

(Re)Invention — (Re)Invention

29th August 2018, 18.30 hrs.
Sangita Vadhana Hall, Administration Building

Playing music from distant times and places always involves adaptation and change. Perhaps no music exemplifies this quite so well as that of **Johann Sebastian Bach**. Over the last 250 years or so, Bach's music has been adapted to suit countless new instruments and aesthetic trends. Further, Bach's music has been a perennial favorite for arrangement. In the concert this evening, Bach's **Two-Part Invention No. 15 in B minor (ca. 1720, Germany)** serves as a recurring interlude, transporting us from one musical world to the next.

Henry Purcell, Chaconne Z730 in G Minor (ca. 1680, England)

The chaconne was originally a dance popular with Spanish servants and slaves in South America (the "New World," from the Spanish perspective). These early chaconnes were routinely condemned by the clergy for their lewd and satirical texts. In the seventeenth-century, the French reinvented this mischievous romp to create the stately court chaconne. French chaconnes were typically slow, with variations unfurling over a repeated bass pattern. Purcell's chaconne in G minor is thus an English composer's take on a French reinvention of a naughty Spanish dance.

Franz Schubert, Impromptu Op. 142 No. 3 in B-flat major (1827, Austria)

Schubert's unparalleled gift for melody is on full display in this impromptu. The work is structured as a set of variations, the theme of which comes from the incidental music he wrote for the play *Rosamunde*. The beautiful Klimt Bösendorfer used in this evening's performance invites us to contemplate the ways in which successive generations of artists and thinkers reinterpret—and even reinvent—the composers they idolize. Schubert was one of Klimt's favorite composers, and *Schubert am Klavier* (1899) is among his most famous works. Despite its historical subject matter, the painting is stylistically modern. As one critic put it, "now and then the slight feeling might seize us, that this modern Schubert may have looked a little too deeply into our contemporary spirit...appropriated with impressionable humility some measures from Hugo Wolf's neo-Viennese and post-Wagnerian dissonance." Painters and performing musicians alike cannot help but reframe and transform the music they engage with.

Suppabhorn Suwanpakdee, Mood (2017, Thailand)

Mood, a chamber work scored for Guitar and String Quartet, was inspired by Suppabhorn's fieldwork in Pang Ma Pha in northern Thailand. Drawing on the models of Béla Bartók and Leo Brouwer, Suppabhorn combined elements of classical compositional practice with Lisu folk music.

Ronald Stevenson, Heroic Song for Hugh MacDiarmid (1967, Scotland)

Ronald Stevenson and the poet Hugh MacDiarmid shared a deep love of Scotland and frequently celebrated their homeland through their respective arts. The BBC commissioned Stevenson to compose something for MacDiarmid on the occasion of his 75th birthday. The resulting work, *Heroic Song for Hugh MacDiarmid*, opens with an evocation of the Scottish high hills, followed by three sections: "the poet speaks," "the poet laughs," and "the poet dreams."

Franz Schubert, Der Tod und das Mädchen (1817, Austria)

We return again briefly to Schubert—a composer whose artistry was deeply connected to poetry. Over the course of his short life, Schubert composed some 600 songs. *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, with poetry by Matthias Claudius, is one of several songs Schubert wrote that reflects his fascination with death. As in *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *Erlkönig*, death is presented as both frightening and seductive.

Philip Glass Metamorphosis No. 1 (1989, United States)

Glass repurposed the melody for this metamorphosis from the soundtrack he composed for *A Thin Blue Line*. This documentary tells the story of Randall Dale Adams, a man sentenced to death for a

murder he did not commit. With this context in mind, Glass's haunting music seems to express the vagaries of human perception and the elusive nature of truth. *Metamorphosis No. 1* is scored for piano but this evening we will hear an arrangement for two marimbas by Anothai Nitibhon.

Béla Bartók, Out of Doors: With Drums and Pipes, The Night's Music, The Chase (1926, Hungary)

Out of doors *where*? Sorry, but no portraits of Hungarian peasant life tonight. Performer Khetsin Chuchan's recontextualization of Bartók's music will instead take us on a journey through the urban cityscape of Bangkok.

Leopold Godowsky, Symphonic Metamorphosis on Johann Strauss's "Artist's Life" Waltz (1905, Germany)

The pianist and composer Leopold Godowsky was almost entirely self taught. His remarkable technique led him to create piano arrangements and paraphrases of hair-raising difficulty. Yet Godowsky disliked being called a virtuoso. "Virtuosity is a fault, not a virtue," he said. "What I have accomplished is, in fact, a free musical polyphony along modern polyphonic lines." It is in this spirit that Godowsky composed his epic *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Johann Strauss's "Artist's Life" Waltz*—a work musicologist Lewis Lockwood describes as "Johann Strauss waltzing with Johann Bach." Appropriately then, we will end with this show-stopping reinvention!

Notes by Elissa Miller-Kay