Concert Report 2

2017 14th Sept.

Guildford Cathedral in Guildford, Surrey. Fr 11:15.

1 O.Respighi: Aria from 6 pieces for violin and piano P 31,

2 P.Hindemith: 3rd movement from Sonata for Violin Solo Op.31 No.1,

3 O.Respighi: Valse caressante from 6 pieces for violin and piano P 31,

4 G.Holst: A Song of the Night Op.19 No.1,

5 G.Finzi: Elegy Op.22,

6 F.Kreisler: Rondino on a theme of Beethoven,

7 E.Elgar: Salut d'Amour Op.12

8 E.Elgar: Chanson de Nuit Op.15 No.1.

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The sophisticated city of Guildford is located 30 miles south west of London. Surrounded by trees on top of a hill in the centre stands Guildford Cathedral. This relatively modern structure with its pleasingly simple lines holds a special place in the affections of local people. We had the honour of performing a concert there for the first time after the completion of extensive renovations.

The huge cathedral, shaped like a shoebox, has a considerably long reverberation time.

This acoustic quality was crucial in helping me to realize my image of 'Elegy OP.22' by G.Finzi, with its characteristic organ sound rich in subtleties. The response of the audience suggested that they had fully understood my intention, which gave me great satisfaction. With the other pieces by English composers, I was pleased to see that the audience shared my passion for them.

And in a different way, playing the 3rd movement from 'Sonata for Violin Solo Op.31 No.1' by P. Hindemith left a deep impression on me.

I performed the 4th mov. of the same piece amongst others at the concerts in the first half of this year. The composer indicates that the movement should be played with an absolute calmness in accordance with the whole of Op.31 No.1. It suggested to me a serene lake with crystal clear water. I felt I could picture a story to myself with this short piece, so added it to the concert programme. In order to realize my image of the piece, I tried to play expressing some nuances of my ideas, without straying from

the composer’ s intentions. Then while I was playing the piece, I felt there was some similarity to J.S.Bach, specifically "Gigue" from Solo Partita No.2 BWV 1004. This might indicate that the ideal of music that Hindemith was aiming for was based on the concepts of the medieval philosophers A. Augustinus and S. Boethius.

This time, the 3rd movement of this piece, which has even stronger Hindemith characteristics than the 4th, was adopted and analysed referring to ‘6 pieces for violin and piano P 31’ by O. Respighi. This movement modulates at almost every cluster of notes, and occurs more often than in the 4th movement. This enhances the effect of reverberation to bring about an exceptional sound.

Generally speaking, it is supposed that every piece played in a hall will have a certain reverberation, and its effect is fully considered at the time of composition. That is to say that a piece is composed empirically as well as intentionally, so as to harmonize the preceding and following notes when they arrive at the listener’ s ears. In the case of this movement, however, it’ s difficult for the inhomogeneous notes before and after the modulation to intermix, and they incline to jut out from the melody line. Moreover, the frequent and regular modulations exaggerate this effect. This rather negative effect has never been accepted by traditional music from the Medieval to the Roman schools, and not by twelve-tone music, either. In other words, this effect is only seen in the poly-mode music of Hindemith.

According to Hindemith' s opinion described in his book, "A composer' s world" , a composer should take into consideration not only composing techniques but also the actual playing, the audience and the size and sound of the hall etc. So the effect in the 3rd movement must have been intentional, and at least requires our understanding of his concept when we play the movement. So, in order to accept the effect in a positive way, I tried to think of this piece as a painting. In other words, I thought of the piece as being like an image on TV, proceeding as the music plays and producing a unified image at the end of the piece of music.
What kind of painting would the 3rd movement become?

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I have never come across such an approach before. In the case of a piece of music proceeding in time, we basically enjoy the sound momentarily, and then build an impression of the whole piece by integrating the decaying memories of the preceding sounds. With paintings, on the other hand, we instantly view the work. It therefore seems difficult to apply a similar analogical approach to the two forms. However, in many kinds of painting, it is possible to appreciate the expression of a particular area of the painting, and then to consider the whole painting in reference to the point. I feel it' s possible to think of a piece of music in the same way.

The overlapping of reverberation and note after the modulation in the melody may be comparable to the line of an object separating it from the background in a painting. Repeating the modulation causes the line of the object to become apparent. Does such a technique exist in painting?

Regarding the overlapping as "wet-in-wet" or blurring of colour, the effect is applied for the grading of hues in water-colour painting. J.M.W. Turner is well known for his skill in expressing the expanse of space and graduation of hue. This technique is common with Chinese and Japanese painting. However, the overlapping of notes in Hindemith' s pieces is more like a thin line in painting, which is quite different from the rather thick lines in water-colour and monochrome paintings.

Leonardo da Vinci said ' every thing has no an outline' , and traditional painting technique, particularly in oil painting, does not delineate contours of objects with single lines. We do not see sketched contours in the paintings of either Impressionism or Realism. My knowledge of painting is poor but it seems to me that outlining Hindemith' s music like this might more resemble the Cloisonnism used by Gauguin. Here, the contours of objects and areas are clearly drawn and filled in with relatively plain colours. – a technique that was taken from Ukiyoe (Japanese traditional wood-prints commonly used outlining). The black or dark coloured lines in Gauguin' s painting, with the mixture of colour on each side, is a little different, but superimposing this image of Gauguin' s work on the 3rd movement might be the first

step in helping to express it in this way.

I played the 3rd movement at the concert analyzing it in this way. After the concert, however, the audience seemed to have retained the usual negative opinion of Hindemith' s piece. As I explained above, I tried to perform the piece with a positive interpretation of Hindemith' s opinion and intention. It is possible that this might have been as a result of the audience feeling the overlapping effect more strongly than I did, which attenuated the impression of the melody. The player cannot think about reverberation so much because he must pay attention to the direction the music takes. The audience, on the other hand, must take in the reverberation as they enjoy the music, while retaining their memory of the melody.

Thinking about this, George Rouault' s paintings came to mind. Increasing the overlapping effect is like thickening the outline and strengthening its presence in a painting, which is what we see in Rouault' s painting.

So, can we make a musical image using this painting method?

This might be more difficult than in the case of Gauguin, because Rouault' s paintings give a splendid image when viewed as a whole from a little distance, rather than looking at the different areas of the painting in isolation. However, this approach would not work with music flowing with time.

Of course, professional musicians can easily get an image of the whole piece by reading through the score. However, since they can' t hear the reverberation, they can' t easily imagine

Hindemith' s piece with the overlapping effect. Consequently, his music might only be capable of being enjoyed by players who can express the concept of the piece by depicting it as a series of momentary impressions, and by listeners who are able to appreciate the cumulative effect of the music. In other words, Hindemith' s pieces are very difficult both to play and to listen to. Actually, Hindemith describes the necessity of improving the skill of the listener, and the responsibility of the musicians to do so. When we are successful in that task, his work will be played more widely than at present. He has bequeathed us a very difficult task.

In conclusion, the main theme of this concert was to play Finzi' s piece while referring to other pieces, and through this to use English pieces to better understand the British and the continental European violin music. Moreover, a sub theme was to promote a better understanding of Neoclassicism through playing the pieces of Hindemith and Respighi. I believe I was able to achieve the main objective but I was unable to achieve the second objective because I was too preoccupied myself in trying to understand Hindemith' s piece. However, Hindemith' s piece caused me to consider many different things and I enjoyed the experience immensely. I would like to thank Ms. Louise Kenyon for giving me the opportunity to have such a wonderful experience.

The End