

MIGHTY BRASS & PERCUSSION

Friday 29 January 8.30pm
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

Johannes Fritzs conductor
TSO Brass and Percussion

BRITTEN Fanfare for St Edmundsbury

GESUALDO (arr. Maxwell Davies) Two Motets for Brass Quintet

BRUCKNER (arr. Davis) Locus iste

TOMASI Être, ou ne pas être

TAKEMITSU Garden Rain

POULENC (arr. Higgins) Quatre pieces prières de Saint-François d'Assise

TOMASI Fanfares liturgiques

This evening's concert opens with the Fanfare for St Edmundsbury, by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). Composed for a Magna Carta pageant at Bury St Edmunds cathedral in 1959, this work is for three spatially distanced trumpets. Each trumpet plays a solo fanfare before all three are combined as one, resulting in some surprising and piquant sonorities.

In 1926 Cecil Gray published a book with the salacious title *Carlo Gesualdo: Prince of Venosa, Musician and Murderer*. And, yes, high-born Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613) was, indeed, all of those things. His chief contribution to music was his six books of madrigals. Gesualdo firmly believed that sung music ought to take its point of departure, first and foremost, from the words. He would 'paint' individual words in music, even if it compromised the overall shape of a musical phrase. For Gesualdo, emotional expressivity was paramount. In addition to composing secular madrigals, Gesualdo wrote sacred motets. The two motets heard in this concert would originally have been sung.

In addition to making a very significant contribution to the symphony, Anton Bruckner (1824-1896), who was an organist as well as a composer, wrote a sizeable quantity of sacred music. One of his most famous small-scale sacred works is the gradual, *Locus iste*, which was composed in 1869. This soft and gentle work is a minor miracle.

Unlike the previous two works, *Être, ou ne pas être* (To be or not to be) by French composer Henri Tomasi (1901-1971) was written specifically for four-part brass ensemble. In addition to writing a good number of works for brass, Tomasi was keen to expand the concerto repertoire for somewhat neglected instruments, among them the saxophone, double bass and guitar. At the time of his death, Tomasi was composing an operatic version of *Hamlet*.

Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996) came of age in the period after World War II. His first exposure to Western music was from listening to radio broadcasts on the US military station. Almost at once he decided to become a composer. Debussy and Messiaen were early influences and, along with many composers in the 1950s, he became interested in electronic music. His gaze was fixed firmly on the West for the first two decades of his compositional career until, in the early-to-mid 1960s, he started to incorporate Japanese influences in his music, notably Japanese instruments such as the biwa (a Japanese lute) and shakuhachi (a Japanese flute). *Garden Rain*, which was composed in 1974, is Takemitsu's first work for brass instruments.

Our next work, the *Quatre pieces prières de Saint-François d'Assise* (Four small prayers of St Francis of Assisi) is by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963). Composed in 1948, the *Quatre pieces prières de Saint-François d'Assise* were originally written for male chorus. A many-sided composer, Poulenc is known for his witty and debonair works, but he also wrote a significant quantity of religious music – such as this work – which reveal a more serious and devout side.

Finally, we return to the music of Henri Tomasi. Composed for brass ensemble, timpani and drums, the *Fanfares liturgiques* are drawn from Tomasi's opera, *Miguel Mañara* (also known as *Don Juan de Mañara*) and date from 1947. They were premièred in Monte Carlo.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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