

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

presents

A FACULTY CONCERT

Wednesday, May 26, 1965

8:15 p.m.

Carriage Barn

Varen (Words by A. O. Vinje)

Edvard Grieg

Langs ei Å (Words by A. O. Vinje)

En Svane (Words by Henrik Ibsen)

Ved Rondane (Words by A. O. Vinje)

Frank Baker, Tenor

Julian DeGray, Piano

Nigun (Improvisation)

Ernest Bloch

(From "Baal Shem: three Pictures of Chassidic Life")

The Fountain of Arethusa, Opus 30, No. 1

Karol Szymanowski

Sonata in D (K. 306)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Allegro con spirito

Andante cantabile

Allegretto - Allegro

Orrea Pernel, Violin

Vivian Fine, Piano

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Trois Mélodies

Oliver Messiaen

Pourquoi? (Words by Oliver Messiaen)

Le Sourire (Words by Cécile Sauvage)

La Fiancée perdue (Words by Oliver Messiaen)

Frank Baker, Tenor

Julian DeGray, Piano

Stabbelåten (Stump Tune)

Oberek (Polish Dance)

Minuet (K. 355)

Danse de l'Esprit de Joie

Edvard Grieg

Karol Szymanowski

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Oliver Messiaen

Julian DeGray, Piano

Songs by Grieg

Unlike the work of Ibsen and Bjørnson, which has become international domain, the poetry of Aasmund Vinje, because of a peculiar language barrier, is almost unknown outside of Norway. Vinje, a peasant himself, chose to write in a dialect so extreme that even in Norway his works have to be provided with special glossaries. The literati consider, however, that buried in this obscure dialect is some of the most vivid poetry of the romantic movement. The associations evoked by the original words: peasant toil, brooding forests, glistening mountain air, are blunted as soon as they are rendered into even the more conventional speech of Norway's townfolk. To capture their flavour in translation is as hopeless as to do Robert Burns into the French of Pierre Corneille.

It is peculiarly fitting that it should have been Grieg who undertook to find the musical equivalent of this exclusively Norwegian poetry, for he was so identified with the landscape and the culture of Norway that he refused to be known as a Scandinavian composer. He would say: "I am not Scandinavian, I am Norse". Clearly Vinje's poetry was deeply ingrained in his emotional make-up, for in his correspondence, when describing the ovations with which he was habitually greeted on his continental tours, he would revert time and again to the lines from "Spring": "Meire eg fekk enn eg hadde fortent, og alting må trjota". More I've received that e'er I deserved, and all things must perish.

Varen (Spring)...Grieg

I

Now once again I have witnessed how Winter surrenders
to springtime;
Hedges of cherry I've seen once again as they burst
into snowfall,
Snow as it melts into waterfall brooks that tumble
and murmur,
Ice, as it loosens its grip on the shoreline and
floats into ocean.
Grass growing green again now I have seen all covered
with blossoms,
Birds of the spring I have heard as they sing
towards sun and towards summer.

II

Flecks of bright sunlight I've seen as they
danced on surface of springbrooks,
Butterflies fluttering, winging their way through
thickets of branches,
All this renewal of spring that I feared had
escaped me forever.
Still I am joyless, and query I must: Is this
the last springtime?
Then be it so! For in life I have met with much
beauty to cherish;
More I've received than e'er I deserved, and all
things must perish.

III

Once in the saturate breath of the
spring that gorges my seeing,
There I shall one day myself find a home and
bathe in its being.
All this that springtime has offered to me, the
flower that I've gathered,
Spirits of forebears I thought it to be, that
danced and lamented.
Thus under spruce an enigma in spring I came to
discover,
Thus did the flute that I carved seem to me with
weeping to quiver.

Langs ei Å (Along a Brook) ... Grieg

O forest! Thou, that bendest down
To kiss this dark and treacherous stream,
This stream that gnaws thine own heart's root
To make thee in its bosom drown,
Like thee full many a one I've found,
Most often in the spring of life,
Will kiss the very hand that strikes
Into his heart its deepest wound.
O forest, thou forest, O forest thou!

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En Svane (A Swan)...Grieg

My white-downed swan,
So mute, unwilling,
No note, no trilling
Gave sign of singing.

Terror-protective
Spirit in sleep,
Always listening
Gliding the deep.

But then, that last meeting,
When down and eyes
Were secret lies,
Yes, then it sounded!
In birthpangs of tone,
Thy voyage was done!
Still thou wert a swan.

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Ved Rondane...Grieg

I

Again I see the mountains and the valleys
Like those I used to see in youth's first day;
The same wind this, that cools the heated forehead,
The gold still lies on snow as once it lay.
It speaks to me in childhood's language
And makes me pensive, whilst it makes me gay.
So intricate with childhood's reminiscence
It rushes o'er me so it takes my breath away.

II

Yes, life still rushes, as it once rushed o'er me
When under snow I glimpsed a blade of green;
I dream today the dreams that I've dreamt always
When mountain tops through bluish haze I've seen.
Again the strife of daytime is forgotten
Whene'er I glimpse the sinking sun's last ray;
I'll surely find a house to give me shelter
When home to night the sun will light my way.

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The Fountain of Arethusa ...Szymanowski

(from "Stories of Gods and Heroes" by Thomas Bulfinch)

Arethusa to Ceres in Sicily: "This is not my native country; I came hither from Elis (Hellas). I was a woodland nymph, and delighted in the chase. They praised my beauty, but I cared nothing for it, and rather boasted of my hunting exploits. One day I was returning from the wood, heated with exercise, when I came to a stream silently flowing, so clear that you might count the pebbles on the bottom. The willows shaded it, and the grassy bank sloped down to the water's edge. I approached, I touched the water with my foot. I stepped in knee-deep, and not content with that, I laid my garments on the willows and went in. While I sported in the water, I heard an indistinct murmur coming up as out of the depths of the stream; and made haste to escape to the nearest bank. The voice said, "Why do you fly, Arethusa? I am Alpheus, the god of this stream." I ran, he pursued; he was not more swift than I, but he was stronger, and gained upon me, as my strength failed. At last, exhausted, I cried for help to Diana. 'Help me, goddess! Help your votary!' The goddess heard, and wrapped me suddenly in a thick cloud. The river god looked now this way and now that, and twice came close to me, but could not find me. 'Arethusa! Arethusa!' he cried. O, how I trembled,--like a lamb that hears the wolf growling outside the fold. A cold sweat came over me, my hair flowed down in streams; where my foot stood there was a pool. In short, in less time than it takes to tell it I became a fountain. But in this form Alpheus knew me, and attempted to mingle his stream with mine. Diana cleft the ground, and I, endeavoring to escape him, plunged into the cavern, and through the bowels of the earth came out here in Sicily."

TROIS MÉLODIES
BY
OLIVER MESSIAEN

1. POURQUOI?

Why the birds of the air?
Why the reflections in the water?
Why the clouds in the sky?
Why?
Why the autumn leaves?
Why the summer roses?
Why the songs of spring?
Why?
Why have they no charm for me?
Why, ah, Why?

2. LE SOURIRE

A certain word whispered by you is intimate and prolonged
as a kiss upon the soul

My mouth wants to smile
And my smile trembles.

3. LA FIANCÉE PERDUE

Tis the sweet fiancée,
Tis the angel of goodness,
Tis an afternoon sun drenched.

Tis the mind on the flowers,
Tis a smile pure as a baby's heart,

Tis a great lily white as a wing
high in a golden cup...

O Jesus, bless her!
Give her your grace

That she may escape suffering and tears.
Grant her peace, Jesus.

Stabbalåten (Stump Tune) Grieg

In olden times peasant weddings in Norway lasted for three or four days. Guests came from all over the countryside, the young folk were bedded on "flatsenger," a sort of sleeping bag, in barns and lofts. After an evening of revelry anything might happen in the intimacy of the darkness, and spies were posted to prowl about and report "developments." When a couple was identified, the young swain was made to sit the following morning on a chopping block (stabbe), holding his lady in his lap, whilst the rest of the company dance around them amidst cheers and jeers.

Danse de l'Esprit de Joie Messiaen
(From Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus)

Danse véhémence, ton ivre des cors, transport du Saint-Esprit....la joie d'amour du Dieu bienheureux dans l'âme de Jésus-Christ... J'ai toujours été frappé par ce fait que Dieu est heureux - et que cette joie ineffable et continue habitait l'âme du Christ. Joie qui est pour moi un transport, une ivresse dans le sens le plus fou du terme.

Forme: Danse orientale dans l'extrême grave, en neumes inégaux, comme du plain-chant. Premier développement sur "thème de joie." Agrandissement asymétrique. Sorte d'air de chasse en trois variations. Deuxième développement sur "thème de joie" et "thème de Dieu." Reprise de la danse orientale, extrême aigu et extrême grave ensemble. Coda sur "thème de joie." Olivier Messiaen