

HARMONIUM DAY

SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2008

Demonstrations and talks plus the opportunity to play a variety of harmoniums

The Front Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall, 2pm
Admission free

ANNE PAGE HARMONIUM

A fascinating programme of Vierne, Franck, Wagner, Guilman and Karg-Elert.

Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.30pm
£12

THE MUSIC OF OLIVIER MESSIAEN: FROM THE CANYONS TO THE STARS

Our celebration of Messiaen's centenary continues until December. Full details at www.southbankcentre.co.uk/messiaen.

THE ART OF FUGUE

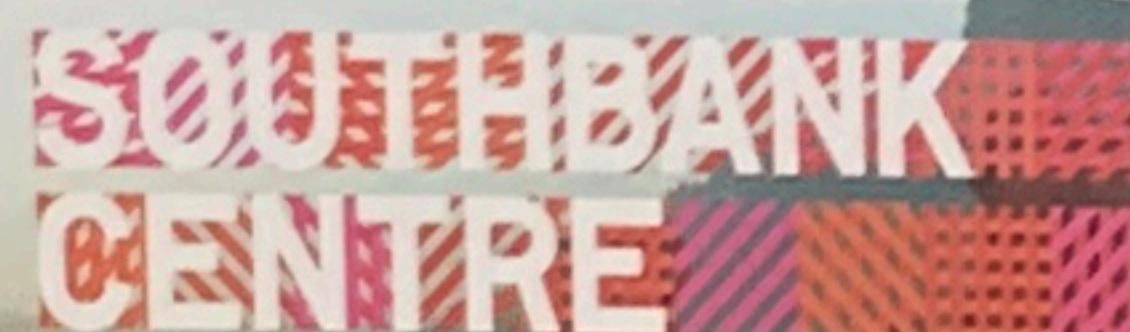
THURSDAY 12 MARCH 2009

David Goode performs the 18 monumental fugue movements that form one of Bach's greatest works.

Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.30pm
£15



LOTTERY FUNDED



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TUESDAY 15TH JULY

Lunchtime Recital

ATRIUM STRING QUARTET

Alexey Naumenko, violin

Anton Ilyunin, violin

Dmitry Pitulko, viola

Anna Gorelova, cello

1.05pm Laxton School Cloisters

String Quartet in E flat, Op.74, 'The Harp'

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Poco adagio, Allegro – Adagio ma non troppo – Presto – Allegretto con variazioni

Although usually classified as belonging to Beethoven's middle period, this quartet has many moments of the introspection and mysticism found in the late quartets, when deafness, domestic tensions and financial worry turned the composer's mind within himself and far from the tastes of the fashionable audience of his day. The title 'The Harp' was bestowed on this piece by the publisher and refers to the pizzicato arpeggios that are prominent in the development section of the first movement and occur momentarily in other parts of the music.

The first movement opens with a slow, extended introduction (in E flat) in which a motif of four notes is given prominence. There is much interplay of instrumentation before the Allegro is launched, again by a four-note motif. Although normal sonata form is followed, the music is very much a matter of comment on short motifs rather than the treatment of broad themes.

The second movement is one of prevailing melancholy – a melancholy perhaps touched with grandeur. Two introductory quavers from the lower instruments allow the first violin to launch the principal subject in the key of A flat. Subsequent supporting themes and their treatment are often subtle and affecting but do little to relieve the generally dark and sombre mood of the music.

Some welcome relief comes with the Scherzo which follows. Short and fast, it is equipped with two contrasting trio sections. Its opening rhythms are strongly reminiscent of the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, but its themes are elusive and vague, creating but a fleeting impression.

There is nothing elusive, nor fleeting, about the beautiful last movement, a set of neatly constructed variations – six in all – upon a simple two-section theme. Each variation seeks to explore some rhythmic or harmonic feature of the theme. The first displays

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a number of staccato arpeggios; the second allows the viola a major share of the limelight; the third is sprightly in its offbeat rhythms; the fourth is effective in its harmonic colour and romantic poignancy; the fifth is restless and moody, but the sixth has its own fresh treatment of quiet animation. Even the extended coda, which ends the quartet, introduces yet another new look at the theme before it rushes, in a vigorous unison passage, to its conclusion. There is, perhaps, a chuckle in the unexpected hushed chords of the final cadence.

String Quartet no.3 in F major, Op.73

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Allegretto – Moderato con moto – Allegro non troppo – Adagio – Moderato meno mosso, Tempo 1, Adagio

The chamber music of Dmitri Shostakovich is dominated by his fifteen string quartets; no one did more to re-establish the primacy of the string quartet in the 20th century. These monuments of the genre serve as a remarkable chronicle of the composer's musical development spanning a period of nearly 40 years. The first appeared in 1938 and the last in 1974, a year before his death. Many of them are also profoundly intimate musical documents,

revealing his personality. These pieces serve as vehicles for his most introspective and private musings on such matters as death and terror.

The String Quartet No.3 was composed in 1946 and premiered the same year in Moscow by the Beethoven Quartet, who collaborated closely with the composer over many years, and to whom the piece is dedicated. The work was furiously denounced for its content and inconclusive ending. Some critics went so far as to accuse Shostakovich of hiding coded subversive messages against Stalin within it. It is, however, undoubtedly one of the finest of Shostakovich's quartets, spanning a variety of moods. The first and third movements are lively and energetic, framing a more relaxed Moderato movement. The slow movement, which leads directly to the Finale, is based on a passacaglia; this is heard once more following the climax of the Finale, after which the music dies away quietly.

The Atrium String Quartet began life in 2000 at the St Petersburg Conservatory under the inspiration of Professor Joseph Levinson, cellist of the celebrated Taneyev Quartet. They first rose to international prominence in April 2003 when they won the First Prize and the Audience Prize in the London International String Quartet Competition, held at the Wigmore Hall. In 2007 the jury of the Fifth International String Quartet Competition in Bordeaux unanimously awarded them the Premier Grand Prix and the Prix MMSG. Future plans include appearances at major festivals in Germany, Switzerland, France and the UK and in 2009 they will make their first tour of the USA. The Atrium Quartet currently resides in Berlin.

Refreshments available before the concert.

The concert ends at approximately 2.10pm. There will be no interval.

Sponsor: Mrs Pauline Sampson