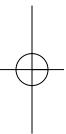
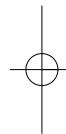
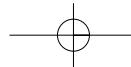


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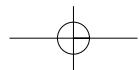
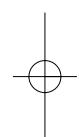
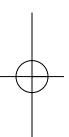
Thursday 6 October 2005
7.45pm, Purcell Room

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Programme

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piano



Thursday 6 October 2005 | 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Fanny Mendelssohn

*Das Jahr - 12 Charakterstücke
für das Forte-Piano*
Norbert Meyn, reader

interval

Schumann

Abegg Variations, opus 1

Brahms

7 Fantasias, opus 116

Special thanks to those companies, individuals and trusts who have generously sponsored this programme:

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at the Royal Festival Hall and the Tay Charitable Trust.

Programme notes

Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847)
Das Jahr - 12 Character pieces for piano



At the age of 14, Fanny Mendelssohn was advised by her father to prepare for her future role as a wife and mother. She was actively discouraged from aspiring to be a composer, although she was given the finest musical tuition. Her brother Felix was equally discouraging, although he rated her musicianship in the highest terms, and was willing to publish some of her music under his name. It was simply felt to be inappropriate that a woman of wealthy background should aspire to have a career, especially in music. Happily, her husband, the Prussian court painter Wilhelm Hensel was more supportive of his gifted wife, and he lovingly illustrated each of the twelve pieces which make up the manuscript of *Das Jahr*. Furthermore each piece is introduced by an extract from poetic works. This piano cycle of 12 pieces plus epilogue depicts the passing months of the year in what was for the time a ground-breaking combination of music, art and poetry.

In 1839-40 Fanny Mendelssohn and Wilhelm Hensel spent a happy few months in Italy. The visit was a great success, and the composer found herself receiving recognition for the first time outside her family circle. On her return she was inspired to compose *Das Jahr*. The Mendelssohn family, including Fanny and Felix's grandfather Moses Mendelssohn had championed the music of J.S. Bach. Fanny Mendelssohn pays homage to J.S. Bach with three chorale quotations - one in March, one in December, and one in the Nachspiel.

During the 1820s the Mendelssohn family had held regular *Sonntagsmusiken* (Sunday salon concerts) in their house, at which both Fanny and Felix performed their own music and music by other composers. When Felix left home in 1829 to go on tour, the family ceased to hold the *Sonntagsmusiken*. However, Fanny re-established the tradition in 1831, and the *Sonntagsmusiken* continued for many years, giving her an outlet for the performance of her numerous compositions. In 1846, encouraged among others by the family friend Robert von Keudall, she found the confidence to start having some of her works published, (opus 1-7) in spite of her brother's objections. The next year, in May, she was to suffer a fatal stroke during a rehearsal for one of the *Sonntagsmusiken*. Her grief-stricken brother, upon the request of Fanny's husband Wilhelm Hensel, arranged for publication of some more of her works. This came about in 1850, but Felix was not to see their publication, as he died a few months after his sister, in November 1847.

Composed in 1841, *Das Jahr* remained unpublished until 1989. The fair copy, illustrated by Wilhelm Hensel, was published in 1997. In 2005, the bicentenary of Fanny Mendelssohn's birth, all of her known works are being performed somewhere in the world.



Januar is a dramatic piece which captures both the icy stillness and the blizzards of this time of year. It leads directly into *Februar*.

JANUAR - Ein Traum
Ahnest du, o Seele wieder
Sanfte, süße
Frühlingslieder?
Sieh umher die falben
Bäume.
Ach! es waren holde
Träume. (*Ludwig Uhland*)

JANUARY - A dream
O soul, do you again
recognize
Soft, sweet spring songs?
Look, everywhere are
leafless trees.
Ah, they were sweet
dreams!



The sparkling *Februar* depicts the carnival which is held in many German towns in February. Listeners may observe that Fanny Mendelssohn was influenced here by her brother's keyboard writing - but who was influencing who?

FEBRUAR - Scherzo
Denkt nicht ihr seyd in
deutschen Gränzen,
Von Teufels-Narren-und
Todtentänzen
Ein heiter Fest erwartet
Euch. (*Goethe*)

FEBRUARY - Scherzo
Do not think you are in
German lands,
With the dances of devils,
fools and death,
A merry feast awaits you.



Easter is marked by a setting of the chorale *Christ ist erstanden*.

MÄRZ - Pralodium und
Choral
Verkündiget ihr dumpfen
Glocken schon
Der Osterfestes erste
Feyerstunde? (*Goethe*)

MARCH
Muffled bells, do you
already announce
The first holiday hour of
the Easter celebrations?



April is a lively and virtuosic piece which leads directly into *Mai*.

APRIL - Capriccio
Der Sonnenblick
betrüget
Mit mildem, falschem
Schein. (*Goethe*)

APRIL - Capriccio
The glance of the sun
betrays itself
With its mild, traitorous
shine.



The optimism of late spring is captured in *Mai*.

MAI - Frühlingslied
Nun blüht das fernste,
tiefste Thal.
(*Ludwig Uhland*)

MAY - Spring Song
Now the distant, deep
valley blooms.



After a poignant introduction, the serenade *Juni* features guitar-like figuration accompanying a wistful melody.

JUNI - Serenade
Hör' ich Rauschen, hör' ich
Lieder
Hör ich holde Liebesklage?
(Poet unknown)

JUNE - Serenade
Do I hear whispering,
do I hear songs,
Do I hear the sweet
lament of love?



Writing after a year in Italy, the composer depicts the languor of a blisteringly hot July day.

JULI
Die Fluren dürsten
Nach erquickendem
Thau,
der Mensch
verschmachtet. (*Schiller*)

JULY
The meadows thirst
For refreshing dew,
People languish.



The introduction and Marcia pastorale lead into to some of the most joyous and exuberant music in *Das Jahr*.

AUGUST
Bunt von Farben
auf den Garben
Lieg der Kranz.
(*Schiller*)

AUGUST
Bright with colours
On the sheaves
Lies the garland.



A particularly beautiful song without words, *September* was one of the few works to be published during the composer's lifetime, under the title *Andante con moto*, opus 2 no 2.

SEPTEMBER - Am Flusse
Fließe, fließe, lieber
Fluß
Nimmer werd ich froh.
(*Goethe*)

SEPTEMBER - By The River
Flow, flow, dear river,
Never will I be happy.



Oktober depicts a hunting scene.

OKTOBER
Im Wald, im grünen
Walde
Da ist ein lustiger
Schall. (*Joseph of
Eichendorff*)

OCTOBER
In the wood, in the green
woods,
There is a cheerful echo.



The mood of *November* is dark and dramatic.

NOVEMBER
Wie rauschen die Bäume
so winterlich schon
Es fliehen die Träume
des Lebens davon
Ein Klagelied schallt
Durch Hügel und Wald.
(*Poet unknown*)

NOVEMBER
How the trees rustle
So wintry already.
They fly away
The dreams of life
A lament echoes
Through hill and wood.



In *Dezember*, we hear the Bach chorale '*Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her*', and this is followed by the *Nachspiel/Epilogue*, in which Fanny Mendelssohn pays final homage to Bach, with a quotation of the chorale '*Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*', framed by some magnificently contrapuntal music.

DEZEMBER
Von Himmel hoch,
da komm ich her.
(*Melody by J.S. Bach,
words by Martin Luther*)

DECEMBER
From heaven above
I come to earth.

NACHSPIEL
Das alte Jahr vergangen
ist. (*Words by Johann
Steuerlein. Chorale
melody by J.S. Bach*)

EPILOGUE
The old year has fled.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Abegg Variations opus 1 (1830)

Schumann presented himself to the world as a virtuoso-composer with his early Abegg Variations opus 1, written when he was 20. The notes of the theme, A-B flat-E-G-G, derive from the name of the dedicatee, Pauline, Comtesse d'Abegg, thought to be fictional. The true inspiration for the work, and Schumann's first love, was probably the young pianist Meta Abegg. Schumann loved wordplay, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the name Meta is an anagram of the word Italian word tema (theme). The theme (indeed marked Tema) is gentle and good-natured, and the variations alternate between tender lyricism and sparkling virtuosity.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Seven Fantasias opus 116 (1892)

Having composed extensively for the piano as a young man in the early 1850s (opp. 1, 2 and 5 Piano Sonatas, Schumann Variations op. 9, Ballades op. 10 among other works), Brahms' next intensive period of composing for piano occurred late in his life. Between 1892 and 1893, Brahms composed four great piano cycles, opus 116, 117, 118 and 119. Remarkably for a composer with such an orchestral and chamber music output, Brahms claimed to feel comfortable only when writing for the piano. He described some of the late piano music of 1892-3 as cradle songs of his sorrow. The op. 116 pieces comprise three Capriccii and four Intermezzi. A certain key structure can be discerned, particularly as the 1st and 7th Capriccii are both in D minor:

1. Capriccio - D minor.
2. Intermezzo - A minor.
3. Capriccio - G minor.
4. Intermezzo (originally Notturno) - E major.
5. Intermezzo - E minor.
6. Intermezzo - E major.
7. Capriccio - D minor.

The first Capriccio is wild and impassioned, tempered with creeping, crepuscular octaves, and boiling textures, creating a tempestuous struggle. The A minor Intermezzo has the texture of string chamber music, with a yearning, unsettling middle section. The noble grandeur of the G minor Capriccio gives way to the delicate prayer of the Intermezzo/Notturno in E major, which is at the heart of the seven Fantasias. No.5, the Intermezzo in E minor is an extraordinary piece, aphoristic, reticent and questioning, in which Brahms seems to be embracing modernism. The chromaticism of the sadly contemplative sixth piece, Intermezzo in E major, would seem even more intense were it not for the preceding E minor Intermezzo's mysterious harmonic twists. The 7th Capriccio ends the set with an emphatic return to dramatic, furious D minor.

Biographies

Christina Lawrie *piano*

Christina Lawrie studied at Chetham's School of Music with the Polish pianist and teacher Ryszard Bakst. She went on to read Music at Trinity College, Cambridge. After graduation, the Royal College of Music awarded her a Leverhulme Postgraduate Studentship, enabling her to study with Yonty Solomon. She also worked with Vanessa Latarche at the Royal Academy of Music.

Christina's engagements in 2005 have included a Wigmore Hall debut as a Park Lane Group Young Artist, a recital for the PLG New Year Series at the Purcell Room, and two live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, as well as nationwide concerts for music societies. Her performance at the Bellapais International Music Festival 2005 in Cyprus was broadcast on Cypriot television.



photo: Sussie Ahlborg

Christina made her South Bank debut in the 2004 Park Lane Group Young Artists Series. The Observer praised her "formidable intellect and boundless technique...Fantastic playing", and Musical Opinion described her as "a very gifted young player..". When one of the 2005 PLG Young Artists dropped out, six weeks before the concert, Christina was asked to step in for the 2005 series. Musical Pointers remarked of her performance "In a few weeks and by special request she had learnt the complete programme already scheduled for an indisposed PLG Young Artist. That included Tippett's rhapsodic and elusive 4th sonata, played from memory with complete assurance and remarkable aplomb; an astonishing feat of professionalism."

Christina has won a host of accolades on a national and international level. She was a finalist in the Royal Overseas League Piano Competition, a prizewinner at the Marsala International Piano Competition and a Blackheath Halls Young Artist in Residence. A former Caird Scholar, Christina also won the ESU Vlado Perlemuter Scholarship, and awards from the Cross Trust, Hope Scott Trust, and Musicians' Benevolent Fund. She won numerous prizes at the RCM and the RAM, including the Academy's Postgraduate Piano Recital Prize, and the Friends of the Royal Academy of Music/Mortimer Career Development Award. She receives generous support from the Scottish Arts Council. Christina has worked with renowned artists such as Nelly Akopian-Tamarina, Sergei Babayan, Andrew Ball, John O'Conor, Paul Crossley, Joan Havill, Vanessa Latarche, John Lill, Alexander Satz and Yonty Solomon.

Forthcoming engagements include a recital at Chelsea Arts Club in March 06 and debuts at St. George's, Bristol and the new Perth Concert Hall in its inaugural season.

Norbert Meyn

reader

Norbert Meyn was born in Weimar, Germany. He studied singing in Dresden, Riga and Weimar and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. In 1996 he was a prize-winner at the Baroque Singing Competition of the International Handel-Festival in Halle, and in 1998 he won first prize at the English Singers and Speakers Competition in London.



As a soloist he has performed Bach's *B Minor Mass* with Phillip Pickett in Madrid, Bach's *St. John Passion* and *Christmas Oratorio* with Howard Arman in Salzburg and *Bach Cantata Solos* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner as part of the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in Luxemburg. In 2000 he sang the tenor solo in Weill's *Berliner Requiem* with European Voices and BCMG under Thomas Adés at the Aldeburgh Festival and the Proms. He also appeared as Evangelist in the *St. John Passion* at St. John's Smith Square in London and at Chester Cathedral, and he was a soloist in the 'Masquerade' Series of Early English Opera at the South Bank Centre.

Other operatic appearances include the title-role in *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus* by Peter Maxwell Davies with The Opera Group in London and at the Buxton Festival, Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*, Monostatos in *The Magic Flute* and Danilo in *The Merry Widow* for Pavilion Opera as well as an Apprentice in Graham Vick's production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Royal Opera House.

As a Lieder singer he performed Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* at Conway Hall and *Winterreise* at the Bloomsbury Theatre in London. Norbert was also a participant of the Steans Institute for Young Artists Programme at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago. Together with pianist Christopher Gould he created the recital series 'Packed Lunch' at the Bloomsbury Theatre. Norbert Meyn teaches German Diction and Lieder Classes at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal College of Music.

Fanny Hensel

née Mendelssohn (1805-1847)



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