

Piano Music from 1920s Berlin: childhood and revolution

This concert explores the sound-world of Berlin in the 1920s and contemporary trends in music of the time, from Jazz influences, through varying degrees of dissonance and harmonic systems, and culminating in the pure atonality of the Second Viennese school, viewed largely through the clarifying prism of works having been written for children or with a particular terseness at heart. Programmes from two concerts of the time unearthed in the archive of Benjamin's childhood friend Ernst Schoen, one a dance evening, the other a showcase of children's pieces, form a starting point for the assembly of composers. The first part of the programme features several pieces that are designated as children's music, and many of the works are excerpted from larger sets of brief portrait pieces, rearranged here and juxtaposed to form a sequence of miniature narratives: an animal is introduced, followed by a funeral march, then a dance. Schoenberg's intense and aphoristic 6 Kleine Klavierstücke, in which, in the major musical revolution of the century, tonality is dispensed with, form the heart of the second part of the programme. Schoenberg's influence on a seventeen-year-old Adorno can be heard in his brooding Klavierstück of 1921. Webern's miniature Kinderstück is a pure example of his strict application of the dodecaphonic 'serial' technique, in which the 12 notes of the chromatic scale are presented in series, and which he approached with greater rigour than Schoenberg. Schulhoff's Elf Inventionen show expressionist and Dadaist influences, having eschewed the late-Romantic aesthetic in response to war.

Zez Confrey (1895-1971)
African Suite (1924) : I – High hattin'

Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973)
Omaggi (1920) : I – a un pappagallo

Lord Berners (Sir Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson) (1883-1950)
3 petites marches funèbres (1916) : II – pour un canari

Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937)
Four Polish Dances : Mazurek

Emerson Whithorne (1884-1958)
Hototogisu (The Cuckoo), op. 14 no. 1 (1916)

Eugène Goossens (1893-1962)
Kaleidoscope, op. 18 no. 10 (1918) : X – Lament for a departed doll

Karol Szymanowski
Four Polish Dances (1926) : Krakowiak

Gian Francesco Malipiero
Omaggi : II – a un elefante

Alfredo Casella (1883-1947)
11 pezzi infantili, op.35 (1920) : X-Berceuse

Lord Berners
3 petites marches funèbres : I – pour un homme d'état

Zez Confrey
African Suite : II – Kinda careless

Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942)
from **Ostinato** (1925) : -Mama- --da...da- --hopp...hopp-

Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951)
Sechs kleine Klavierstücke, op. 19 (1911)

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969)
Klavierstück (1921)

Anton Webern (1883-1945)
Kinderstück (1924)

Erwin Schulhoff
11 Inventionen, op. 36 (1921) : I – VIII – X

Zez Confrey
African Suite : III – Mississippi Shivers