



Claire Hammond Concert Review (04/09/21)

Saturday afternoon and it was the opening concert of MAAA 2021/22 Season and what an opening. Clare Hammond, Concert pianist took us from Europe with compositions by Montgeroult (France), Brahms (Germany) and Szymanowski (Poland) and across the Atlantic to America with a less known composition by W G Still.

The concert opened with a selection of Etudes by Montgeroult. Clare introduced them allowing the audience an insight into the compositional techniques that Montgeroult included. (An etude is a “study designed to improve the technique or demonstrate the skill of the player” - it is certainly the latter which was the meaning here today.)

Clare introduced this next selection of music by Brahms explaining that by the time Brahms composed these pieces he was in his late 50's and felt he'd written enough. His music was now looking back on his life and showing a great sadness and affection. In the calm and peaceful atmosphere of Christ Church you could feel it within the music.

An exciting and relatively unknown work by H G Still - The Bell was perfect in Christ Church. This work was composed in 1943 and unusually both the orchestral and the solo piano pieces were composed simultaneously. The inspiration for this piece came from the 1873 poem "The Phantom Chapel," by John Townsend Trowbridge. Clare demonstrated the entire range of the piano to its full potential in this unsettling, haunting, atmospheric piece.

Clare's final selection was a set of 10 variations on a Polish folk tune by Szymanowski. These variations all had their own bright style or certainly until Variation No.8 which was very dramatic and was the music that Szymanowski had played at his own funeral.

This first concert of “live” music certainly lived up to its name. The acoustics of Christ Church and the virtuosic skills of Clare Hammond performing an exciting programme of music certainly shows that the MAAA Season is off to an excellent start.