

# **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CONCERT SERIES 2017 – 2018**

## **CHARITY CONCERT 2018**

**STUDENTS FROM ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY MUSIC**

**PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH ABERDEEN ROTARY CLUB**

### **FEATURING:**

**SASKIA MUCKE: Viola, KAROLINA CZECH: Piano, SOLJA HANSON: Cello**

**JAMIE LOWE: Piano, MITCH BERCIER: Cello and Electronics,**

**GEORGE STOKES: Trombone with JEREMY COLEMAN Piano Accompanist**

### **SCOTTISH TRADITIONAL GROUP:**

**ELLEN BIELINSKI: Fiddle, FRASER BORLAND: Piano/Bodhran**

**JOSIE FAIRLEY KEAST: Saxophone/Whistle, CALLUM YOUNG: Double Bass**

**BUTCHART CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

After words of welcome from Dr Nigel Dower representing Aberdeen Rotary Club, the student performers in Friday's Charity Concert were introduced by Thomas Michie. First off with a bright and breezy performance of Mikhail Glinka's Sonata in d minor (1828) were Saskia Mucke, viola and Karolina Czech, piano. It is an early piece by the composer which he never actually finished. There were originally intended to be three movements but it has become a favourite with viola players and I think it is fair to say after tonight's performance by the two girls it had become an audience favourite too. The piano began with an attractive romantic theme soon taken up and expanded by the viola. We enjoyed a confident opening and a riveting performance. Saskia played her melodic passages with great warmth and Karolina's piano playing full of sparkling light-fingered runs was particularly engaging.

From Glinka to Franz Ignaz Danzi (1763 – 1826) and his Duo in g minor, Op. 9 no. 2 (1802) in which Saskia was joined by cellist Solja Hansen. In the first movement there was marvellously responsive duo playing with melodic interest passed from viola to cello and back again. The second movement opened with pizzicato cello accompaniment to a warm singing viola, like a mezzo soprano. The cello took over as the singer, with double stopping accompaniment on viola and at the end of the piece there was lively duo playing from both girls.

Both viola and cello were joined by pianist Karolina in a lovely performance of Elgar's Salut d'amour. There was a delicious moment near the end where the piano seized the melody just for a moment.

Next on the platform was young pianist Jamie Lowe with Richard Addinsell's Warsaw Concerto (1941) composed for the film Dangerous Moonlight. The producers of the film had originally wanted to use Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto but the film rights were simply too expensive so Addinsell was hired to compose a similar piece. I wonder how much they paid him. Along with The Legend of the Glass Mountain by Nino Rota and the Dream of Olwen by Charles Williams it became one of the favourite 'show off' pieces for aspiring young pianists. It is actually the most technically challenging of the three pieces and Jamie Lowe gave us a dazzlingly exciting performance. Having been brought up in a musical climate where the slightest hint of melody was frowned on, I never thought I would hear a live performance of this piece, but I was delighted that Jamie had chosen to play it. There was a little boy sitting just in front of me and when the opening chords thundered out of the piano he sat bolt upright in his seat and a broad grin lit up his face. This was obviously his kind of music.

Jamie played the piece from memory. Trills, leaps and avalanches of notes in runs poured confidently from the piano.

After the interval, Ken Thomson from the Kintore Rotary Club gave a generous explanation of Shelter Box, one of the charities supported by this concert. Anyone who thought that Addinsell's music was, in the words of one of my musical friends, composer Oliver Searle, 'much too cheezy' would have been relieved to hear two new pieces for cello and electronics by Mitch Bercier. He

used several advanced bowing techniques including spiccato, which I like to call 'bouncy bow'. Using an electronic technique where this first motif was recorded then played back while other cello music was added to the mix, and so on, we ended up with what was a huge seething mixture of cello sounds, as if from some huge crazy cello orchestra. Mitch Bercier had produced a staggering sound blend to astonish us.

If this was too much for some of the audience, the next performer, bass trombonist George Stokes added a different kind of thrill to the performance. Supported on piano with immaculate skill by one of Aberdeen's finest young accompanists Jeremy Coleman, he began with the two movements of *Father Neptune* (1986) by Roy Newsome (1930 – 2011). The opening fast movement had, I thought in its rhythms and melodic leaps something of the spirit of Hindemith, a composer I particularly admire. The second slow movement was more English in mood with lovely smooth tone from George and his trombone.

The second piece was the *Sonata for Bass Trombone and piano* (1962) by Patrick McCarty (b.1928). The introduction was wonderfully exciting in the style of a showpiece, then this was followed by a merry tune with leaps and low notes which carried a charge of amusement and good humour in George's splendid performance. The piano had a section of fresh sounding dancing lightness while the trombone had a smooth singing melody. The final section went back to the idea of merry melody, rhythmically and melodically entrancing and really just great.

To complete the concert, on came four performers with what was listed as Scottish Traditional. Their first piece *Zito the Bubbleman* comes from a group called Ceolbeg who often perform and record in the USA and *Ashokan Farewell* was composed by the American musician Jay Ungar for a television programme about the American Civil War. Their final piece with the fascinating title *Liere's Welcome to Cozac is I think Irish*. There is nothing wrong with any of that and I enjoyed the performance thoroughly. Fraser Borland on piano and bodhran was absolutely fantastic and Ellen Bielinski on fiddle carried the melodic core of the performance splendidly. Josie Fairley Keast on whistle and saxophone added a special touch of spice to the performance and double bass player Callum Young kept the music on solid ground.

This was the third collaboration between University music students and the Rotarians and especially regarding the amazingly wide-ranging mixture of music, it was I reckon, their best yet, certainly their most entertaining and all in a really good cause!