

## UCL Chamber Music Club



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## In this issue:

'Music should belong to everyone' – a homage on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Zoltán Kodály's death - page 2

Meet the committee – Amélie Saintonge - page 7

Club's members present Sibelius's Sonatina in E and a trio sonata by J.S. Bach - page 10

Some thoughts on editions - page 10

Gustave Charpentier's opera *Louise*: a footnote - page 17

Text and translations - page 21

## Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to the eighth issue of the Chamber Music Club Newsletter. We hope it will provide some worthwhile summer reading, whether you're up a mountain, on a river, in a forest, on a beach, or just sipping something relaxing at a café table (or any combination of the above). As usual we offer a variety of content, some, though not all, directly connected with the CMC's activities. An article on the musical and educational legacy of Zoltán Kodály complements the concert which we presented in February in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian composer's death. An account of an event at Sheffield University concerning texts and translations, with a particular focus on German song, is thought-provoking. An interesting aspect of the late-Romantic operatic repertoire, and its broader cultural and historical context, is explored. Having written at some length in the last issue about notation, I now offer at even greater length some thoughts about editions of music. The latest in our 'meet the committee' series features an informative interview with Amélie Saintonge, whom many of you will have heard in our concerts as a versatile singer, in repertoire as varied as 'Anon, sixteenth century', Cole Porter, Ravel, and most recently Pergolesi.

As always, please feel free to offer contributions to the Newsletter – especially if you haven't written for us before. It doesn't have to be a full-length article: reviews of concerts and books, for example, are very welcome, as are letters to the editor and other short items. If, however, you are thinking of submitting something substantial it would be useful to send us your proposal first. The ninth issue is scheduled for autumn 2017. The editors are: Dace Ruklisa (dd.rr.tt@btinternet.com), Helene Albrecht (helene.albrecht@gmx.net), Jill House (j.house@ucl.ac.uk) and me (rabeemus@gmail.com); we'll be very pleased to hear from you.

Once again, thanks are due to Dace, Helene and Jill for their work in producing this issue. We hope you enjoy reading it.

*Roger Beeson, Deputy Chair, UCL CMC*

## ‘Music should belong to everyone’ – a homage on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Zoltán Kodály’s death

On 6 March 1967 the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály died in Budapest aged 85, after an accomplished life as ethnomusicologist, composer and educator. While across the globe musicians celebrate his fiftieth anniversary in countless concerts, conferences and memoranda, UCL Chamber Music Club has dedicated one of its events to the master, where club members presented movements from his chamber music and some of his pedagogical work. Kodály’s music on this occasion was very well received; the audience, relatively uninformed about his work, appreciated the breadth and particularities of Kodály’s musical language and expressed willingness to hear and to learn more about this universally thinking personality and unique representative of music in the twentieth century.

As Kodály’s approach to music grew out of a societal necessity that has surprising parallels with contemporary concerns, and as this artist’s original response remains highly relevant in new circumstances this short review of Kodály’s life and achievements seeks to stimulate interest in his contributions and the underlying philosophy. In this context his unorthodox move from a career as internationally renowned composer to the setting up of music education in kindergartens was remarkable as was the role British influences have played in this development.

### PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND BEGINNING OF KODÁLY’S MUSICAL CAREER AS COMPOSER AND PEDAGOGUE

From numerous essays, biographies and prefaces to his works we can discern that Kodály enjoyed a privileged childhood and adolescence in rural Hungary; privileged not only as a bright student of a highly regarded grammar school and the son of passionate amateur musicians, but also as a member of an ethnically diversified community, surrounded by ancient traditions of gypsy music, *verbunkos*, and folk songs of his Czech, Slovakian, German and Hungarian school mates. Kodály’s own music education which consisted of violin, piano and cello playing was further enhanced through exposure to the tradition of church music at the cathedral of Nagyszombat in western Slovakia, where he encountered Gregorian chant, motets by Palestrina and major sacred works by Haydn, Beethoven and Liszt among others. It was already there that Kodály still in his school years realised the lack of a unified musical language originating in his own country. While studying much-appreciated works such as Beethoven’s Mass in C, Liszt’s *Missa of Esztergom* and Bach’s *Well-Tempered Keyboard*, the desire to create something new and profoundly national grew as he recalled from his days spent at the cathedral:

‘I vividly remember one day [...] picking up a broken instrument that had been left [...] For me that broken bassoon became a symbol of how, if musical culture was to be recreated in Hungary, one would have to build it from fragments of the past.’ (Eösze, p.13)

Kodály’s concerns about the lack of awareness of Hungarian cultural heritage and national identity were confirmed in 1900 when he moved to Budapest in order to enrol for university courses in German and Hungarian Language and Literature. Simultaneously he entered a four-year course in composition at the Academy of Music where he was taught by the German Professor János Koessler, who also counted Béla Bartók, Ernest von Dohnányi and Leó Weiner among his students. Concert halls and the Music Academy were dominated by German musicians and teachers with the result that an urban elite, knowledgeable in German language and with affinity to German culture, uncritically consumed conventional interpretations of the works of German composers, from Haydn to Liszt and Brahms, without reflecting on new cultural developments that would address contemporary societal concerns. Foremost amongst these was the growing divide between Hungary’s rural and urban populations. From a pedagogical point of view, but also from his perspective as an ambitious young artist, Kodály sought to address the mismatch, being aware that ‘the works of art that exert the most powerful influence throughout the world as a whole, are those that express most fully the national characteristics of the artist.’ (Eösze, p.88) Finding a like-minded companion in Béla Bartók, both men launched extensive research into centuries-old Hungarian folk music that was still alive in remote villages across the country. Simultaneously, they found inspiration in the work of Claude Debussy, who, by integrating pentatonic and church modes in his musical language, also sought to escape perceived outdated German tradition. Through an amalgamation of these two inputs, the latter clearly audible in his *Méditation sur un motif de Claude Debussy*, Op.7, for piano solo, Kodály started to increasingly incorporate folkloristic material into his chamber music, for example in his Sonata for Cello Solo, Op.8 from 1915, on which Bartók six years later commented: ‘No other composer has written music that is at all similar to this type of work. [...] Here Kodály is expressing, with the simplest technical means, ideas that are entirely original.’ (Eösze, p.109) Kodály’s commitment to national identity as a source for artistic inspiration found expression not only in his chamber music which comprises string quartets, songs, piano works, and solo works, duos and trios for strings, organ and piano. With symphonic works such as *Dances of Galanta* and *Variations on a Hungarian Folk Song*, the opera *Háry János* and the choral work *Psalmus Hungaricus* he created more and more identifiers for cultural self-awareness and self-identification of the historically tattered Hungarian nation.

On these grounds involvement with the educational sector was clearly desirable, albeit not without hurdles. Following their research on folk music (Kodály

had completed his PhD thesis in 1905 on 'The strophic structure of Hungarian folk-songs'), and having attained membership of Europe's most celebrated avant-garde, he and Bartók obtained high positions within the Hungarian educational sector. In 1920 Kodály became Deputy Director of the National Academy of Music under the leadership of Ernő Dohnányi, and Bartók became an appointed member of the Music Council. However, from the start Kodály's position was not safe in times when 'all departments of Hungarian life were disrupted under the shadows of political intrigue and individual plan-seeking.' (Young, p.61) Hungary had separated from Austria in 1918, becoming for a few months in 1919 the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and in the process had lost considerable territories with their Hungarian population to neighbouring countries. In the subsequent period of reaction, Kodály was accused before a commission of enquiry of a number of offences, for instance permitting the *Internationale* to be orchestrated and allowing teachers to participate in strike actions, and downgraded from his post for a time.

Above all there was the suspicion that Kodály would apply any measures only with the purpose of promoting his own compositional work. Kodály defended himself by stating: 'I have never meddled in everyday politics. But figuratively speaking, every bar of folk tune I have recorded has been a political act.' (Young, p.64) It would take another twenty years and the experience of a second world war before his emerging new approach to music education would come into full blossom.

#### TEACHING FROM THE BOTTOM UP: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KODÁLY METHOD

'The greatest deficiency in our culture is that it is built from above. When, after centuries of constraint in national life, freedom was achieved in this respect as well, we wanted to make up too hastily for what we had lost. There are no leaps in nature. Culture is the result of slow growth. To accelerate it, to change the order of evolution is impossible'; so said Kodály in a lecture *Music in the Kindergarten* in 1940. (Kodály, p.127) Accordingly he started with the youngest in society and envisaged a long term strategy for the creation of holistic and sustainable regeneration processes for his nation by means of music education. However, within his first step in a threefold career as pedagogue was the training of music teachers who would 'instil a thirst for finer music' through systematic instruction in singing and solfege. He claimed that 'music must not be approached from its intellectual, rational side, nor should it be conveyed to the child as a system of algebraic symbols [...] the way should be paved for direct intuition', in a paper 'Children's Choirs' from 1929. (Kodály, p.119) Crucially, Kodály himself must have applied extraordinary teaching methods to his own students, allowing them 'to grow from their own roots', or in the words of the composer Mátyás Seiber: 'He [had] that curiously compulsive and suggestive power of drawing out from his pupils all their

latent ability.' (Eösze, p.68)

There have been several encounters with British music traditions that decisively inspired Kodály. In 1929 he attended the Proms and the Three Choirs Festival, where his works were presented alongside compositions by Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Not only did he straight away import the idea of major choir festivals to his home country which, once realised, inspired a wave of publications of new Hungarian choral works, but he also drew inspiration from the role of music in British school education, as he reported in 1929: 'The curriculum and instructions for British schools declare on the role of music in education: "By now the value of music in school life is so well recognised that it is superfluous to dwell at length upon it." What a long way we are from this!' (Kodály, p.130) He hoped to achieve a similar outcome for his home country, and from 1937 onward embarked on the comprehensive provision of suitable teaching materials for schools, including the four-volume *Bicinia Hungarica*, the *Songs for Schools*, and choral exercises under the title *Let us sing correctly*.

In this context research by the independent music teacher Celia Waterhouse reveals a surprising link to Kodály's appreciation of the British music educational system. According to Waterhouse the English amateur pianist and music teacher Sarah Glover, working in the early nineteenth century, developed the first methodological approach that would unlock people's inherent musicality, in particular in children. After observing the incapacity of parishioners to sing the psalmody in tune Glover replaced stave notation with sol-fa notation, created a system for a transition between both methods, and supplemented these measures by her own rhythm notation that consisted of careful spacing of notes. Her systematic studies of children's learning behaviour led to a broader concept for music education in schools, where she progressively familiarised pupils with simple harmonies before teaching them canons, so that part-singing could start at a very early stage. Sarah Glover's methodology was later taken up by Reverend John Curwen (1816-1880), who modified and refined her methods. In this capacity Curwen can be seen as a founder of music education in British schools, and accordingly was indirectly honoured by Kodály in a preface to the first publication of his *Choral Method* in 1962: 'In the course of a number of visits to England since 1927 I observed the highly developed singing in schools. To this I am indebted for much stimulation, which helped me gradually to complete my work for children. I am now very pleased to return to the English what I learned from them, and was able to adapt to our needs in Hungary.'

A quotation from Sarah Glover demonstrates her closeness to Kodály method: 'In teaching children music, I think it best to instruct them on the same principle as they are taught speech; that is by deducing theory from practice rather than practice from theory.'

## CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS OF THE KODÁLY METHOD

However topical a restoration of national pride and consciousness might be in our time, its recovery by means of music seems to belong to history for many reasons. Globalisation has turned us into global citizens who, digitally connected, explore new ways to engage with music and often tend to favour visual arts for the shaping of societal discourse. Music again has to fight hard in order to preserve its mind-shaping place in education; see for instance the recent publication from BBC Education entitled 'Music could face extinction in secondary schools'. (BBC News, March 2017) However, academics and music practitioners identify several key areas that benefit from an application of the Kodály method. A recent publication from the United States attributes to it 'an initiation of primary school children into the many aspects of music, including performing, critical thinking, listening, creativity, and becoming stewards of their national heritage'. (Houlohan and Tacka, p.2) The method has become commonplace for many instrumental teachers and 'early years' pedagogues as it facilitates access to any instrument through its holistic strategies. It is also able to address learning difficulties and physical and mental problems as academic research from across the globe demonstrates (see for instance Chiengchana and Trakarnrung, 2014). One of the method's essential principles, deep learning in three steps from the *unconscious* to the *conscious* and through *re-inforcing* has been explored in pedagogical works by David Vinden, former music director of the Purcell School, now lecturer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama; it also informs *Colourstrings*, a worldwide network of music schools and conservatoires originally set up in Finland by the Hungarian brothers Geza and Czaba Szilvay, which also operates in the UK and in Ireland. By building on the singing voice as point of origin and starting from its simplest element, the interval of the minor third that is common to all human beings, fresh applications of Kodály's concept to cultures outside the Western classical tradition have now been fully explored. According to my own experience all those who have had the chance to deeply engage with Kodály's musical work and teaching method have found their universal reach irresistible.

*Helene Albrecht*

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## Meet the committee – Amélie Saintonge

Helene Albrecht: *Amélie, you have been so kind as to offer us your time for this interview in the busiest period of the year, right in the middle of marking exam papers. Let's start from the very beginning: how did you learn about UCL Chamber Music Club and what provoked your interest in becoming a member and shortly after also a committee member?*

Amélie Saintonge: I came to UCL in 2013. After ten years of living short-term in different places, I was looking for opportunities to seriously return back to singing. Subsequently the first project I got involved with was a concert by the CMC chamber choir.

HA: *At UCL you are holding a position as lecturer in the Physics and Astronomy Department: tell us about stages of your previous journeys. I know that you grew up in Canada...*

AS: That's right; I was born in Montreal and did a degree in Physics and Mathematics over there. I then moved to the US for five years for a PhD in Astrophysics at Cornell University. Later I moved to Switzerland for two years working at the University of Zurich, and after that to Munich for another four years which I spent at the Max Planck Institute.

HA: *Sounds like an interesting and fulfilling career path! I wonder how music fitted in during these busy years! When did you actually start any musical activities?*

AS: I started as a young child with piano lessons, being quite the average student who enjoys playing without any particular ambitions. Aged six I started singing in children's choirs which then turned into something more specific when I took private singing lessons at the age of fifteen. While building up my singing technique there have been recommendations to go for a professional career and at times it was very hard for me to decide between physics and music!

HA: *Were you able to continue with singing while doing your physics degree at Montreal?*

AS: Oh, yes; my time as an undergraduate student in Montreal turned out to

be my busiest time in life. I had the opportunity to join a chamber music choir led by young Yannick Nézet-Séguin, now a world class conductor. Besides I got plenty of gigs and really enjoyed the opportunities to run to the church between two lectures to sing at service for some easily earned money! During that time I was also conducting the mixed children's choir at the Montreal Cathedral where we sang services every Sunday in addition to putting on concerts.

HA: *Did you develop particular preferences in terms of musical style during this time? What kind of music did you perform both as soloist and as conductor?*

AS: There was clearly a focus on Baroque music: Monteverdi, Bach and Handel. But of course, my vocal training did also involve opera and German Lied. However, music had to take a second seat when I went to Cornell University and dedicated far more time to science.

HA: *When you became CMC committee member in 2014 one of your very own projects became the organisation of a very successful programme dedicated to music for voice, instrument(s) and piano. How did you approach this theme?*

AS: I started doing some research on pieces that would involve a range of instruments, not just piano. I wanted to highlight how by mixing voice with different instruments, composers could emphasise certain qualities of the voice. I made some very interesting discoveries, for instance Maurice Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* for voice, flute, cello and piano was a favourite.

HA: *Can you recall any other concerts that left deeper impressions?*

AS: I very much like the way the Chamber Music Club organises its concerts and the opportunities musicians get from there, including myself. I remember well a Shakespeare-themed concert organised by Roger Beeson, an eclectic mix of pieces ranging from Shakespeare's contemporaries to modern music. I always enjoy the Christmas concerts, where we get our best and most enthusiastic audiences, and overall I enjoy meeting people doing all kinds of jobs from the wider UCL community on such occasions. It is also nice to unexpectedly meet scientists from your own department while doing music.

HA: *On this note: in my capacity as the CMC's membership secretary I identified that the largest number of members from one department are those from Physics and Astronomy. I was recently fascinated by a publication from MIT under the title 'Music and the Making of Modern Science'. The author suggested that advances in physics, in particular in maths and cosmology, have often been anticipated in music throughout the centuries. Would you agree that there is such a link between sciences and music?*

AS: I agree that there are many scientists who are also musicians at a high level. Interestingly, my mum who is a university professor for education and specialises in maths for young children has identified key predictors for excellent performances in maths. These are a child's capabilities to touch things and to play and to deal with materials. In other words, all those capabilities matter that chil-



dren acquire when they learn an instrument. This might also relate to a scientist's disposition to experiments and exploration.

HA: *In this context it might be conclusive that you mentioned Bach and Brahms as your favourite composers. For me, there is something very elemental to their music, for example the organisation of time and measurement in Brahms's music. On this note: we have not heard much about your scientific background. What is your area of expertise within astrophysics?*

AS: I study the formation and evolution of galaxies. In particular, I observe their dust and gas contents, and use that as a tool to understand when, where and how the formation of new stars is possible in galaxies. I very much enjoy all sorts of different aspects of my job: working with students, collaborating with scientists, in particular in China, Canada, Germany and Australia, and of course travelling to all sorts of exciting places for conferences and experiments at the telescopes.

HA: *Coming back to children: you are a mother of two. Do you care about music education of your children?*

AS: Oh yes, I do! My son, twelve years old, started playing the violin aged three and has advanced to Grade 6 UK standard by now. I loved the German violin training he experienced: a private teacher who ran a small music school and used his own individual approach to enable very young children to play in a string orchestra from the age about six to seven, something I would find elsewhere for much older children only.

HA: *Finally, I guess you also have a musical life outside UCL. Are you visiting London's manifold concert venues or do you participate in any other musical activities?*

AS: I pick and choose from the offer of concerts and recitals down to my whims. I am very much of a 'casual musician': I do not have a very deep knowledge about music history, I start from things I enjoy and explore from there.

Apart from this I am member of a chamber music choir called 'Chantage'. We are a small ensemble; very busy singers who meet for weekly rehearsals at a high level and in turn organise and manage project-based concerts. We have just finished the recording of music by Swedish composer Marten Jansson. One of our most remarkable concerts and one of my first activities here in London was the performance of *Meld* by Benedict Mason as part of the Proms 2014; a completely insane piece that combined the qualities of architecture and spaces with sound. The piece has been composed for the Royal Albert Hall specifically, and we singers, amongst 144 musicians, were asked at all times to move through the space along very carefully planned and choreographed itineraries while performing. Crazy!

HA: *Thank you very much, Amélie, for this inspiring chat! We look very much forward to hearing you in future concerts and to sharing some more of your enthusiasm for vocal music.*

## Club's members present Sibelius's Sonatina in E and a trio sonata by J.S. Bach

Chamber Music Club members Bronwen Evans (violin) and Roger Beeson (piano) will be taking part with other musicians in a charity concert on Saturday 24th June at 3pm. They will perform Sibelius's Sonatina in E, Op.80, and together with flautist Lesley Murray will play a trio sonata by J.S. Bach and two arrangements by Roger of American popular songs (Hoagy Carmichael's 'Skylark' and 'Stardust'). Other items in the programme include flute pieces by Satie and others, a viola sonata by Hummel, and organ music by Bach and Franck.

The venue is Putney Methodist Church, Upper Richmond Road/Gwendolen Avenue, Putney, London SW15 6SN. (This is just a short walk from Putney rail station, or a slightly longer one from East Putney underground.) Admission to the concert is free, and includes tea and homemade cake (highly recommended!), but donations are welcome. For more information about the concert, contact Bronwen ([bronwen.evans@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:bronwen.evans@ucl.ac.uk)) or Roger ([rabeemus@gmail.com](mailto:rabeemus@gmail.com)).

## Some thoughts on editions

'What edition should I choose?' This question should be asked by any serious performer, amateur or professional, approaching a piece of music. These days the frequent answer might be 'See what I can find on the internet and hope for the best.' By all means use the internet – we all do – but bear in mind that what you will find there is essentially arbitrary, dependent upon what someone has seen fit to upload. Going online may be more convenient than rummaging around in a library or a music shop (and cheaper than actually making a purchase), but it is not more reliable. The questions to ask about an edition of music are the same whether you're getting it from a screen or a shelf. And a fundamental question is: what relation does this version have to what the composer wrote?

### IS THERE AN *URTEXT*?

Editors have been fond, in recent decades, of advertising their products as '*Urtext* editions', in rather the same way that record companies until recently used – or misused – the notion of 'authentic' performance. What might 'original text' – *Urtext* – mean? Given that composition is a process which might go through a number of stages, from rough sketches to a final version ready for the publisher, it is likely to mean what the composer *finally*, rather than in a literal sense *originally* wrote. Or perhaps an edition which is known to have been approved – proof-read? revised? – by the composer? But there is much music – including

standard repertoire – of which we do not have a *composer's* original version in any of these senses: for example, there are four eighteenth-century manuscripts of J.S. Bach's Suites for solo cello, but none of them is in Bach's own hand. (This has not prevented publishers from attaching '*Urtext*' to their editions.) Indeed, for anything prior to the late sixteenth century, the likelihood of a 'composer's original' being in existence can be ruled out. *Urtext* can therefore best be thought of as implying original *source*. The concept has negative as much as positive connotations – it suggests a lack of editorial additions, and arose from a laudable desire to do away with the accretions (phrasing, articulation, dynamics etc.) which were a feature of so many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editions of older music. The establishment of musicology as a scholarly discipline in the nineteenth century, and the associated publication of collected editions of composers' works, gave an impetus to the idea of returning to the original sources, insofar as they existed.

#### 'EARLY' MUSIC AND MODERN EDITIONS

The further we go back in musical history, the further a modern edition, even a good, source-based one, is likely to be from an 'original' text; and the more distant a present-day performer's experience is likely to be from that of a (notional) 'original' performer. The scholar Margaret Bent has written, in relation to mediaeval and Renaissance music: 'The original notation is the only *Urtext*' ('Editing Early Music', p.227). Consider, for example, polyphonic vocal music of the period c. 1400-1600, as it appears in sources of the time. Here are two immediately obvious features. (i) The music would appear in 'choirbook' format, or, with the advent of music printing in the sixteenth century, in part-books. (For choirbook, imagine an open book; in a work for four voice-parts, one part will appear in the upper area of the left-hand page, another in the lower area, and the other two parts similarly on the right-hand page. In part-books, the different parts are literally on separate sheets.) (ii) There would be no bar-lines. Add to these the frequent lack of precise text underlay in the original source; the absence, at times, of expected accidentals; the use of 'ligatures' (single signs representing two or more consecutive notes) – frequent in the earlier part of the period; occasional use of verbal 'canons', sometimes cryptic, to indicate how a part should be realised; and the predominance of note-values which may look slow to us but are not. Clearly the modern editor has rather a lot of work to do to convert the 'original text' to a version which is usable by the generality of today's performers, or even to a version intended for scholarly study. The music will be presented in the format of a score, i.e. with the parts vertically aligned. Bar-lines of some sort will be added – though scholarly editions sometimes place these *between*, rather than *on*, the staves (a device called *Mensurstrich*), which allows the often free-flowing rhythmic character of the original to remain clear. Editorial addition, or repetition, of text beneath the notes

can be shown by the use of brackets or italics; and accidentals suggested by the editor can be added above the notes. Ligatures need to be notated as single notes: square brackets above groups of notes are customarily used to indicate the original ligatures. The meaning of a verbal 'canon' has to be determined, and applied to the modern notation – for example, in Dufay's *Missa Se la face ay pale*, from the mid fifteenth century, the phrase '*tenor crescit in duplo*' occurs a number of times, conveying that the tenor part at these points should be sung twice as slowly as notated; a modern edition must adjust the notation accordingly. It is also customary to reduce note-values to a half, or even a quarter, of the original length. There is also the question of pitch: bearing in mind that pitch, for the mediaeval and Renaissance musician, was not a matter of specific, absolute frequency, and taking account of the practical needs of present-day mixed vocal ensembles, an editor may find it desirable to transpose the original if it appears to be notated rather high or low. Good editorial practice will include an '*incipit*' at the beginning of the score: this shows the original clefs, and at least the first note of each part at the original pitch and the original note-value.

#### THE BAROQUE

In some respects the music of the Baroque era presents fewer problems, but two issues of interest can be mentioned. The first concerns key-signatures. It was in the Baroque period that the system of keys and key relationships that was to hold sway for 200 years became established. However, theory did not always keep up with practice, and neither did notation. The system of key-signatures that we know was still, as it were, settling down. So it is not uncommon to find that in early sources some key-signatures seem to be at variance with the actual key of the work; in particular, that they lack one flat or one sharp. (These are sometimes called modal signatures, since they ultimately derive from the old modal system.) A case in point is Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* (performed at a CMC concert on 19 May). The work begins and ends in F minor, which nowadays requires a key-signature of four flats. Among the various versions which can be found online are a manuscript and a French printed edition, both dating from the 1740s. In both of these the F minor movements have a key-signature of *three* flats; when a D flat is required, it is inserted before the note. Furthermore, some, but not all, of the movements in C minor and G minor have key-signatures of, respectively, two flats and one flat in the manuscript (with the 'extra' flats inserted into the music where necessary); but in the printed edition these have the modern signatures of three and two flats. This shows how far the earlier eighteenth century was indeed a period of transition in formalising the modern system of key-signatures. What is a modern editor to do? From the performer's point of view it doesn't perhaps matter too much what the key-signature is as long as it's clear what notes are to be played and sung; and certainly in older twentieth-century editions it was common to ap-

ply modern signatures in Baroque works whose original sources used the 'modal' style. Recently editors have tended to preserve the original signatures, even in 'performing' editions, as part of the general tendency to respect the sources.

A more important matter in Baroque music, from the performer's point of view, is the continuo. Much of this repertoire contains an accompanying part which originally consisted of a bass line (the *basso continuo*), often but not always with numbers above or below – i.e. a 'figured bass' – and the expectation was that the keyboard player would fill this out by adding chords (as indicated by the figures, where these existed). Learning to 'realise' a continuo in this way was a normal part of a keyboardist's training. Modern performing editions generally include an editorial realisation. What is essential is that the editor should make clear that this *is* a realisation – one possibility among others; a favoured way of doing this is to use a smaller typeface for the realisation (the upper stave of the keyboard part). The figures should also be included below the bass. It is vital that a continuo realisation should be distinguished from an *obbligato* keyboard part, such as J.S. Bach provided for some of his sonatas (the accompanied violin sonatas, gamba sonatas and three of the flute sonatas); in these cases the keyboard part is fully composed and is, as the term suggests, obligatory. It is equally important that keyboard players themselves should be aware of the difference!

#### WRONG OR RIGHT NOTES?

Mistakes can be made in preparing a musical score or parts, by the composer, the copyist or the type-setter. Many mistakes are obvious, but not all. Two intriguing examples from the nineteenth century involve possible mistakes of omission. In the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op.106 (the 'Hammerklavier') there occurs what has been called 'perhaps the single most disputed note in all of Beethoven's music' (Eric Wen, 'A Sharp Practice?', p.144). The lead-up to the recapitulation has a key-signature of five sharps, with a return to a two-flat signature at the recapitulation (bar 227). Bars 224-6 contain two-note figures of which the first note each time is A – which according to the signature is A sharp. It has been speculated, however, that Beethoven intended A natural, and that it is simply an oversight that a natural sign was not written. This is plausible – A natural makes good sense in terms of implied harmony – but by no means certain: A sharp is not out of the question, anticipating the B flat of the recapitulation. The second example, again involving accidentals, is in bar 3 of Chopin's C minor Prelude, Op.28 No.20. Is the last chord (fourth beat) of this bar major or minor? The second chord of the bar has an E natural at the top (the notated natural cancelling out the flat in the key-signature); the chord of C at the end of the bar again has E on top, and since the flat is not reinstated before this note the earlier natural presumably remains in force, and so the chord is C major. This is the case in Chopin's manuscript and in the earliest editions. However, in a copy belonging to Chopin's

Scottish pupil Jane Stirling, a flat has been written in before this E, apparently by Chopin, converting the chord to C minor, and this version appears in some subsequent editions. It is open to question, though, whether this really constitutes a *correction* on Chopin's part, or whether it simply offers an alternative possibility (given Chopin's tendency to permit variant versions of his music to circulate). Both versions of the chord 'work' in context, and which is more convincing perhaps depends on which one has been brought up with! In both the Beethoven and the Chopin examples, in the absence of really authoritative evidence, pianists tend to make their own choices. A good edition will allow for both possibilities, by inserting the uncertain accidental in brackets, and/or by means of an explanatory footnote (or endnote in an editorial commentary).

#### THE CASE OF CHOPIN

Frédéric Chopin is indeed an editorial minefield, and deserves a whole article to himself. The 'Chopin problem' – the existence of different versions of the same piece – is summarised by Jeffrey Kallberg: 'Often the same phrase might differ in all the surviving sources, which may include multiple autograph manuscripts, copyists' manuscripts, three first editions, later states of editions, and ... copies of these editions ... owned by pupils of Chopin and annotated by him in lessons' ('The Chopin "Problem"', p.215). The reference to first editions relates to the fact that Chopin habitually sent his works to French, English and German publishers, at more or less the same time, but the versions sent, and published, are not always identical. Kallberg gives as an example bars 53-55 of the Nocturne in B major, Op.62 No.1, for which we have the manuscripts of the French and German versions as well as the three printed first editions. The various sources show the extent to which Chopin varied and revised his ideas; most important, the German and English editions on the one hand, and the French on the other, differ in rhythmic, melodic and harmonic detail and in slurring (not only in the bars examined by Kallberg). What is an editor to do in this and similar cases? One possibility is to choose one version of the work as a 'copy text', while noting significant variants in footnotes or editorial commentary – but the choice of copy text may not always be obvious. The alternative is to put together a hybrid version, taking elements from different sources; it has the disadvantage of not corresponding to any specific version directly connected to the composer.

Another commentator on Op.62 No.1 has written: 'Clearly, Chopin could not make up his mind, leaving posterity with numerous authoritative versions that continue to spawn divergent editions of the work to this day' (Friedemann Salis, *Music Sketches*, p.157). If Chopin could not make up his mind, it may be questioned whether it is the job of an editor to make it up for him. One can go further: recent Chopin scholarship has tended to move away from the notion of a definitive version of a work, representing the composer's 'final inten-

tions'. Chopin's constant 'tinkering' with his pieces suggests a much more flexible attitude to the musical work. It is in this spirit that the Online Chopin Variorum Edition was set up. One of the 'key research questions' underlying this project is: 'What is a musical "work", and how is the "work concept" that has prevailed since the mid-nineteenth century challenged by the Chopin sources?' ([www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/about](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/about)). The site contains about 6000 digital images of 'individual pages of primary source material, comprising music text and other elements of manuscripts, first editions, and later impressions produced during Chopin's lifetime or after his death'. So, for example, it is possible to bring up nine sources of the Op.62 Nocturnes (two manuscripts, seven prints); and – this is especially useful – directly and instantly to compare different versions of a particular bar.

Chopin's use of slurs is of considerable interest, and variant readings are not uncommon in manuscripts and editions. An example is from the Scherzo No.2, Op.31. A lengthy melody (marked 'con anima') begins at bar 65. The editor of the old Warsaw Complete Works (the so-called 'Paderewski' edition) writes in the editorial commentary: 'The original version ties the section from bar 65 up to the beginning of bar 96 with one slur. Then, beginning the slur at the last crotchet of bar 96, it ends at bar 112. The only exceptions are the A.M. [manuscript] and the F.E. [French edition], which begin new slurs at bars 81, 88... The recent editions ... phrase this melody by beginning slurs at bars 73, 81 ... etc. We think that these phrases [*sic* – presumably meaning 'bars'] should be treated as up-beats, as marked in our edition (similarly to the A.M. and the F.E. in bar 88).' Notice that the editor (i) has nothing to say about the single long slur (bars 65-96) – indeed, it is not clear what this 'original version' is; (ii) *imposes* a view of where the slurs should be (by analogy with a similar but not identical place in A.M. and F.E.); and (iii) assumes that the role of the slur – which basically signifies legato playing – should be to reflect or clarify the phrase structure: an unjustifiable assumption. Admittedly, the situation regarding sources is complicated, but this approach can scarcely be considered good practice.

One final example of an editorial problem in Chopin's music concerns the first movement of the B flat minor Sonata, Op.35. This begins with four bars marked 'Grave', which lead into the main body of the movement, from bar 5, marked 'Doppio movimento' (i.e. at double speed: two bars of the Doppio movimento are the equivalent of one bar of the Grave). At the end of the exposition section (bars 103-104) there are first-time bars and a repeat mark. Where does the repeat start from? For a long time the assumption was that it should go from the Doppio movimento, bar 5, bars 1-4 being taken as a slow introduction of the kind familiar in many works of the Classical period; in accordance with this, various editions print double bar-lines and repeat marks between bars 4 and 5. There is, however, a contrary (and to my mind convincing) view, particularly urged by the pianist

and scholar Charles Rosen, that the repeat should be from the very beginning of the movement, i.e. should include the Grave bars. There are good musical reasons for this. The move from the dominant of D flat major (bars 103-104) straight to B flat minor (bar 5) is a quite unconvincing way to change key, whereas the resolution onto the octave D flats of bar 1 works well; furthermore, there is an interesting relationship between bars 101-104 and bars 3-4, which is only evident when these bars are brought into proximity. The manuscript and the first French edition do not have the repeat mark at bar 5, but the first German edition does – probably an intervention by the publishers. In the new Polish National Edition, the commentary states that the manuscript ‘separates these bars [i.e. bar 4 from bar 5] with a double bar, which GE [the first German edition] changes arbitrarily into a repeat sign. This error ... appears in the majority of later collected editions.’ (Abridged Source Commentary, p.17) One such is the ‘Paderewski’ edition, which gives the repeat sign at bar 5 with, remarkably, no indication in the commentary that there might be an alternative. Interestingly, two composers of the generation after Chopin seem to have been satisfied with a repeat from bar 1 rather than bar 5. Johannes Brahms, who in addition to his other musical accomplishments was an exemplary editor, was in charge of the relevant volume (c.1878) of the Breitkopf & Härtel collected edition of Chopin; the double bar-line between bars 4 and 5 is present in this version, but no repeat sign. Camille Saint-Saëns made an arrangement for two pianos of this sonata, published in 1907; again, there is no repeat sign at bar 5. Of course, many pianists avoid the issue by simply ignoring the exposition repeat; but for those who wish to include it, one might think that what was good enough for Brahms and Saint-Saëns should be good enough for them.

## CONCLUSION

So, to return to my original question: what edition to choose? The answer depends on who you are. The scholar may need the full information about sources that a ‘critical’ edition should provide. The performer needs less, and editorial markings for performance (fingerings, phrasing, dynamics, added accidentals in ‘early’ music, ornaments and rhythmic alteration in Baroque music) can be very useful, but it is important that they should be distinguished as being editorial – this can be done in various ways typographically. A good performing edition will show respect for the sources and provide sufficient information to enable the user to gauge the authoritativeness of its readings.

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## Gustave Charpentier's opera *Louise*: a footnote

The French composer Gustave Charpentier (1860-1956) is remembered mainly for his opera, *Louise*, and the heroine's aria, 'Depuis le jour'. His music owes much to Gounod, Massenet and Wagner, and he composed little before and after this story of a young Parisian working girl. But by 1900, as the American musicologists Jane Fulcher and Steven Huebner point out, his radical ideals involved him in French political life. This paper is a footnote to their views, and as Anglo-French relations were becoming important, an attempt to see Charpentier's *Louise* in a British context.

Charpentier's career as a composer was brief; *Louise*, completed by 1896 had its premiere in Paris in 1900. It is a conventional tale, similar to other late nineteenth-century operas about adventurous young girls, or, in some cases, women of easy virtue – Louise alone amongst the heroines lived to tell the tale. For example, in 1884 Jules Massenet (1842-1912) composed *Manon*, based on Abbé Prévost's popular eighteenth-century story about a girl who runs away for love. Kathleen Hoover tells us that by 1885, Massenet, Charpentier's tutor at the Paris Conservatoire, advised his pupil to find a nice girl and abandon music, for opera composers faced fierce competition. Italy's Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) became Verdi's successor in 1893 when he composed *Manon Lescaut* for Turin using Prévost's novel. He followed it with his 1896 opera *La bohème*, loosely based on Henri Murger's *Scenes of Bohemian Life*. Murger's work was also the source for another *La bohème*, by Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1858-1919), produced in Venice in 1897.

Italian opera composers were not the only rivals facing French composers. The war of 1870-1 had been a significant defeat for France, forced to cede Alsace and Lorraine in north-east France to the new German state. Charpentier from Lorraine was among the uprooted, and Paris became his home after 1870 when France had to rebuild national pride. The Third Republic looked to the Revolution of 1789 and the First Republic of 1792, when 'Marianne' first emerged to symbolise France, and represent the Republic's values of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. French operas about flighty young girls were not meant to lower Marianne's dignity, but revealed that French composers were torn between the influences of two great musicians and national heroes: Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) and Richard Wagner (1813-83). Verdi was identified with the Risorgimento, the unification of Italy; Wagner with the unification of Germany in 1871.

For Massenet the choice was simple politically and musically – he followed Verdi and in 1871 was a founder of the Société Nationale de Musique to promote French music. Wagner died in 1883 and in 1884 Massenet premiered his opera, *Manon*. The tale of another adventurous girl allowed Massenet to pay homage to Verdi, the first composer to 'liberate' opera by using a prostitute as the heroine of his 1853 *La traviata*, based on the 1848 novel by France's Alexandre Dumas fils, *La dame aux camélias*. But in the 1880s Wagner was an influence on French music and politics and there was discord among musicians in Paris; Gabriel Fauré, Massenet's successor as Professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, thought little of his work. Massenet resigned from this post in 1896 – some said because he was not made head of the Conservatoire with life tenure; and thereafter he composed independently and not always successfully.

By 1900 Puccini, now internationally famous, remained politically neutral; but Charpentier had radical views, and his *Louise* is the story of a young Parisian seamstress who leaves her respectable working class family to live with her lover. Charpentier met anarchists and was a friend of the novelist and journalist, Émile

Zola, famous for his attack on the establishment over the Dreyfus affair in the late 1890s. Zola's wife and mistress were both seamstresses, but critics agree that Charpentier's *Louise* is autobiographical; he never married and his first mistress and other women friends were called Louise. But for British historians of the 1880s and '90s the name recalls Queen Victoria's handsome daughter, Princess Louise. She was a well-known patron of the arts – a reason for Charpentier to use her name at a time of growing rapprochement between France and Britain.

Married in 1871 to the heir of the Duke of Argyll, Princess Louise and her husband were the talk of London for decades as they were childless and often lived apart. Louise was a patron of the expatriate American artist, James McNeill Whistler, as well known in Paris as in London. She was a moderately good art student who sculpted public statues of the Queen in the late 1890s, and despite continuing gossip became known for her liberal, almost feminist views, support for girls' schools and for losing an ear lobe, the result of an accident in Canada in 1880 when her earring was torn off. Gossip about 'Louise's ear' may have motivated Vincent van Gogh in 1888 to cut off his ear and present it to an upright working girl. In *La bohème* Puccini has Musetta sell her earrings to buy medicine for the dying Mimi.

Princess Louise was a patron of the British composer, Arthur Sullivan, who protected her by composing music that tempered the biting satire of his librettist, W. S. Gilbert, famed for his attack on the establishment. The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan delighted London in the 1880s, including their 1884 production, *Princess Ida*. But by 1885 in *The Mikado* Gilbert's 'three little maids from school' were a world apart from the heroines of 'serious' Wagnerian operas. Sullivan rebelled and *The Gondoliers* in 1889 was their last successful production together; the opera had a conventional happy ending but Gilbert used it to attack the establishment with a satirical demand for a republic. Gilbertian satire would be seen as treasonable in Paris during the Dreyfus affair (c.1894-1900), and Charpentier composed *Louise* in 1896 using a realistic social setting that demanded respect for working girls. Like the creators of *Princess Ida* he paid tribute to women like Princess Louise, and in 1902 founded the Conservatoire Populaire de Mimi Pinson for working girls to study music. It came with the reminder they were not privileged princesses for he took the name Mimi Pinson from a poem by Alfred de Musset (1810-57) about a *grisette* or working girl, possibly a seamstress.

French national honour was not negotiable but Charpentier's demand for respect for French women came at an awkward junction – in January 1901 Princess Louise's brother became Edward VII. He was now an important figure in Anglo-French diplomacy but as Prince of Wales he had often visited Paris to sleep with prostitutes, and this aroused gossip that divided the artistic world. James Tissot, one of the 1870 French exiles living in London, caricatured the Prince of Wales in an 1873 edition of the British magazine, *Vanity Fair*. Tissot's 'The Prince', dressed

as a burly working man, looks capable of anything. Claude Monet, another of the French artists who briefly sought refuge in London in 1870, brought back the latest news, and his friend, Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-94), composed two 'British' operas discreetly satirising Edward of Wales, despoiler of French women. *Gwendoline* (1886), set in England before the Norman Conquest, was followed the next year by *Le roi malgré lui*, about a playboy king of Poland. In 1903 the British composer, Edward German, retaliated with the last Savoy opera, *The Princess of Kensington*. Princess Louise still lived at Kensington Palace but she ranked socially below the King's eldest daughter, also called Louise. The opera was not a success and nor was Charpentier's *Louise*, which may be seen as his attempt to be part of Anglo-French artistic society.

By the turn of the century, Paris led the world in art and music, if not in opera; during the 'belle époque' rich American expatriates made Paris their playground, their 'Newport on the Seine'; but ambitious French artists and musicians found it hard to build a career. As Steven Huebner points out, Charpentier was motivated by conflicting forces, ranging from anarchism to the bourgeois box office, and by expediency. Charpentier had to be discreet as the death of his friend, Zola, in 1902 was rumoured to be murder. Perhaps coincidentally, a French designer, Alexandre Charpentier (no kin of Gustave), was asked to create a medal in Zola's name.

The 'Entente Cordiale' signed on 8 April 1904 brought official Anglo-French accord and Charpentier received national honours throughout his long life, honours awarded for working for his Conservatoire Populaire de Mimi Pinson rather than for his creative musical career. Puccini's heroines captivated the world and *Louise* was the only working-girl drama; in 1902 Debussy, no friend of Charpentier or his music, created *Mélisande*, and France saw a return to a different type of romantic heroine.

Clare Taylor, September 2016

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## Text and translations

In autumn 2016, Sheffield University, in association with 'Music in the Round'\*, hosted a number of public events in and around Sheffield, including sessions on the theme of 'Songmakers: Music, Language and Poetry'. On 12 November I attended a session entitled 'Texts and Translations'. The session was billed as 'A morning exploring the relationship between words, language and music, with a focus on German song'. It was divided into three sections: a masterclass for two University of Sheffield music students led by baritone Roderick Williams; a discussion of the texts and translations led by poetry and song specialist Professor Helen Abbott (University of Birmingham); and some background to the origin of the poems and music in their historic context presented by Dr Seán Williams, specialist in German literature and cultural history and BBC Radio 3 New Generation Thinker 2016. The singers were accompanied by Richard Longman on piano.

Having studied languages (though not German) and linguistics, including translation theories, and also music though with never much focus on Lieder, and always delighting in a childish sense that a masterclass is letting you in on secrets, I thought this would be a great way to spend a morning. This partnership of Sheffield University and 'Music in the Round' (for which Roderick Williams is currently singer-in-residence) had at its heart the intention of engaging a wider audience in classical music, although at this session, there seemed to be a more traditional audience, i.e. composed of people that were relatively knowledgeable about the subject matter, and some involved in musical education. What I felt lay behind the session could be articulated with the question: is translating a classic work 'dumbing down', 'reaching out', or a further 'creative act'? I would like to make the case for the third, whilst not discounting the second. I understand the apprehensions of some who might think the first, but believe we should interrogate them.

Focusing on song in the series was designed to remind us that the voice is usually the first instrument we meet and use, and perhaps implicitly was posing questions as to whether there are difficulties in attracting newer audiences to 'classical' songs. In an age when recorded music is a major mode of listening, it also drew me back to considering the live element as an interpersonal activity. The session was fairly informal, with the audience invited to ask questions and discuss points, which means that I was taking 'jottings' rather than 'notes' and my reflections during the event and after are rather mingled with the reporting.

In the context of this, I gradually realised that ‘translation’ for either a concert or a performance was far more than the technical job of finding English words to use for the original ones. It is a process of transmuting the work as received from editors, teachers, tradition of performance, into one the performer can make speak to the audience in question. This particularity of every performance brought to mind something read many years ago in *After Babel* by George Steiner, a classic work on the significance of cultural identities in the processes of translation. The introduction to the 1992 edition of this book states that it postulates ‘Translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication’ (p. pxii).

Later in this book, the connection with the work of musicians and other performers is also explicitly made: ‘“Interpretation” as that which gives language life beyond the moment and place of immediate utterance or transcription, is what I am concerned with. The French word *interprète* concentrates all the relevant values. An actor is *interprète* of Racine; a pianist gives *une interprétation* of a Beethoven sonata. As it does not include the world of the actor, and includes that of the musician only by analogy, the English term interpreter is less strong. But it is congruent with French when reaching out in another direction. *Interprète/interpreter* are commonly used to mean translator.’ (Steiner 1992, p.28)

In the masterclass, Roddy Williams certainly underlined the role of the performer as an active interpreter, even in chamber work. Having sung Schubert’s *Winterreise* himself both in German and English within the Sheffield ‘Songmakers’ series, he was aware of this cycle as a journey. When performing the English translation by Jeremy Sams, he had taken the opportunity of another ‘in the round’ space to use the space as a visual demonstration of that. He talked about the dangers at certain points in the music of forgetting which language he was meant to be performing in and asked whether any of the audience had experienced something similar. One or two had felt that hearing the music in English for them had meant that they related the work to English classic poems.

At the outset of the class the two music students (both English native speakers) were asked about their approach to singing Lieder. We were also surveyed, through a quick show of hands, about our levels of German, and challenged by this introduction. Roddy Williams asked us to consider the performer’s perspective in regard to the audience – are the audience members all staring at the page with the words and translation throughout? It was a bit of a wake-up call that when that singer is singing off by heart the performer is looking at us as there’s nowhere else to look! Does it truly help to follow the translation on the page, rather than the person of the singer? Well, that was in turn another question to the singers. Their job is to make the latter the preferable option. My own instinct was to wonder whether examining the text is a stereotypical English response to potentially embarrassing eye contact when in a small performance space. If it was, it was the next thing to be addressed, as one of the singers was asked to get out of their

own comfort zone and move not only into the body of the audience through the aisle, but to address a part of their song directly to an individual member of the audience!

A Lieder recital is not an opera – but a ‘story’ or at least ‘character’ element is present in a song, and song cycles have a common theme if not a journey on the scale of *Winterreise*. How is that conveyed? What expectations can the singers have of their audience when they are singing in foreign languages, and what help can they give? What expectations do the audiences have of the concert? I admit that as someone who has scarcely ever held a conversation in German, just saying ‘song’ instead of ‘Lied’ instantly modifies my response. Even using the expression ‘art song’ can suggest it’s less accessible for the listener, rather than just referring to the skills of the composer and musicians. Essentially, the ‘art’ in ‘art song’ is to bring the text to life, not to suffocate it, by the addition of the music – although usually with both a melody for the words and an accompanying instrumental part (accompanying in the sense of sharing the journey, not a secondary part). Roddy Williams took the singers through this by encouraging them to focus on: 1) some aspect of mood or experience expressed in the poem that spoke to their own experience and 2) some words (e.g. what ‘adjectives’ appear here) and practise projecting them to the audience. They were asked to sing, and the audience to identify what could be those keys from the performance. For many listeners this is what happens when we enjoy music: fix on a point and see the rest of it from that viewpoint, not always with full attention to the whole – although, of course, it can depend on the type of piece as well as our mood on the day. I related this to the passage that, ‘the degree of re-creative immediacy varies. It is most radically life-giving in the case of musical performance. Every musical realisation is a new *poiesis*. It differs from all other performances of the same composition. Its ontological relationship to the original score and to all previous renditions is twofold: it is at the same time reproductive and innovatory.’ (Steiner, p.27)

Even within the timeframe of this workshop, each time we heard the music our attention was drawn to something new. The discussions between the singers, panel and other audience members contributed to this. It was a joint project, given that the singers were given a question we all heard and then their performance answered it, leading us to listen differently.

The audience at any performance bring with them not only their interest in a given concert and the ‘programme notes’ either written or otherwise, but the issues personal and collective around them. How can we use such ‘distractions’ to take us into thinking about why the music is still saying something to us?

The tensions in the role of interpreting for Anglophones were in some way illustrated at this point in time by events in the world. There were questions in the air of the relationship with European culture following the referendum – how would it be affected by a political decision – is there more to cultural relations than

political opportunities? Maybe we could rely on the Anglophone world – but the result of their elections, too, created uncertainty.

The performers also expose themselves to the intimate experience of a chamber concert. They are not a distant star in a grand opera, but usually the staging brings them closer to their audience. They may set themselves good standards, as part of their respect for the work they are performing, and for their audience, but they can and should take courage, as well as this sense of responsibility, in their capacity to create something unique.

In my mind, at this point, there were also questions running about the relationship of the UK to European and American culture. Historic links with the European canon of classical music, in the case of singing, or choral music are affected by the increasing hegemony of English which has partly been emphasised or ‘exacerbated’ by popular music exchange with America. The effect is magnified since much of the music we experience is not live but recorded, and popularity is gained for uniform versions by the ease of access for mass audiences. In the creative tension to find a balance, to ‘anglicise’ the European music for a local audience chamber music can reclaim a literally vital opportunity to help audiences find their way to understand a work and through that, its original country and social context, and the connectedness of our experience.

When it came to language, the two young singers had different approaches to the German text: one tried to use a number of English translations to compare and contrast as an illumination, and one really liked to take the opportunity to exercise any relevant language skills, either writing his own translation if he knew the language, or by finding some reference books and attempting some elements of translation, or trying to understand available ones.

They were asked whether they stuck to editions with parallel texts under the music, or wrote the English equivalents over key, if not all, German words in their music while learning the songs. Part of the point being that an English text may either adapt the words to fit the music, resulting in strange English, or risk having an English with key words not quite in the right place musically. In modern times, it may seem less acceptable to mess with a composer’s music to make a better match with a good translation of the words. Not so with some opera composers in the early twentieth century who endorsed the translation of libretti by providing a specific edition of the music adapted to take account of the rhythms of the target language (Berg, Gretchaninov). Roddy Williams gave credit to the strengths of Jeremy Sams, who was commissioned to produce an English translation of *Winterreise*, and to his capacity not only to render the meaning but to match the text to the music.

A reason for ‘strange’ English putting a distance between us and the music can be the passage of time. We know that the original song is ‘foreign’, so we either make the effort in listening to the original, or we expect a translation to bring it to



us in our own tongue. But if our edition uses a translation from the early twentieth century the English sounds dated and the effect can be felt more viscerally.

George Steiner writes about the way that our own language changes over time: 'Any thorough reading of a text out of the past of one's own language and literature is a manifold act of interpretation. In the great majority of cases this act is hardly performed or even consciously recognised.' (Steiner, p.18).

If we read Chaucer or Shakespeare we are well aware of this sense that the language is distant in time; as we get closer to our own time, we sometimes don't consciously think of it but unconsciously reject the 'old-fashioned' words as not speaking to us. In the same way, we can fail to realise that distances we perceive as being from Schubert (or rather Müller), are failures of translations.

The nineteenth century in Germany, when *Winterreise* and many other poems used in Lieder were written, was a period when society was changing. Across Europe Romanticism was emerging in all art forms. The poets used the language in specific ways, using key words to evoke certain feelings and link them to parallels in nature, in a way that was quite *sui generis*. At the same time, there was wider circulation of periodicals that included versions of poetry with some set to music, for a class who now had leisure time to enjoy such activities. Across the German lands this meant that there was a 'market' for these kinds of work. In wider Europe, the urban middle class was also becoming more widespread, and the strata of society who were interested in these works in the nineteenth century had some exposure to the language, and did sing in German. Sadly, the early part of the twentieth century brought conflict and a predominance of singing in English, with many translations reflecting the style of that era, not our own! It could appear stilted.

Then we moved to have a closer look at more technical questions and translations. As a singer and language teacher, Professor Abbott was well qualified to comment on difficulties of practising the craft of singing in different languages.

I am all too well aware of the challenges of translating poetry into another language. Some say it can't be done. Some just acknowledge the compromises that need to be made and get on with doing what they can. Before you even begin translating a song into English, however, it pays to remember that what you are considering, the created song, has already undergone a type of translation – the act of setting the words to music.

'The composer who sets a text to music is engaged in the same sequence of intuitive and technical motions which obtain in translation proper .... The test of critical intelligence, of psychological responsiveness to which the composer submits himself when choosing and setting his lyric, is at all points concordant with that of the translator. In both cases we ask: has he understood the argument, the emotional tone, the formal particularities, the historical conventions, the potential

ambiguities in the original? Has he found a medium in which to represent fully and to elucidate these elements?' (Steiner, p.438).

To conclude, this session brought to mind how many 'translations' any work of music goes through from conception to performance. A singer who is also a songwriter and sets their own words has more autonomy over the creation and performance of the work – constrained only by their ability and range on their 'instrument'. On the other hand, in works such as the Lieder there can be a sequence of years of thoughtful working at play. First, the poet wrote, influenced by his own social milieu, 'translating' thoughts and emotions into words that will resonate, at this point, not envisaging the work being set to music. The composer finds the text, picks up something in the poem that they want to express in their own medium, decorating the words with the addition of music – written for both singer and instrumentalist(s). The performers take this forward from the page to the audience, deciding whether the original language or a new one will help them most in this endeavour. The audience, receiving the presentation, meet it in the midst of their own experiences that day, and sift it through their personal and cultural heritage and try to catch a glimpse of the whole journey of the piece to that particular performance.

The membership of a Chamber Music Club such as ours, with members from all over the world, offers the opportunity to interact with organisers and performers (often the same) in particular concerts and to discuss the works. We can be exposed to music we would never otherwise have discovered because we are led to it, and to become more open to it, through the introduction from those who are colleagues and friends. There is a limit to how many languages we are likely to learn, so there is a place for translated works, which can be creative in themselves as well as providing a useful stepping stone towards appreciating a performance in the original language.

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#### REFERENCES

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\* 'Music in the Round' <[http://www.musicintheround.co.uk/who\\_we\\_are.php](http://www.musicintheround.co.uk/who_we_are.php)>