

The Aurora Ensemble

Prizewinning quintet at the European chamber music competition, Musique d'Ensemble, held at the Paris Conservatoire in 2001, the Aurora Ensemble has performed in many major venues and festivals including the Purcell Room (for the Park Lane Group), Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, Cardiff's St. David's Hall and the Cheltenham, Thaxted, Ryedale and Petworth Festivals. It has broadcast on ORS Television (Austria) and BBC Radio 3 for the Young Artists' Forum Series.

In 2002 the ensemble gave the first complete performance of Rhian Samuel's Primavera and recorded their debut CD, which included the first CD recording of Marin Goleminov's Wind Quintet No.2 and the world première recording of Ronan Guilfoyle's Groove Merchants. The Auroras are currently in the process of commissioning a new work from Ronan, for première during 2004.

Established in 2000, Sounds Exciting (Patron Neil Black OBE) is the ensemble's own education project, which runs in conjunction with their recital work. Recent projects include a children's concert with narration from former Blue Peter presenter, Janet Ellis. The ensemble has also commissioned artwork from children's illustrator, Caroline Glicksman, to use in their children's concerts. The ensemble directs its own chamber music course at Hawkwood College, Gloucestershire every Easter and for Benslow Music Trust each December (see residential courses page). It is also a member of the late Yehudi Menuhin's Live Music Now! scheme which takes live music into the wider community - to hospitals, prisons, residential homes for the elderly and schools and centres for people with disabilities.

The Aurora Ensemble has recently been selected for the Making Music Scheme for 2005-06.

*"The excellent Aurora Ensemble played...with dazzling precision and infectious wit...These players are a superb team, brilliantly accomplished, and I long to hear more of them
*****" Financial Times*

"flames flickered with the Aurora Ensemble...Out from mouths and fingers came immaculately polished and blended sounds." The Times

*"moments of real inspiration...energy and enthusiasm...an enthralling interpretation."
The Guardian*

"The Aurora Ensemble played with complete professionalism - tight, witty, beautifully balanced and cleverly phrased." The Independent on Sunday

Future SVAM Events

Friday 24 February 8pm Constable Hall. Lecture by Dr Lyn Rodley

Sunday 2 April 4pm at St. Mary's Church. **Leopold Trio**

Extra Event 2006: Jazz Concert and Supper on Saturday **20 May 2006** at the Constable Hall. Tickets £12.50. Information from Birte Kelly, 01206 299448 or Beate Harden 01206 298491. **TICKETS ARE SELLING OUT FAST!**

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-fifth
season
2005-6

8.00pm
Friday
27 January
2006

Constable Hall
East Bergholt

The Aurora Ensemble

Maxine Willis *flute* – Gwenllian Davies *oboe*
Andrew Mason *clarinet* – Helen Shillito *horn*
Philip Gibbon *bassoon*

Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907) Norwegian Dances

II - Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso
III - Allegro moderato alla marcia

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 -1791) Fantasy in F minor K.594

Adagio – Allegro - Adagio

Jean-Michel Damase (b.1928) Dix-Sept Variations Op 22

JS Bach Revisited by Michael Berkeley (b.1948) Re-inventions (1995)

*Two Part Invention No.4 in D minor - flute cadenza - clarinet
cadenza . - Three Part Invention No. 5 in E flat - bassoon &
horn cadenza. – Three Part Invention No. 9 in F minor - bas-
soon & oboe cadenza . - Two Part Invention No. 8 in F*

INTERVAL

Georges Auric (1899 - 1983) Trio for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon

I – Decidé II – Romance – III - Final

Jim Parker (b. 1934)

*I - King Oliver Steps Out - II - Blues for Johnny Dodds
III - The River Queen - IV - Le Tombeau de Bessie Smith
V - Les Animaux*

Luciano Berio (1925 - 2003) Opus Number Zoo – **with text by Rhoda Levine**

*I - Barn Dance – II - The Faun
III - The Grey Mouse – IV - Tom Cats*



SVAM is a member of NFMS and a Registered Charity (No 276640)

Programme Notes

Edvard **Grieg** was an energetic promoter of Norwegian culture, although until his mid-twenties he had known next to nothing of the Norwegian nationalist tendencies of his time and had scarcely heard any genuine Norwegian folk music. He had been brought up in the environment of middle-class Norwegian urban society, with its predominantly Danish speech, traditions and cultural outlook. Except for years of study spent at Leipzig his musical associations were Danish in character. But in 1864 his artistic life entered a new phase, when, during the summer, he stayed with Ole Bull at Osterøy, played the classics with him, and caught some of the violinist's enthusiasm for Norwegian peasant culture. In the winter of 1864–5 he met the man on whom the Norwegian nationalists set their chief hope for a national school of music, Rikard Nordraak. Thenceforward Grieg felt that his path was clear: it was that of a musician dedicated to Romantic nationalism. He acknowledged his debt to Nordraak in the *Humoresker* for piano, Op.6, the first of his many compositions showing the influence of Norwegian folk idioms. His genius was for lyric pieces – songs and piano miniatures – in which he drew on both folk-tunes and the Romantic tradition, though his Piano Concerto found a permanent place in the international repertory. He published *25 Norwegian Folk Dances* in 1870.

Bohemian nobleman Count Josef von Deym maintained a private museum of unusual exhibits, amongst them a waxwork of the Austrian Field Marshall Laudon, who died on 14th July, 1790. That autumn, Deym commissioned music for another of the gallery's exhibits – a mechanical organ. **Mozart** seems to have decided on an elegiac piece to suit the mausoleum-like setting, though when he set to work he did not find it altogether straightforward. In a letter to his wife dated October 3rd, he wrote "I have to break off now and then, as I get bored...the works consist solely of little pipes which sound too high pitched and too childish for my taste." Evidently he persevered, and has provided us with an impressive reminder of baroque style.

Jean-Michel **Damase** showed precocious musical talent - when five years old he began courses in piano and solfège. He started to compose at the age of nine when, after meeting Colette, he set some of her poems. At 13 he joined the Paris Conservatoire: at 15 he was unanimously awarded a *premier prix* for piano. At 19 he won the first prize in composition with a quintet, whilst a cantata won him the Prix de Rome. In the meantime his career as a solo pianist was flourishing. Damase's music has a style that is both polished and elegant, preferring earlier French characteristics to the Modernist innovations of Boulez or Messiaen. His chamber works show a deep knowledge of the possibilities of individual instruments. He is a great lover of ballet and a close friend of several leading choreographers, and has composed numerous operas and ballets.

Composer and broadcaster Michael **Berkeley** began composing at the age of six, enthused with a love of music by his father and his godfather Britten, whose choral works he often sang as a chorister at Westminster Cathedral. After studies at the RAM in composition, piano and singing, Berkeley performed professionally as a baritone and as a rock musician. From 1974 to 1979 he worked as a BBC radio announcer, later becoming a leading freelance radio and TV broadcaster. His composing career was profoundly influenced by studies in the mid-1970s with Richard Rodney Bennett, from whom he acquired the techniques of serialism and logical thematic development.

Georges **Auric** spent his childhood in Montpellier where he studied at the local conservatory. In 1913 his parents moved to the capital so that he could enter the Paris Conservatoire. The young prodigy was regularly invited out, and by the age of fifteen Auric was acquainted with Stravinsky, Apollinaire, Cocteau, Braque and Picasso. By the time he found himself a member of Les Six, the style of Auric's music – brilliant and often acidly aggressive – had become well established. In the 1920s he wrote ballets for Diaghilev, and was also writing regularly for various music and avant-garde literary revues closely linked with the dadaists and surrealists. The 1930s saw a few instrumental pieces, among them this evening's trio, but were more notable for the start of a long series of scores for films that include some of the classics of French cinema. His biggest popular success came with *Moulin Rouge* (directed by John Huston, 1952), which has a main theme we recognise instantly before struggling to recall its name!

Jim **Parker** has won the British Academy Award for best original Television Music four times, and has written scores for over one hundred programmes, including *Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *House of Elliott*, and *House of Cards*. He had early success with a series of recordings in which he provided a musical background to recitations by the late Sir John Betjeman of his own poems. The reception of these and subsequent records led to work in television and the theatre, including productions of three West End musicals. Film scores include numerous feature-length television films along with scores for the new prints of the classic silents *Girl Shy*, by Harold Lloyd and *The Blot*, a 1921 film directed by Lois Weber.

Luciano **Berio** frequently revisited and reworked his compositions to produce entirely new pieces. In this way, *Sequenza*, originally for unaccompanied flute, gave rise to the pieces *Sequenza I - XIV*, each of which exploits the timbre and technical possibilities of a different instrument, and the various works known as *Chemins*, for varying combinations of instruments. *Opus Number Zoo* was a reworking of material which had appeared first in 1948, had been revised for two clarinets and two horns in 1950, reworked a little later for wind quintet and revised again in 1971. An internet website for horn players includes the following entry:

"I was hornist with the Dorian Quintet for 12 wonderful years...we commissioned new works, resurrected lost ones and also commissioned arrangements. We asked Luciano Berio to write a new piece for us, but he was snowed under with commissions...he had a piece for 5 winds and narrator. He offered to arrange that piece for us – as it had never been played, we accepted. The result was *Opus Number Zoo*. The best performance of it I ever heard was when Berio came up to our studio in Greenwich Village and did it with us. What enthusiasm and panache! Well, when he heard me play that high line in "The Horse", now called "The Faun" in the published version, I covered up everything with the opening high line. So he had me put in the mute. I was grateful...I no longer felt as though I was blotting out the sun...I kept the mute in for the whole movement."

Opus Number Zoo has a text by Rhoda Levine, in which barnyard animals exhibit human tendencies. On the surface the poems appear to be light hearted, though underneath they carry somewhat darker sentiments.