

Christopher Bowers- Broadbent

Monday 24 November, 12pm
St Paul's Hall

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent organ

Arvo Pärt (Estonia, 1935)

Annum per Annum (1980) 9'

Arvo Pärt was born in Paide in Estonia. He studied music with Heino Eller at the Conservatory in Tallinn and after graduation became recording manager at the Estnik broadcasting station, while starting his composing career. Then, in 1980, he emigrated to Vienna, along with his wife and two sons, and two years later to Berlin.

Two distinct phases divide Pärt's work. His early compositions consisted mainly of serial works; this phase came to an end with his *Credo* (1968). The period from 1968 to 1976 was one of transition, during which he

wrote the *Third Symphony*. His intense studies of medieval music opened a new phase in 1976, which Pärt called 'tintinnabuli' style.

Annum per Annum was commissioned in 1980 for the 900th anniversary of the Cathedral in Speyer. The piece consists of five sections (variations on a sequentially changing cantus firmus), an introduction and coda. The five sections are marked K-G-C-S-A, which, during the Russian occupation of Estonia, was the only way he dared refer to the ordinary of the Mass.

Judith Weir (UK, 1954)

Ettrick Banks (1985) 4'

Judith Weir studied composition with John Tavener and played in the National Youth Orchestra. She wrote her first full-length opera in 1987 *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, commissioned by the BBC for Kent Opera.

Of *Ettrick Banks* Weir writes: "Having always admired the famous impressionist water studies for piano – Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau* and Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* – I had the idea of writing a water study for organ. This 4-minute piece is based on the intervals of the traditional Scottish air *Ettrick Bank* (not particularly audible in the finished piece) and seemed to describe a more turbulent stretch of water than the French pieces mentioned above."

Kevin Volans (South Africa/Ireland, 1949)

Walking Song (1984) 5'

Volans is a white South African who has studied in Europe. He was working for Stockhausen when he set off for a field trip in the late 1970s to record African music. The result was *White Man Sleeps*, an explosion of African instrumental colouring and rhythms which shot Volans to Number

Three in the US Classical Charts when The Kronos Quartet recorded it on their best-selling album.

“The light, the textures, the colours of Africa and the African landscape and the sounds of the birds and the insects are so different from Europe. The music draws on those elements. It's not so much cultural as environmental.”

Volans describes the evocative 5-minute piece simply as being based on the rhythms of walking.

Philip Glass (USA, 1937)

Satyagraha: Finale (1980) 8'

Philip Glass, born in Baltimore, discovered music in his father's radio repair shop. By the time he was 23 he had studied with Persichetti, Milhaud and William Bergsma, and from there continued intensive study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. By 1974 he had composed a large collection of new music, much of it for use by the theatre company Mabou Mines, and most of it composed for his own performing group The Philip Glass Ensemble. This period culminated in *Einstein on the Beach*, the Philip Glass/Robert Wilson four-and-a-half hour epic opera, now seen as a landmark in 20th century music-theatre. ‘*Einstein*’ became the first of a trilogy of ‘portrait operas’ on the lives of influential men – that, in the case of *Satyagraha*, being Gandhi.

The work heard today is a version of the concluding moments of Act 3 of the opera, composed to stand on its own. Flowing throughout the piece are couplet sixths in a 4-bar phrase, sometimes in 3/4 time, then in 4/4, underpinned by a pedal ostinato, first of three notes (C-D-E), then of four (F-B-C-E). Whilst an upper part adds a rise and fall to the line, the whole is dominated by an ascending scale from E to E in the ‘tenor’ line, which, as the whole work is confined to the ‘white notes’, has coincidentally a

modal character. The work achieves its sense of finality by the skilful juxtaposition and balance of its rhythmic and motivic elements.

Produced by hcmf// supported by Estonian Centre of Contemporary Music and Culture Ireland