piece music for intervals with visuals by the Animation Department of Kingston University and flat-e.

During 2008 Anna is writing a youth music theatre work - Tarantula in Petrol Blue, for Aldeburgh Music with libretto by Philip Ridley, due for performance in 2009. She also wrote a new work, froms for the 2008 Last Night of the Proms which will used live elements from the various Last Night of the Proms and Proms in the Park concerts and was televised to over 40 million people.

Anna is also working on a plan for a Concerto for Beatboxer and Orchestra with the beatboxer Shlomo in connection with the Southbank Centre, and on her regular projects with the Camberwell Composers Collective, currently New Music Associates at Kettles Yard in Cambridge.
Anna frequently works with visual artists, especially her sister Eleanor Meredith and has performed her electronic pieces at Faster than Sound, KOKO, Bongo Club, and the Luminaire. She plans to put together an album of her electronic pieces when the moment presents.

BAKCHEIA [2008]

CHARLIE PIPER (WORLD PREMIERE)

In Greek mythology Dionysus is the god of wine and the inspirer of ritual madness and ecstasy. To the Romans he is known as Bacchus; and Bakcheia is the orgiastic frenzy he induces to help people escape from the daily world through physical or spiritual intoxication.

ABOUT CHARLIE PIPER

Charlie Piper completed his master’s degree with distinction at the Royal College of Music, studying with David Sawer and Michael Zev Gordon. He is currently doing doctoral research at the Royal Academy of Music, with funding from the AHRC.

He has supplemented his studies with courses at Aldeburgh, Apeldoorn and the Bang-on-a-Can Festival. He has been performed at the Cheltenham, Huddersfield and Gaudeamus Festivals and by performers including the London Symphony Orchestra, Apartment House, The Composers Ensemble, Musica Vitae, Alexandra Wood and Huw Watkins, orkest ‘de ereprijs’ and the English National Ballet.

Charlie was the recipient of the 2006 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize and was also a winner at the 13th International Young Composers Meeting in Apeldoorn.

Recently The Twittering Machine was premièred at the Barbican by percussionist Neil Percy and the London Symphony Orchestra. Charlie is currently working on a jointly composed oratorio to be performed in the 2009 London Handel Festival, commemorating 250 years since Handel’s death.
Feeling sidelined as a minor, regional composer far from the musical heartlands of Vienna and Leipzig, Sibelius wrote in his diary that “as a personality and ‘eine Erscheinung aus den Wäldern’, you will have your small, modest place”. The German phrase means “an apparition from the woods”; Sibelius meant “the woods” partly as we might today disparagingly refer to anywhere outside the metropolis as “the sticks”. Finland was (and is) heavily forested, and Sibelius worked at Ainola, in a rustic house in the woods outside Helsinki, literally therefore, appearing from the woods into the civilised world, freshly-composed symphony in hands.

In a sense, I feel an affinity with Sibelius’s sentiment, leading me to borrow his phrase for the title of my new piano trio. I’m sure I share with many composers today the sense of working well away from the current popularity-obsessed musical mainstream - we’re unlikely to appear on Britain’s Got Talent, after all. Moreover, even within that loose collection of “contemporary classical” musicians, there are trends and fashions from which I sometimes feel remote. Indeed I was once angrily branded a “retro” composer by a long-bearded, sandalled man in a purple tie-dye shirt for marking a new composition andante con moto.

The association with the woods, and more broadly, the “nature-versus-metropolis” theme, goes much further than this metaphorical or political subtext. I tend to think (and compose) most clearly when away from the town, whether hiking in the Alps, or actually walking in the woods. This piece is influenced by the sounds, experience, and imagination of the outdoors. In particular, I have borrowed the songs of my garden’s avian inhabitants.

My Eine Erscheinung aus den Wäldern is in three movements of roughly similar length. The first, opening with a bold “call” or “cry” on the piano, alternates between gentle, rubato dialogue in the strings and the more agitated calls of the piano, which are taken up by the violin and cello before a resolution emerges from the introspective “dialogue” music. The second movement is made up of two reflective sections - blending pensive intonations in the cello with a darker, scordatura (de-tuned) violin - surrounding an exuberant passage for solo piano inspired by the chatterings of animals and birds. The final movement is essentially two pieces of music intertwined: one opening with heavy, angry, low chords that gradually become serene and gentle, and the other beginning with a high, calm, slow melody which descends, become more energetic over the course of the movement, finally melding into a reprise of the first movement’s “call” music.

Tim Benjamin
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(SPNM/New Notes on Radius’s debut at Wigmore Hall, April 2007)

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We hope that you enjoy this evening’s performance as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you, and we look forward to seeing you again soon!

Tim Benjamin
Founder and Director, Radius

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JOCELYN LIGHTFOOT (HORN)
Jocelyn Lightfoot began playing the horn at the age of five. In 2000 she became a member of the National Youth orchestra of Great Britain and for her sixth form education Jocelyn attended Chetham’s School of music in Manchester. From 2003-2007 Jocelyn attended the Royal Academy of Music performing in many solo and orchestral concerts including the Gregson Horn Concerto with the Academy Brass Band. Other achievements at the Academy included a Leverhulme Orchestral Fellowship. She graduated with 1st class honours.

ALEXANDRA WOOD (VIOLIN)
Alexandra Wood has won major prizes at International Violin Competitions including Wieniawski, Tibor Varga, Lipizer and Yampolsky. She graduated from Selwyn College Cambridge, and the Royal College of Music, where she was President Emerita Scholar, and studied with Itzhak Rashkovksy.

Alexandra has performed concertos with the Philharmonia, City of London Sinfonia, and the OSJ, and worked with conductors including Pierre Boulez, Roger Norrington, Tom Adès, Oliver Knussen and Richard Hickox. Alexandra has won many prestigious awards including the Worshipful Company of Musicians Medal, Maisie Lewis Award, Wingate Scholarship, Hattori Award and Junior Fellowships at the Royal College of Music.

Associate Professor of Violin at Leeds College of Music, and also a teacher at Birmingham Conservatoire, she is currently compiling the ABRSM Spectrum for Violin volume.

OLIVER COATES (CELLO)
Oliver Coates attained the highest degree result in the Royal Academy of Music’s history and went on to achieve an MPhil with distinction at Oxford University (New College). He plays as guest principal in the London Sinfonietta, performs as a duo with mira calix (Warp Records), and is a member of the Ossian Ensemble (Leverhulme Junior Fellows in Chamber Music at the Royal College of Music), the House of Bedlam (BMIC Cutting Edge tour 2008) and Radius (contemporary series - South Bank Centre).

Oliver performs concertos and recitals around the world and has given three solo tours of Japan. He has worked with Birtwistle, Adès, Gubaidulina, Harvey and Lindberg on their music and has written and improvised with Massive Attack. He also collaborates with the pianist and conductor Ryan Wigglesworth as a musician in residence at Cambridge University.

Olly is a winner of the 2006 Philip & Dorothy Green Award for Young Concert Artists, awarded by the Making Music Federation and in 2007 he was a winner at the Kirckman Society auditions.

This season he also performs a debut with Danny Driver at the Wigmore Hall, March 8th, in a programme of Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, a world premiere by Benjamin Britten, and further premieres by Larry Goves and Martin Suckling.

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JOHN REID (PIANO)
John Reid read music at Clare College, Cambridge, before taking up a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music with Michael Dussek. He has also taken lessons in song interpretation with Malcolm Martineau and, privately in Amsterdam, with Rudolf Jansen. His many awards include the 2003 Kathleen Ferrier and Maggie Teyte accompaniment prizes, the 2003 Birmingham Accompanist of the Year (joint first prize), the 2004 Gerald Moore Award and the Queen’s Commendation for excellence, presented by the Academy.

John has made a number of significant recital debuts during the course of recent seasons: at Wigmore Hall in May 2004 (with soprano Lucy Crowe); at the Purcell Room (as a 2004 Park Lane Group Young Artist); in Berlin and at the Mecklenburg Festival (with flautist Adam Walker) and in Switzerland, Italy and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam (with trumpeter Alison Balsom). He has partnered distinguished singers Joan Rodgers and Anthony Rolfe-Johnson, flautist William Bennett, cellist Alexander Baillie and violinist Jennifer Pike and, together with his regular duo partner, violinist Thomas Gould, he has performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, St. George’s Brandon Hill, Purcell Room and in festivals across the UK. He is a regular member of the Aurora Orchestra, with whom he has appeared at the Aldeburgh Festival, and he joined the contemporary music ensemble Radius for debuts at Wigmore Hall and the Southbank Centre during 2007.

John is an alumnus of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme and was a founder member of the Royal Academy of Music Song Circle, whose debut disc (‘Songs of Spring’) was released to critical acclaim. Other recent projects include first recordings of music by Charles Camilleri (on Divine Art), Rhian Samuel (on Deux-Elles), and Clifford Benson (Landor Records). He is shortly to record music for two pianos by York Bowen, with Michael Dussek, for Dutton Epoch.

John was recently elected Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.
RADIUS AT THE WIGMORE HALL: 18TH JUNE 2009

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, and 150 years since the first publication of “On the Origin of Species”, Radius will perform a programme featuring different approaches to “chance” in music (John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Paul Newland), glorious bird-song (Olivier Messiaen), and a new semi-staged work setting and dramatising Darwin’s letters from the Beagle, by Tim Benjamin.

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