TOKE MØLDRUP - STEVEN BECK

FATHOMS

UK Premiere

ST JOHN’S SMITH SQUARE

Monday, May 8th, 2017

Geoffrey Gordon
Benjamin Britten
Herman Koppel
Ralph Vaughan Williams
A VERY WARM WELCOME!

Preceding the release of the “cello libris” CD which will feature not only FATHOMS but Lorca Musica per cello solo and the “Doktor Faustus” Cello Concerto by Geoffrey, Gordon, I am delighted that two of the world’s most exciting soloists, Danish cellist Toke Møldrup and US pianist Steven Beck are here to perform a rich and exciting programme of music on an American - English - Danish theme and to give the UK premiere of American composer Geoffrey Gordon’s fabulous cello and piano sonata FATHOMS, after their wonderful performance of the world premiere at Carnegie Hall in December 2015.

Toke, Steve, Geoffrey and I are pleased for you to be here and welcome you all. Thank you for coming.

We hope you enjoy the concert!

~ Anna Ferro

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Smoking is not permitted anywhere in St John’s.

Refreshments are permitted only in the Footstool Restaurant.

During the interval and after the concert*

Restaurant is open for licensed refreshments.

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The Footstool Restaurant in the Crypt will be closed to the public after the concert.
Programme
(Pre-concert talk by composer, Geoffrey Gordon)

Geoffrey Gordon (1968-)
Lorca Music per Cello Solo (1999)

Herman D. Koppel (1908-1998)
Ternio, Op. 53b (1951)
  I. Allegramente
  II. Tempo di passacaglia
  III. Allegro giocoso

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
(Dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich)
  1 Dialogo
  2 Scherzo-pizzicato
  3 Elegia
  4 Marcia
  5 Moto perpetuo

**********INTERVAL 20 minutes**********

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Six Studies in English Folk Songs (1926)
  1. Adagio ('Lovely on the Water') in E modal minor
  2. Andante sostenuto ('Spurn Point') in Eb
  3. Larghetto ('Van Dieman's Land') in D modal minor
  4. Lento ('She Borrowed Some of her Mother's Gold') in D
  5. Andante tranquillo ("The Lady and the Dragoon") in G
  6. Allegro vivace ('As I walked over London Bridge') in A modal minor

Geoffrey Gordon (1968-)
FATHOMS: Five Impressions of The Tempest,
with Prelude, for cello and piano (2015)
(UK premiere)
  (dedicated to Toke Møl drup)
  Prelude and Storm
  I. Ferdinand and Miranda
  II. Ariel and His Quality
  III. Caliban ( and Sycorax)
  IV. The Isle is Full of Noises
  V. Prospero Drowns His Book
Gordon: Lorca Musica per cello solo

“Federico Garcia Lorca inspired this work, as well as the work from which it is drawn: my 1995 three act ballet, The House of Bernarda Alba, after the play of the same name. Although Lorca Musica is not intended as a direct derivation of the ballet--and does not in any way attempt to follow the dramatic thread of the play--it is nevertheless intrinsically linked with that work, both thematically and spiritually. The motifs of Alba, and of Lorca’s life--lust, longing, repression, shame, passion, desire and death--provide the framework and wellspring for this music. Thematic material--phrases, melodic fragments, harmonic and rhythmic cells--have been imported from the ballet. The opening bars recount the death of Adela which concluded both the play and the ballet. However, here it is designed to make a much broader statement. Other references--the Tango, the agitato and sereno themes--are similarly intended to expand on the Alba play, and comment more profoundly on Lorca’s life and death.”

Geoffrey Gordon, 20 June, 1998

Koppel: Ternio

Herman D. Koppel was probably the first leading Danish composer to take a serious interest in the cello as a solo instrument... In particular, the cello concerto from 1952 has celebrated triumphs and has been performed just as often as Koppel's signature Third Piano Concerto, op. 45. The year before the cello concerto Koppel wrote Ternio, op. 53, which has also become one of his best known works, and not only because its exists both in a version for violin and one for cello: Ternio, with its concise form, is a classic sonata, three movements typified by hurtling, sparkling energy. The word 'ternio' is late Latin and means three of a kind, 'a three' and so on. The first movement begins in unison between the piano and pizzicato in the cello, a distinctive effect that strikes up the lively coolness that permeates the work. That Koppel was one of the outstanding pianists of his time shines through the style; it is in the crossfield between the instrumentalist’s professional inspiration on the one hand and the composer's constructive intelligence and musical emotion on the other that most great music is created, and Koppel is one of the few performer-composers we have had in the field of classical music in Denmark. This can be heard clearly in the excellent piano parts in the two works on this CD, but in fact also in the way Koppel writes for cello, with a decided sensitivity to the instrument's special potential for sonority and expression, but with insight and respect for the technical conditions in which the cello functions. The first version of Ternio was for violin and piano, but Koppel has stated in his marvellous memoirs Fra et Hjem med Klaver: ".. it turned out that it [Ternio] was far better suited to the sound of the cello."

(From “Herman D. Koppel and the Cello” by Morten Zeuthen)

Britten: Cello Sonata in C

English composer, Benjamin Britten’s Cello Sonata in C, op. 65, is effectively a document of a new friendship. It is as if Britten saw the great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich play, made a note of what he admired (by digging composer Dimitri Shostakovich in the ribs when he first encountered Rostropovich at the premiere in September 1960 of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall in London!) and then went out and wrote for those particular techniques in his own distinct voice. The two famously played through the sonata for the first time at Britten's flat in St John’s Wood. The Cello Sonata was premiered by Rostropovich, with
Britten at the piano, at the Aldeburgh festival of 1961. It was the first of five major works which Britten written for Rostropovich over the course of the next decade – the others being the Cello Symphony and the three suites for solo cello. Britten's correspondence with Rostropovich reveals the composer's humility in the face of Rostropovich's reputation: he confesses "I may have made some mistakes" and quips that "the pizzicato movement will amuse you; I hope it is possible!". The final Moto perpetuo movement uses the DSCH motif (the musical transformation of Shostakovich's name) as a tribute to the composer who inspired Britten to write for cello. Britten wrote this analysis of the Sonata: “Dialogo (Allegro): This movement is throughout the discussion of a tiny motive of a rising or falling second. The motive is lengthened to make a lyrical second subject which rises towards and falls from a pianissimo harmonic. Scherzo–pizzicato (Allegretto): A study in pizzicato, sometimes almost guitar-like in its elaborate right-hand technique. Elegia (Lento): Against a sombre piano background, the cello sings a long tune. This tune is developed, by means of double, triple, and quadruple stopping, to a big climax, and sinks away to a soft conclusion. A brief Marcia (Energico): The cello plays a rumbustious bass to the jerky tune in the piano. The trio has horn-like calls over a repeated triplet bass. The march returns very softly, with the bass (now in the treble) in harmonics. Moto perpetuo (Poco presto): The 6/8 saltando theme dominates the entire movement, frequently changing its character, now low and grumbling, now gay and carefree.” The Cello Sonata is not only visually impressive as it taxes both performers' abilities in many different disciplines not least in the helter-skelter finale, which careers along like a runaway train, flying past all kinds of musical scenery until it crashes into the C major buffers at the end, but it is clearly a piece for friends to play: the title of the first movement, Dialogo, indicates that but at each turn the instruments are complementing each other, with bursts of lyrical intensity, mischievous asides and whispers, and technical wizardry. The piece has become one of the twentieth century's most popular recital pieces for cello, and a wonderful test of a duo.

Anna Ferro

Vaughan Williams: Six Studies in English Folk Songs

"I am told that when grapevines were first cultivated in California the vineyard masters used to try the experiment of importing plants from France or Italy and setting them in their own soil. The result was that the grapes acquired a peculiar individual flavor, so strong was the influence of the soil in which they were planted. I think I need hardly draw the moral of this, namely, that if the roots of your art are firmly planted in your own soil and that soil has anything individual to give you, you may still gain the whole world and not lose your own soul." Ralph Vaughan Williams, National Music (1934). English folksong was crucial in the development of the great English composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams' personal voice, and he incorporated folksongs into a number of works. The Six Studies in English Folksong are one of a handful of Vaughan Williams' chamber works. They were composed in 1926 for the cellist May Mukle, who gave the premiere with her sister Anne, on 4 June 1926 at the Scala Theatre, London, as part of the English Folk Dance Society Festival. The work has been transcribed by the composer and others violin, viola, English horn, clarinet, bassoon, alto sax, and tuba. Vaughan Williams' own admonition on the setting of folksongs was that they be "treated with love,": overflowing with yearning modal melody, each is tastefully and skillfully matted and framed to reveal the beauty of the song. Brevity enhances the effect. The studies are not simply transcriptions of the folksongs used, but elaborations on them. All but the final study are in slow
tempos. The songs treated are: Lovely on the Water (which is the same melody Vaughan Williams used in the second of his Five English Folksongs under the title ‘The Springtime of the Year’), Spurn Point, Van Dieman’s Land, She Borrowed Some of Her Mother’s Gold, The Lady and the Dragoon, and As I Walked Over London Bridge.

Anna Ferro

Gordon: “FATHOMS”

Geoffrey Gordon’s cello sonata “FATHOMS Five Impressions of Shakespeare’s The Tempest (with Prelude) for cello and piano” was commissioned by Anna Ferro and an anonymous patron for cellist, Toke Møldrup, and was composed in 2015. The work lasting around 30 minutes, comprises 6 captivating and contrasting movements which present a musical consideration of the magic and drama of the fascinating and well-loved tale of Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand as cast by William Shakespeare’s final drama “The Tempest”. Shakespeare’s play sees the King of Naples and his entourage shipwrecked by a violent storm on a strange island inhabited by the magician Prospero, who conjured the storm but whose good magic at the end of the play prevails; his daughter Miranda, with whom the King’s son, young prince Ferdinand falls in love; Ariel, a sprite who carries out the bidding of Prospero; and Caliban, the monster-like half human son of the witch, Sycorax. Each movement in the score is headed with a citation from the play which together with the movement’s title sets the scene for the musical impression. Of the premiere performance given by Toke Møldrup and Steven Beck at Carnegie Hall, New York, in on 17 December 2015, The New York Times said: “The engaging and colorful ‘Fathoms’ links to the past with unabashedly programmatic, extroverted storytelling. Using a range of extended techniques and unusual textures, Mr. Gordon vividly sketches characters and scenes from ‘The Tempest.’ Caliban’s gruffness, Ariel’s quicksilver curiosity, the glowing romance between Ferdinand and Miranda all came alive in Mr. Moldrup and Mr. Beck’s intense playing. The final movement imagines Prospero drowning his book, with Mr. Moldrup gradually tuning the bottom string of his cello downward, creating the unnerving sensation of something sinking, slowly, to ever darker depths.” (The New York Times: 18 December 2015)

Prelude and Storm : “A most auspicious star”. From the hushed, expectant cello lead of the opening, the music conjures the sea and a storm, the dynamics expanding the undulating and increasingly turbulent lines, the deepest trills and wind and wave-like figures building to a frightening but tightly controlled, destructive climax.
I. Ferdinand and Miranda: “Miranda: Do you love me? Ferdinand: O heaven! O earth! Bear witness to this sound ....” In rich harmony and with a notable intensity the cello delivers in a lyrical interplay with the piano part, Ferdinand’s response to Miranda’s question, the rich and promising tonality imbued with the strength of desire and sentiment. The music draws on the romance and beauty of a perfect and passionate love, and all the desire and commitment which the young prince declares to his sweetheart.

II. Ariel and all his quality: “To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride On the curl’d clouds ....” Colour, dynamics, technique, and thrilling cello figures and piano textures, take us on a spell-binding ride with Shakespeare’s zephyr-like sprite, as he whooshes about, riding a bat, enthused with using his white magic, his goodness and desire to feel human reflected by the tenderness which shines in the music’s inventive harmonic and motivic energy.

III. Caliban (and Sycorax): “You taught me language, and my profit on’t Is, I know how to curse ...” Instantly, by the cello’s double-stopped figures and the rumbling piano trills and tremulous chords interspersed with furtive glances and child-like cello skips, the music conveys the monsterish Caliban, the subhuman son of the witch Sycorax: ugly, basic, deeply insolent, rebellious, out of control yet also an innocent, reacting animalistically to his emotions and things around him. Everything dissonant in a language which might be Caliban’s own, dark, highly agitated idiom, plunges the parts into rumbling darkness and an intense and disturbing close.

IV. The Isle is Full of Noises: "Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices, That, if I then had wak’d after long sleep, Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming, The clouds methought would open and show riches Ready to drop upon me, that, when I wak’d, I cried to dream again.” After the dark, brutish side of Caliban in the previous movement, extended piano techniques and effects set against fascinating lines and figures in the cello, fill the music with Caliban’s dreams and the sounds of his island, capturing Caliban’s complex innocence, the sadness of his enslavement and his childlike wonder and love of his island home, and reflect one of the most beautiful speeches of the play, paradoxical in that although Caliban claims that the chief virtue of his newly learned language was that it enabled him to curse, he speaks here so sensitively. The pianist is instructed to “(sweep hand across strings, in this approximate range....) (strike keys; mute strings lightly with finger) (smack piano case percussively, with left hand, dampers raised.... ) (Freely flick keys upward with fingernail, causing sharp, unpitched percussive sound....)” and the music is filled with palm clusters, fingernail glissandi, and string harmonics.

V. Prospero Drowns His Book: “But this rough magic I here abjure, and when I have required Some heavenly music, which even now I do, To work mine end upon their senses that This airy charm is for, I’ll break my staff, Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, And deeper than did ever plummet sound I’ll drown my book.” At the end of the play, Prospero intends to drown his book and renounce magic. Motivic references from the preceding impressions fuse to conclude the drama of the work, the tempest now controlled and calmed at the command of Prospero, the quintessentially quiet ending to the work, appreciating what has come before and with the sense that, just as with Prospero’s magic, and with the words of the Bard himself, the impact and enchantment and Gordon’s music will work on, long after the final note of the piece.

Anna Ferro, December, 2015
GEOFFREY GORDON

A winner of the Aaron Copland Award, US composer, Geoffrey Gordon has been described as “a rising star in contemporary music” (Le Monde). His list of works includes orchestral and chamber music—vocal and instrumental—as well as scores for theater, dance and film. His music has been called “darkly seductive” (New York Times), “brilliant” (Boston Globe), “stunning” (Milwaukee Journal), “wonderfully idiomatic” (Salt Lake Tribune), “haunting” (Strings Magazine) and “remarkable” (Fanfare). Chicago Tribune music critic John von Rhein called Mr. Gordon’s lux solis aeterna, premiered by the acclaimed Fulcrum Point New Music Project, “a cosmic beauty … of acutely crafted music.” And music critic Lawrence Johnson, of Classical Review, called Mr. Gordon’s work Tiger Psalms, “a very impressive and significant world premiere … the composer makes the music sing magnificently.” Over the past several seasons, Mr. Gordon’s works have been performed more than fifty times on three continents, including premieres conducted by rising stars including Rory Macdonald, James Gaffigan, Christophe Mueller and Ilan Volkov, and featuring soloists Toke Møldrup, Moshe Aharonov, Megumi Kanda and Carol Wincenc. Next season and beyond, highlights include new works for celebrated soloists including London Philharmonia principal bass clarinet, Laurent Ben Slimane (commissioned concerto after Kafka's Prometheus); Munich Philharmonic principal trumpet, Guido Segers (commissioned concerto inspired by the sculptures of Swiss artist, Alberto Giacometti); English Symphony Orchestra principals Simon Desbruslais and Clare Hammond (trumpet and piano), Grammy award-winning soloist Tim McAllister (saxophone), left handed pianist Nicholas McCarthy, percussionist Evelyn Glennie and guitarist Craig Ogden.

Mr Gordon has worked with some of the best ensembles in the world, including the London Philharmonia, the Copenhagen Philharmonic, the Munich Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, the English Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Symphony, JACK Quartet, Zeitfluss, Ensemble Meitar, the Buffalo Philharmonic, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and the International Contemporary Ensemble. In March of 2016, he will serve as composer in residence at the International Centre for Composers in Visby, Sweden. He received the 2015 commission award from the American Music Project, with a major new chamber work for clarinet and string quartet (the JACK Quartet and Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of New York Philharmonic) which premiered in New York City and Chicago. The English Symphony Orchestra and the Copenhagen Philharmonic will be issuing commercial recordings featuring Mr. Gordon’s works beginning in 2017. In December 2015, cellist Toke Møldrup premiered Mr. Gordon’s cello sonata, FATHOMS, after Shakespeare’s Tempest, at Carnegie Hall in New York. A commercial recording will follow. His chamber vocal work Winterleben (for horn, mezzo-soprano and piano), commissioned for Los Angeles principal horn, Andrew Bain (after a text by German poet Friedrich Ruckert), was premiered in August 2015, in Los Angeles, as part of the 47th International Horn Symposium. He has been shortlisted for the 2016 Mario Merz Prize for music composition.

Forthcoming projects include a new work for symphonic winds and percussion, co-commissioned by more than 20 university wind orchestras in US and UK, a new song cycle for the baritone Tobias Greenhalgh (Peter Quince at the Clavier), to complement his 2015 song cycle Sonnets from Neruda, and new orchestral and chamber works in collaboration with top international soloists, including new concertos for guitarist Craig Ogden, left-handed pianist Nicholas McCarthy, and BBC Young Musician and horn soloist, Benjamin Goldscheider.
TOKE MØLDRUP

Danish cellist “Toke Møldrup is without question among the most prominent musicians in Scandinavia.”

This from the Danish newspaper Politiken. After his highly acclaimed debut concert from the cello studio of Morten Zeuthen at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in 2005, Toke Møldrup, 36, has given concerts in some of the world’s major concert halls, including the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York, Wigmore Hall in London, Daiichi Seimei Hall in Tokyo, and the Musikverein in Vienna. As a soloist he has performed with many orchestras in Europe with conductors such as Aldo Ceccato, Mika Eischenholz, Morten Ryelund Sørensen, Sanntu-Matias Rouvalli and Joshua Weilerstein. His international awards include First Prize at the European Broadcast Unions New Talent Competition in Bratislava in 2007 and the Grand Prize at the 4th Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition with the Paizo Quartet as well as the first prize at the Danish String Competition in 2006. Toke Møldrup has received numerous grants and honours, among them Queen Ingrid’s Grant of Honour, Leonid Sonning’s Scholarship and the Danish Music Critics’ Artist Award. In addition to his studies in Copenhagen, Cologne, Chicago, Karlsruhe, Zagreb, Vienna, and his birthplace of Aarhus, Toke Møldrup studied privately and at master classes with great teachers such as Valter Despalj, David Geringas, Ralph Kirshbaum, Yo-Yo Ma, György Kurtág, the Amadeus Quartet, and the Alban Berg Quartet. He was appointed principal cellist with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra in 2010. Toke Møldrup plays a rare cello by David Tecchler from 1697 kindly lent to him by the Augustinus Foundation.

STEVEN BECK

Praised by the New Yorker as “one of the city’s finest young pianists”, American pianist Steven Beck is described as “exemplary” and “deeply satisfying” by Anthony Tommasini in the New York Times.

Highlights of the 2014-15 season include premieres of new piano works by Charles Wuorinen and John Zorn, and performances of Beethoven’s variations and bagatelles at Bargemusic, where he first performed the Beethoven sonata cycle. He will be performing again on the New York Philharmonic Ensembles series, and has repeated his annual performance of Bach’s “Goldberg Variations” on Christmas Eve and “Brandenburg Concertos” on New Year’s Eve at the Barge; these have become a New York institution. Steven Beck is an experienced and acclaimed performer of contemporary works; he has worked with Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, George Perle, and Fred Lerdahl, and performed with ensembles such as Speculum Musicae, the Metropolis Ensemble, the New
York New Music Ensemble, and the Da Capo Chamber Players. He is a member of the Talea Ensemble and the Knights. He is also a member of Quattro Mani, a piano duo specializing in contemporary music. An eminent recording artist, Mr. Beck’s discography includes Peter Lieberson’s third piano concerto (for Bridge records) and world premiere recordings of newly discovered works by Beethoven on Monument Records and a recording of Elliott Carter’s “Double Concerto” on Albany Records (this was described as “impressive” by Gramophone), as well as solo works by Louis Karchin and Andy Laster. His recording “Places of the Spirit” with flutist Paula Robison won the Classical Recording Foundation’s Samuel Sanders Award for 2008, and the debut CD of his chamber ensemble “Pleasure is the Law” was released on Boston Records in 2009.

Geoffrey Gordon, composer: “I first worked with Toke when the Copenhagen Philharmonic commissioned me to write a cello concerto for him in 2013-14. It was one of the best collaborative experiences of my career and I am thrilled that we are recording ‘cello libris’ together next year in Denmark. This new CD brings together my works for cello which have been inspired by literary themes: Thomas Mann’s novel Doktor Faustus in the cello concerto, Lorca’s House of Bernarda Alba in Lorca Musica per Cello Solo and FATHOMS, after Shakespeare’s Tempest.”

**cello libris** CD (Bridge Records) details:

- Lorca Musica per cello solo (after themes from Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba) (1999)
- FATHOMS (Five impressions of The Tempest, with Prelude for cello and piano) (2015)
- Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (after Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus) (2013)

Toke Møldrup, Cello ~ Steven Beck, Piano ~ Copenhagen Philharmonic conducted by Lan Shui. Recordings to take place May 5-8, 2018 at the concert hall of The Royal Danish Academy of Music. Release date tbc.

**Geoffrey Gordon’s Saint Blue Double Concerto for Trumpet and Piano and Strings**, is being released on CD on **25 August** this year. Download on Signum Records and visit the English Symphony Orchestra’s YouTube Channel for a preview!

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