

Inside Music – Jonathan Berman

115'00-115'15 total prog duration

TOTAL MUSIC : 91.49 (4.23)

TOTAL SPEECH : 23.11 / 14 links – c.1.39 each link -

Total at home: **19.05"**

Hello and welcome to Inside Music. I'm Jonathan Berman, a conductor, and I'm lucky enough to have been asked to put together this program for you today. I am fascinated by the hidden or unexpected or surprising in music - sometimes funny, sometimes nuanced but always fascinating to explore. We will open with a sparkling piece by my great friend mentor and the most vociferous musical mind I've ever come across Olly Knussen. Flourish with Fireworks was written for Michael Tilson Thomas's first season as chief conductor with LSO and all of the musical material is created out of two three note cells formed from the initials MTT and LSO, a secret code hidden as it were in plain sight

0.48

Oliver Knussen's Flourish with Fireworks played by the inimitable London Sinfonietta conducted by the composer. The way Olly builds the music out of just two cells but varies and alters them is so playful, almost like a game. There's nothing new about musical games. Back in the mid 15th Century the Franco-Flemish composer Johannes Ockeghem wrote his *Missa Cuiusvis Toni* or Mass in any mode. Ockeghem wrote this mass in a way that you could sing the same sequence of notes in any mode (a mode is like a scale), so the same notes work whether you sing them in major, minor or combinations of the two! So we are going to hear the same piece twice now but in two different modes. I hope you will hear that by changing the mode the pieces is recognisable, yet different. Its like looking at the same object but under different coloured lights.

0.54

Ensemble Musica Nova was directed by Lucien Kandel in the Kyrie from Johannes Ockeghem's *Missa cuiusvis Toni* – a Mass designed for performance 'on whatever tone you choose'. We heard the Kyrie there in two keys – D and G.

Ockeghem's modal games, are hidden, are fascinating, but essentially external to the music. Others hidden elements are vital to understanding or realising the music. I was lucky enough before I conducted Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande* to spend time with the handwritten Manuscript. *Pelleas* is one of the most ravishing operas ever written and music I actively miss when not working on it. Debussy's tempo markings are a bit of a puzzle. However from the original manuscript you can see that it had been used by the conductors at the Opera Comique in Paris for all early performances. You can see that what had happened was after each performance Debussy had gone to the manuscript and corrected some tempos in reaction to the performance the night before. Suddenly, understanding when these markings had been, made them much clearer to understand.

We're going to hear one of the most sensuous scenes from the opera where Melisande lets her hair (which is wildly long) down the side of a tower to Pelleas who caresses it, kisses it and then ties her hair to a willow tree. The scene ends with the forbidding footsteps of Goloud (Melisande's husband) as he comes to tell Pelleas and Melisande off for being children! Ernest Ansetmet conducts here with such flexibility, but always with a clear sense of the bigger dramatic and musical structures.

1.37

We heard the glorious voices of Erna Spoorenberg as Melisande and Camille Maurane as Pelleas with L'orchestra de Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet in a 1964 recording of Act 3, scene 1 of Claude Debussy's Opera Pelleas et Melisande.

You're listening to Inside Music on BBC Radio 3 with me – conductor Jonathan Berman – on a journey this afternoon into some of the hidden aspects of music which fascinate me.

One of which is the relationship (in all music) between the surface sound world and the underlying layers of structure and meaning. But don't worry you don't have to be a musicologist to explore this. Our next two tracks have musical surfaces which disguise underlying meanings. In our first piece by Berndt Alois Zimmerman the whole piece is composed using only quotations, Zimmerman dislocate them from their original or surface meaning through collage to darkly comic effect.

At the other end of the scale Beethoven in the 2nd movement of his op 95 quartet creates a surface of simplicity and silence which has the effect of hiding and deepening our profound emotional reaction to the music.

From the fragility of the opening cello line which draws you to its cadence to the fugal passages where the surface simplicity of the lines draws out the power and pull of the dissonances Beethoven simplifies the surface seemingly giving us a direct route into the emotional content of his music - a trait which would define his late style.

Here in an extraordinarily sensitive account is the Barylli Quartet led by Walter Barylli the then concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic.

1.41

We heard the WDR Symphonie Orchestra Koln conducted by Peter Hirsch in *Le Cheval à Phynances et les larbins de Phynances* from Berndt Alois Zimmerman's *Musique pour les soupers de rois Abu*, and then in that mono recording from 1952, the Barylli Quartet with the 2nd movement of Beethoven's *String Quartet no. 11 in F minor, opus 95...*

With all of the hidden parts of music it's the performers task to try and bring them out, clarifying them audibly, whilst still of course keeping them connected and balanced with the structure of the whole work.

A hugely important expressive means for this is tempo and our next track, a rather well known song from 1971 demonstrates how powerful, but also almost unnoticeable (when done well) tempo flexibility is. If you Listen carefully you can hear how each section doesn't just have different orchestration but actually goes at a different tempo, sometimes subtly different, sometimes drastically. I especially love how sections with the same lyrics or musical gestures are never performed in the same way twice!

1.07

Don Maclean's American Pie. Don McLean – vocals and acoustic guitar, Paul Griffin – piano, David Spinozza – electric guitar, Bob Rothstein – bass and backing vocals, and Roy Markowitz – drums and tambourin, with the West Forty Fourth Street Rhythm and Noise Choir.

As the tempo changes in American Pie do, in this next duet from Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, Colin Davis expresses so much through a simple slowing down as two lovers come together after a quarrel. *La Clemenza di Tito* is, I feel, an hugely undervalued opera, for me that it has some of the most tender and subtle music Mozart wrote, where small gestures take on great depth.

Mozart writes the coming together of the two lovers into the very notes of the music. The structure of the duet is a repeated phrase which happens 4 times. The first 2 times this phrase is sung as solos - and just listen to the profound effect of the addition of a flute for the second solo. The third repetition they sing together, and at this point Colin Davis slows down slightly to highlight the journey back

towards reconciliation.

Moreover if you listen carefully, the bass line of the first three repetitions is slightly broken or fragmented. Its un-organic, there's an awkwardness to it. This awkwardness is there right up until the last repetition which is played by the orchestra alone (once the couple have made up) and here the bass line is completely continuous, organic and makes the music feel like an embrace, and so for me, acts as a hidden stage direction for the couple to embrace each other.

1.35

Ah Perdona al Primo Afeto from Act I of Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*. The Soprano was Lucia Popp, with mezzo Fredericka von Strade and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

For me personally, the Tempo flexibility demonstrated by Colin Davis is a hugely important means of expression - its like the way a great actor paces their words and sentences to bring out meaning. Perhaps the next piece can show you how important a tool it is for me as it is a recording I recently made with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. It is of the 1st Symphony of Franz Schmidt, a composer I adore and I think is very underrated. Schmidt takes so much care over the notes he writes the results are so organic - so continuous, and connected yet varied. We tried, with the wonderfully sensitive players of the BBC NOW to really bring out all Schmidt's nuances and let every note of the music speak using, among other things, a very flexible expressive approach to tempo.

1.14

The fourth movement of Franz Schmidt's Symphony no 1. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales was conducted in that recording by me Jonathan Berman your host today on BBC Radio 3's Inside music.

This is the first release in a cycle of Schmidt's symphonies which I am making with the BBC National Orchestra Part of a much bigger project "the Franz Schmidt Project" promoting his music worldwide leading to his 150th Birthday in 2024.

I should admit that I'm a sort of amateur audiophile! I love orchestras, and I love the sound they make, but it's really very hard to capture that sound on disc and for this recording I felt the sound world was incredibly important and so I was very actively involved in the recording process! Luckily we had a wonderful team who were willing to experiment with microphones, where to put them, where to put the players, even the acoustics of the hall.

And so it's with a healthy dose of self parody that I would

like to play “A song of Reproduction by Flanders and Swan”. But.....I’m not only playing it for humouristic value....just have a listen to the incredible synergy between the singer and the pianist, the astonishing amount of flexibility they have - almost every bar is in a different tempo - yet the continuity and narrative is so clear!

1.18

We heard Flanders and Swan with the Song of Reproduction and then proving there is nothing new about the narrative song style or even humour in music, we heard David Munrow's Early Music Consort of London in *El Grillo e buon cantore* by Josquin Desprez written in the late 1400's describing a cricket who's a good singer.

Music isn't only narrative when there are words or concrete stories to be told. The notes, and harmonies and gestures which make up music are chosen by composers to lead you on a journey through time, and as a performer you have many ways to guide the listener through this journey.

Whilst big concepts and large artistic gestures can be very important its often through tiny inflections that you can say the most as a performer, particularly when you have repetitions of the same music or gestures which you can vary with nuance and subtlety, the way great shakespearean actors can imbue the same words with multiple meanings.

I have learnt so much about performance listening to great pianists, in particular the way they inflect very small details

and possibly the master of this is Wilhelm Kempff. Here he is playing a piece probably everybody has heard, but just listen to the way he articulates every single gesture differently which allows him to tell a much more nuanced sensitive musical story than is often portrayed by this piece.

1.25

Wilhelm Kempff was the pianist in Beethoven's Bagatelle in A minor – better known by the title written on the – now lost – autographed manuscript For Elise on April 27 in memory by L. v. Bthvn".

I have learnt so much from listening to pianists like Wilhem kempff, but it will come as no surprise (as I am a conductor) that my true love is the orchestra. An Orchestra is an amazing organism, both in the way it functions and the way it sounds. For me there is no experience like hearing a great orchestra live in a great hall!

The variety of colours or sound, modes of expression, personalities, all coming together through listening to form a sound world that is miraculous as it is both rich and transparent at the same time!

The most wonderful thing is that orchestras aren't just a western phenomenon. There are large organised groups of musicians all over the world which have the same miraculous effect, from Chinese Traditional orchestras, to

Japanese Gagaku orchestras, Folk Madalin orchestras, Balalaika orchestras or Balinese and Javanese Gamalen Orchestras which we will hear in our next two tracks. The first is a field recording taken by David Attenborough of a Balinese Gamalan Orchestra (Attenborough's fascination in folk music was inspired by a radio 3 show by Alan Lomax in the 50's after which Attenborough would take recording equipment - huge tape recorders in those days on all his trips around the world).

The second is a concerto for two pianos by Colin Mcphee who lived on Bali for 7 years in the 1930s and along with writing the seminal book on music in Bali he inspired the islanders to reconnect with some of their older traditions and learn from their oldest masters still alive in the 30's. This pieces has pulsating energy and drive created through repeating cells and sudden gear changes inspired by Gamalan music.

1.50

Ostinatos – the first movement of Colin McPhee’s Tabuh-Tabuhan. The Eastman Rochester Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Howard Hanson in that fabulous Mercury Living Presence recording, made using only three microphones!!!

Strong rhythmic drive as we’ve just heard can be hugely expressive and often very visceral.

Equally powerful, although it needs a different attitude in listening, is the constant expressive colouring that can be heard in a melodic line. Next up is the Hungarian Violinist Joseph Szigeti playing a very simple but beautiful piece by Handel.

Just listen to how his sound is constantly evolving, and colouring the line. Within each single note he makes a multitude of colours - not just one.

You may have noticed that I love performers who play and express repetitions differently. Szigeti here makes a stunning

colour change between the opening phrase, and exactly the same phrase when it comes back two thirds of the way through the piece creating through his performance an emotional journey for us listeners.

1.03

The opening Andante from Handel's Violin Sonata in D major, HWV 371 was performed there by Joseph Szigeti and Carlo Bussotti.

You're listening to Inside Music on BBC Radio 3 with me – conductor Jonathan Berman – taking you through a few of the things I listen for in music and performance.

Its not only in the very small scale inflections where performers can be expressive, but also in the way they build and shape much larger structures through connection and separation. The most distilled example of this for conductors is music by Anton Bruckner.

One of my very first cancellations 18 months ago was a concert including Bruckner's 3rd symphony, and I'd like to play you the 2nd moment now simply because I think its a movement full of humanity and optimism and one of the most perfectly structured movements ever (the whole harmonic structure, and emotional structure is like a

telescope in that all the material is contained within just the first 8 bar).

I'm going to play the performance by Stanislav Skrowaczewski who was a mentor to me before he passed away a few years ago. Its funny though listening back to recordings you know very well. I studied the 3rd Symphony with Skrowaczewski, as well as watching him rehearse and perform it, and I believed that I performed the piece very much in his style. However listening back to the recording now, I hear that over the past years I have really formed my own performance of this piece, very similar in approach to Skrowaczewski, but actually quite different in results! But for now let me play you the masters' interpretation.

Stanislav Skrowaczewski conducting the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra in the 2nd movement of Bruckner's 3rd Symphony.

1.39

In the second movement of Anton Bruckner's 3rd

Symphony we heard the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. I've always been fascinated by the evolution of music and which music has been influential during which eras. Bruckner for instance, has not been as influential on modern-day compositions as some of his contemporaries have.

The 20th and 21st Century has been a web, influences, ideologies and fashions all intertwining. For instance the Gamelan orchestral sound world we heard earlier influenced Debussy, Satie, Mcphee, Britten, Boulez, Messiaen, Bartok and others - each drawing their own inspiration from either the rhythmic tension, the layering of polyrhythms, the percussive sound world, the repetitions, very quick gear changes, or even the tuning. Harry Partch the American composer was also influenced by the Gamelan sound world, mixing it with a dose of his unique quirky humour to create a surreal world. Notice though that even though his music (particular the second movement that I'm

about to play) is based on repetitive patterns which slow down - he never writes exactly the same pattern. employing, as a composer, the idea that nothing is ever exactly the same - however similar it may appear, which has in some ways been a theme of this show today....

1.19

That was Harry Partch's Ring around the moon, phases 3 and 4. It was played by the Gate 5 Ensemble, including the composer and was conducted by Horace Schwartz

You've been listening to me – the conductor Jonathan Berman – on Inside Music and I'm sad to say that we are coming to the end of the program today but I hope you've enjoyed listening to it as much as I have enjoyed putting it together for you.

Music can express so much and we have not even scratch the surface today, but I hope perhaps I've inspired you to listen more actively, explore into the music, under it, around it and if you can excuse the pun, inside music a little more. It doesn't need any more knowledge or study, just a willingness to search with your ears for as much as you can find in the music!

One of the facets of music which is often overlooked and I've tried to touch on today is the use of humour. Often through text, but also humour within the very notes written.

So to finish the program today I'd like to play the very end of Verdi's Falstaff which is one of the most breathtaking operatic fugues. It is constructed with such rigour, complexity and seriousness that it's very construction becomes a joke as the whole chorus and all the soloist tell us through reams of Italian counterpoint that: to quote

All the world's a prank,

and man is born a clown. Within his addled head
his brains are in a churn.

We all are fools! And every man laughs at the others' folly.

But he laughs best who has
the last laugh.

1.33