

TRUE ROMANTICS

As the once-staggeringly-famous British broadcaster C.E.M. Joad would have said, 'it all depends on what you mean by "Romantics"'. What precisely do we mean, then, by musical Romanticism?

Is it a purely *chronological* phenomenon? Surely not. Otherwise in today's concert, Monteverdi would never legitimately share a programme with Brahms; and nor would Brahms with Australia's Anne Boyd.

Is it, instead, a purely *stylistic* phenomenon? No, not that either. Elgar and Ravel were composing at much the same time, yet nobody could mistake the former's idiom for the latter's, or the latter's for the former's. The contrast in creative approaches between Anne Boyd and her fellow Australian Brendan Broadstock is similarly undeniable, though the two composers were born just six years apart.

In 1923 the musicologist Percy A. Scholes, having thrashed around manfully but unavailingly in his attempt to analyse the hypnotic charm of Chopin's *Berceuse*, asked himself and his readers: 'What, after all, *is* romance in music? How *is* it achieved? ... Can anyone say? Perhaps if they could there would be no romance. Is it the employment of a sixth sense? Is it the perception of the unknown?' Maybe the undefinable is best defined through adapting a remark made by Justice Potter Stewart – of the US Supreme Court – in 1964. This judge observed that while he could not unambiguously say what pornography was, 'I know it when I see it.' And similarly with musical Romanticism. How it achieves its effect, neither

performers nor listeners can hope to explain. But we all – performers and listeners alike – know it when we hear it.

WARUM IST DAS LICHT GEGEBEN DEM MÜHSELIGEN? ('WHY IS LIGHT CAST UPON THE SORROWFUL?'), Op. 74 No. 1 –

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, 7 May 1833; died in Vienna, 3 April 1897.

The *German Requiem* excepted, Brahms's choral music has long tended to lie forgotten, in striking contrast to the continuing fame of his symphonies, concertos, chamber works, *Lieder*, and piano variations. Consequently his Op. 74, *Two Motets*, never enjoyed anything like the frequency of performance which it deserves. When not in the throes of composition, Brahms derived much of his income from choral conducting in Hamburg and Vienna. During his day and long afterwards, Germany and Austria were choir-obsessed. Even the smallest town in those countries could usually boast a choir that performed at a solid artistic level, so choral conductors were then assured of ample employment. Brahms's greatest musical loves included Heinrich Schütz's sacred works (not nearly as well known in the nineteenth century as they would become in the late twentieth). Some of Schütz's influence is perceptible in the gloomy polyphonic rigour – alternating with declamatory chords – of *Warum ist das Licht gegeben*, which dates from 1877 although its Op. 74 companion had been finished back in 1864. Part of *Warum* recycles a *Missa Canonica* that Brahms had written during his early twenties but had then suppressed. (The *Missa Canonica*'s manuscript went missing for decades, and turned up only in 1978, at – improbably enough – Cape Cod, Massachusetts.) For the motet's first three sections, Brahms used biblical texts (Job 3, Lamentations 3, James 5); while for the fourth and final section, he looked to Luther's metrical paraphrase of the Song of Simeon (Luke 2). The outcome, traces of Schütz

notwithstanding, could only have been Brahms's work. To an admirer, Vincenz Lachner, who had queried the composer's use of trombones and timpani in the predominantly blithe Second Symphony, Brahms replied: 'I would have to confess that I am a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us, and that in my output – perhaps not entirely by chance – that symphony is followed by a little essay about the great "Why?". The motet, *Warum*, casts the necessary shadow on the serene symphony and perhaps accounts for those timpani and trombones.'

Warum ist das Licht gegeben
dem Mühseligen,
Und das Leben den betrüben
Herzen;
Die das Todes warten und
kommt nicht,
Und grüben ihn wohl aus dem
Verborgenen;
Die sich fast
freuen und sind fröhlich,
Dass sie das Grab bekommen;
Und dem Manne, des Weg
verborgen ist,
Und Gott vor ihm denselben
bedeckt?

Lasset uns unser Herz
Samt den Händen
aufheben zu Gott
in Himmel.

Siehe, wir preisen selig,
die erduldet haben.
Die Geduld Hiob habt ihr
gehört,
Und das Ende des Herrn habt

Why is light
cast upon the sorrowful,
And life to the afflicted
heart?
To those who long for death, and it
comes not,
And who dig for it, more than for
treasure;
To those who are near
happiness and are joyful
That they the grave will obtain;
And to the man whose way
is hidden,
And God has covered
him over?

Let our hearts
Together with our hands
Be lifted up to God
in heaven.

See, we praise as blessed those who
have endured.
The patience of Job have we
heard,
And the goals of the Lord have we

ihr gesehen;
denn der Herr ist barmherzig
und ein Erbarmer.
Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr'
dahin
In Gottes Willen;
Getrost ist mir mein Herz und
Sinn,
Sanft und stille.
Wie Gott mir verheissen hat:
Der Tod ist mir
Schlaf worden.

seen;
That the Lord is merciful
and has pity.
With peace and joy I go
from here,
According to God's will;
Comforted are my heart
and soul,
Gentle and silent.
As God to me has promised:
death is to
become my sleep.

AS I CROSSED A BRIDGE OF DREAMS – ANNE BOYD

Born in Sydney, 10 April 1946. . (This work will not be performed in Sydney)

A former pupil of the late Peter Sculthorpe, Anne Boyd retired in 2017 from her twenty-six-year professorship at the Sydney Conservatorium, and has been a member of the Order of Australia since 1996. Probably her best-known piece is *A I Crossed A Bridge of Dreams*, dating from 1975, and embodying its composer's passionate love of mediaeval Japanese culture. It shares its title with a memoir by Lady Sarashina, who was born in AD 1008; but it does not use actual texts from this source. To quote Anne Boyd's own words:

'In at least two senses, this work barks back to the Japan of the 11th century – to me, an infinitely remote and dream-like world whose great art spanning the centuries speaks with as much poignancy and beauty to the mind and heart of contemporary man as it did nine hundred years ago. In the first place, in attempting to write a composition for unaccompanied voices I found myself drawn again to the voice of the sho, a Japanese mouth-organ whose soft, infinitely subtle and slow-moving

chords form the background sonority for gagaku, the ancient court music of Japan. The harmony is based upon the whole-tone scale with some chromatic embellishments; the chordal progressions are themselves essentially static in effect being a movement from one version of a chord to another version of the same chord ... I have chosen three of Lady Sarashina's dreams upon which the mood and "text" of each of the three sections of my own work are based.

'All three dreams take place in temples and the "magic" names of various Buddhas are phonetically transcribed and "hidden" inside the slow-moving choral textures. In the final dream the six-foot Amida shining with golden light appears with outstretched hands promising to return and fetch Lady Sarashina; it is upon this dream that her hope of salvation rests and it is at this point that my work is brought to a final cadence.'

CRUDA AMARILLI, from the FIFTH BOOK OF MADRIGALS

LASCIATEMI MORIRE, from the SIXTH BOOK OF MADRIGALS

SÌ, CH'IO VORREI MORIRE, from the FOURTH BOOK OF MADRIGALS – Claudio Monteverdi

Baptised in Cremona, 15 May 1567; died in Venice, 29 November 1643.

As British choirmaster Edward Higginbottom observed forty years back, the madrigals of Monteverdi 'run through his life like the string quartets of Beethoven, or the symphonies of Haydn.' In other words, they exemplify a genre to which the composer returned again and again, from youth to age. The first three books of Monteverdi's madrigals were respected but largely uncontroversial; it was with the fourth and fifth books that Monteverdi's troubles

began. Theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi twice (in 1600 and 1603) denounced this music for its novel harmonies, its apparent contempt for the rules of traditional counterpoint. Artusi singled out the eccentric progressions in *Crudi Amarilli* – nearly all of which occur during the first bars – for particular censure. Benefiting from seventeenth-century Italy's commendable absence of libel laws, Artusi called it a 'monstrous birth, part man, part crane, part swallow, part ox.' This invective, if anything, augmented Monteverdi's influence rather than detracting from it; and Artusi would today be forgotten had he not condemned Monteverdi in such harsh terms. After Monteverdi's death the madrigal also died out. He had expanded the form as far as he or anyone could, made it as much like a miniature opera as was possible. If the music of *Cruda Amarilli* was radical the choice of words was not: Monteverdi took his text from the once-celebrated fifteenth-century poet Giovanni Battista Guarini. As for the other two madrigals included in this concert, *Lasciatemi morire* (words by the composer's friend Ottavio Rinuccini) was first published in 1614 and reworks the only surviving music from Monteverdi's now-lost opera *Arianna*; while *Sì, ch'io vorrei morire* (poet unidentified) appeared in 1603. American critic Todd Tarantino described the latter as being 'filled with the sorts of "chimaeras" and "imperfections" that Artusi objected to'. None of these alleged faults will cause any twenty-first century listener the slightest unease.

Cruda Amarilli

che col nome ancora
D'amar, ahì lasso,
amaramente insegni.
Amarilli
del candido ligustro,
Più candida e più bella,
Ma dell'aspido sordo
E più sorda e più fera e più

Cruel Amaryllis,
who with your name
To love, alas,
bitterly you teach.
Amaryllis,
more than the white privet
Pure, and more beautiful,
But deafer than the asp,
And fiercer

fugace.
Poi che col dir t'offendo
Io mi morò tacendo.

and more elusive.
Since telling I offended you,
I shall die in silence.

Lasciatemi morire;
E che volete voi che
mi conforte
In così dura sorte,
In così gran martire?
Lasciatemi morire.

Let me die;
And what you would think could
comfort me
In such a harsh fate,
In such a great martyrdom?
Let me die.

**Sì, ch'io vorrei
morire**
Hora ch'io bacio amore
La bella bocca del mio
amato core.
Ahi cara e dolce lingua,
Datemi tant'humore
Che di dollcezz'in questo sen
m'estingua.
Ahi vita mia,
a questo bianco seno
Deh stringetemi
finch'io venga meno.
Ahi bocca, ahi baci, ahi lingua!
Ahi lingua torn'a dire
Sì ch'io vorrei morire.

**Yes, how I would like
to die**
Now, as I kiss with love
The soft lips of my
beloved!
Oh dear and sweet tongue,
Give me excess of honey
That on this breast I may
drown in sweetness
Ah, beloved,
to your white breast
Strangle me
until I faint.
Ah lips, ah kisses, ah tongue!
Ah, my tongue, repeat:
Yes, how I would like to die.

TWELFTH NIGHT

AGNUS DEI – Samuel Barber

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, 9 March 1910; died in New York City, 23 January 1981.

Twelfth Night, a Christmas carol to lines by the Englishman Laurie (Cider With Rosie) Lee, dates from 1968. At this stage Barber had lately undergone the greatest professional disappointment of his life: the spectacular critical mauling which his opera *Antony and*

Cleopatra incurred the previous year after its première at the Met. This humiliation plunged him into a state of despair and alcoholism from which, in his remaining fourteen years, he seldom emerged. But no hint of fatigue or of artery-hardening marks this piece. It takes full advantage of the potential for harmonic juiciness and word-painting furnished by Lee's florid text.

In 1936 young Barber completed what would become far and away his most famous work: the *Adagio*, originally part of his Op. 11 String Quartet. Ironically, in view of the weariness Barber would later show towards his greatest hit ('I wish they'd play some of my other pieces'), he was at first justifiably proud of what he had done. 'I have just finished the slow movement of my quartet today – it is a knockout.' In its subsequent arrangement for a full string ensemble, it attracted the admiring attention of Toscanini, who conducted its première (from memory, as was his wont) in 1938. Thence it became to American culture what Elgar's *Nimrod* became to British culture: the all-purpose funereal lamentation, used by American radio – and latterly television – networks for every time of national mourning (including the deaths of FDR, JFK, and Princess Grace of Monaco, not to mention 9/11's aftermath). In 1967 Barber, finally conceding that the work was not about to go away, made a choral arrangement of it to the words of the Latin Mass's ***Agnus Dei*** section.

Twelfth Night

No night could be darker than this night,
No cold so cold,
As the blood snaps like a wire,
And the heart's sap stills,
And the year seems defeated.

O never again, it seems, can green things run,
Or sky birds fly,

Or the grass exhale its humming breath,
Powdered with pimpernels,
From this dark lung of winter.

Yet here are lessons for the final mile
Of pilgrim kings;
The mile still left when all have reached
Their tether's end:
That mile where the Child lies hid.

For see, beneath the hand,
The earth already warms and glows;
For men with shepherd's eyes
There are signs in the dark,
The turning stars,
The lamb's returning time.

Out of this utter death He's born again,
His birth our saviour;
From terror's equinox he climbs and grows,
Drawing His finger's light across our blood:
The sun of heaven,
And the Son of God.

Agnus Dei

Soprano Soloist – Elspeth Bawden

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata
mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata
mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takest
away the sins of the world,
grant us Thy peace.

AS TORRENTS IN SUMMER, from KING OLAF
LUX AETERNA (originally NIMROD, from ENIGMA VARIATIONS)
– Sir Edward Elgar, arranged Elizabeth Anderson

Born in Broadheath, Worcestershire, 2 June 1857; died in Worcester, 23 February 1934.

Nimrod, already mentioned in connection with Samuel Barber's *Agnus Dei*, has a most intriguing performance history. In our time it automatically entails connotations of British public bereavement (it has become a fixture of Remembrance Day ceremonies at London's Cenotaph, and was recently included in the soundtrack for *Dunkirk*); yet this was not always so. Elgar never intended it – contrary to a widespread myth – as a funeral tribute to his publisher friend August Jaeger (Jaeger = Nimrod = hunter); Jaeger remained very much alive when Elgar wrote it in 1899. And as noted in the brilliant survey *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (by British scholar Robert Philip), Elgar's distinctly moderate tempo in his own recorded account never suggests unmistakable grief. When, therefore, did *Nimrod* become so death-haunted? We cannot, with any confidence, say. At any rate, the current arrangement – with Elgar's music fitted to words from the traditional Latin Requiem Mass – is by the ACC's own Elizabeth Anderson.

From somewhat earlier in Elgar's career comes *King Olaf* (1896), one of several cantatas that Elgar produced before his big breakthrough – which occurred in Germany rather than in Britain – with *The Dream of Gerontius*. From today's standpoint, these cantatas resemble trial runs for the grand opera that Elgar long hoped to undertake but never actually managed. *King Olaf* uses what was in late-Victorian England a highly fashionable poem, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Saga of King Olaf*, which depicts the tenth-century Norwegian monarch Olaf Tryggvason, credited with having extirpated paganism and with commissioning

his country's first Christian church. As *Torrents in Summer* comes at the end, and it kept a following of its own long after the rest of Elgar's score had fallen from public favour.

As torrents in summer,
Half dried in their channels,
Suddenly rise, though
The sky is still cloudless.
For rain has been falling.
Far off at their fountains;
So hearts that are fainting
Grow full to o'erflowing,
And they who behold it
Marvel, and know not
That God at their fountains
Far off has been raining!

Lux aeterna luceat eis,	May eternal light shine upon them,
Domine:	O Lord,
Cum Sanctis tuis	with Thy saints
in aeternum:	forever:
quia pius es.	For Thou art gracious.
Requiem aeternam dona eis,	Eternal rest give to them,
Domine:	O Lord,
et lux perpetua	And let perpetual light
luceat eis.	shine upon them,
Cum Sanctis tuis in aeternum:	With Thy saints forever:
quia pius es.	For Thou art gracious.

I HAD A DREAM – Brenton Broadstock

Born in Melbourne, 12 December 1952.

The tradition whereby composers write pieces in memory of other composers is a very old one, dating back at least to the late fifteenth century, which was when Josquin Desprez mourned the formidable contrapuntist Johannes Ockeghem. More recent

examples include John Blow's ode on Purcell's death, Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, Marcel Dupré's *Le Tombeau de Titelouze* [Jehan Titelouze, early-seventeenth-century French organist], and Arvo Pärt's *Cantus* in homage to Britten. With *I Had A Dream ...*, Broadstock sought to memorialise the English-born but Melbourne-resident musician and festival director Michael Easton, who died in 2004 aged forty-nine, as the result of a fall. Scored for a *cappella* SATB choir, the composition sets words of Broadstock's own. It begins and ends with an appropriately grim F-minor chord, and necessitates substantial division of the basic four vocal parts.

I had a dream,
 I had a life, I had a soul,
 A life, a mind, a soul.
 I had a dream,
 I had love, I tasted love.
 Am I a dream? A life?
 I once had a name.
 How do I know?
 Have I been good?
 Have I been right?
 Am I a dream? Am I a life? Am I a soul?
 Or am I nothing? A dream?
 I am a dream. I am a soul.
 I am a mind. I am love.
 I am in everything.
 I am a life
 And I am known.
 I am remembered.

Claude Debussy (b. 1862, d. 1918): *Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans* (1898)

1. Dieu qu'il la fait bon regarder!	1. God! But she is fair,
La gracieuse bon et belle!	graceful, good and beautiful.
Pour les grands bien que sont en	All are ready to praise

elle. Chacun est pres de la loüer.
Qui se pourroit d'elle lasser?
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.
Dieu qu'il la fait bon regarder.
La gracieuse bonne et belle!
Par de ca, ne de là, lamer.
Ne scay dame ne damoiselle
Qui soit en tous bien parfaits telle.
C'est ung songe que d'i penser:
Dieu qu'il la fait bon regarder!

her excellent qualities.
Who could tire of her?
Her beauty is ever new.
God! but she is fair,
graceful, good and beautiful!
Nowhere does the sea look on
so fair and perfect
a lady or maiden.
Thinking on her is but a dream.
God! but she is fair!

2. Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin Sonner,
pour s'en aller au may
En mon lit n'en ay fait affray Ne levé
mon chief du coissin
En disant: il est trop matin Ung peu
je me rendormirai:
Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin Sonner
pour s'en aller au may.
Jeunes gens partent leur butin:
De non cha loir m'accointeray
A lui je m'a butineray Trouvé l'ay plus
prouchain voisin;
Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin Sonner
pour s'en aller au may.
En mon lit n'en ay fait affray Ne levé
mon chief du coissin.

2. When I heard the tambourine
call us to go a-Maying,
I did not let it frighten me in my bed
or lift my head from my pillow,
saying, 'It is too early,
I will go back to sleep.'
When I heard the tambourine
call us to go a-Maying,
young folks dividing their spoils,
I cloaked myself in nonchalance,
clinging to it
and finding the nearest neighbour.
When I heard the tambourine
call us to go a-Maying,
I did not let it frighten me in my bed
or lift my head from my pillow.

3. Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain;
Esté est plaisant et gentil
En témoing de may et d'avril Qui
l'accompagnent

3. Winter, you're naught but a rogue.
Summer is pleasant and kind,
as we see from May and April,
which accompany it

soir et main.
Esté revet champs, bois et fleurs
De sa livrée de verdure
Et de maintes autres couleurs Par
l'ordonnance de nature.
Mais vous Yver, trop estes plein
De nège, de nège, vert, pluye et
grézil. On vous deust banir en évil.
Sans point flater je parle plein,
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain

evening and morn.
Summer, by nature's order,
clothes fields, woods and flowers
with its livery of green
and many other hues.
But you, Winter, are too full
of snow, wind, rain and sleet.
We must send you into exile.
I'm no flatterer and I speak my mind.
Winter, you're naught but a rogue.

Programme notes © R. J. Stove, 2011- 2018

The **AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER CHOIR** was established by Douglas Lawrence in 2007. In its first twelve years, the choir has undertaken seven concert tours of Europe, recorded five CDs and given over 200 concert performances, many of which were recorded for broadcast on ABC Classic FM or 3MBS FM.

In 2015, returning by invitation to Denmark's oldest classical music festival, the *Sorø International*, the ACC was made an Honorary Life Member and took its place alongside such luminaries as Wilhelm Kempff, Anton Heiller, Gaston Litaize and Julian Bream. On this tour and on the subsequent ones in 2017 and 2019, the choir was accompanied by a group of *Friends*. You are invited to join Douglas Lawrence and the singers of the ACC on their 2021 tour.

In Australia, the ACC has supplemented regular performances in key Victorian centres with interstate visits, performing in Canberra, Sydney, Albury, Bowral and Wagga Wagga.

In 2016, the choir expanded its regular commitments by undertaking to present all its *a cappella* programs in Sydney.

Wherever they perform, the Australian Chamber Choir is met with resounding accolades from audiences and critics alike:

"the many listeners were totally captivated by the marvellous sound conjured by the Australian Chamber Choir ... At the end ... several minutes of standing ovation ..."

Schwäbische Zeitung, Ravensburg
17 July 2015

"Impeccable pitch and articulation of the text are a feature of the ACC's performances, and throughout (Palestrina's Stabat Mater) the tempered contrasts of dynamics in response to the text was scholarly and splendid"

Classic Melbourne
12 April 2018

"The impact is magical and leaves a lasting impression" (Mozart Requiem)

Melbourne Observer
2 May 2018

"In Mozart's Requiem the ACC gave us the full range of dynamic contrasts with unified control and sensitivity, ... and Lawrence was in command of seamless tempo changes"

Classic Melbourne
12 April 2018

"This is a choir that Australia can be proud of"

Stage Whispers
25 April 2018

"a creative force that transcends faith and soars ... with a devotion and assurance that is inspirational and affirming"

Melbourne Observer, 23 November 2017

"world class"

ClassikON, 29 August 2017

"a dramatic concert which was both tremendously well-conceived and received"

Australian Arts Review, 29 August 2017

"the choir's performance is magical, confident, dancing as one entity"

Weekend Notes, 29 August 2017

"A lightning-crisp intonation rings through a naturally blended sound ... as the choir wends its way with the greatest security through music of many periods and styles"

Echo Darmstadt, Germany, 20 July 2017