

Gordon Kerry - Harvesting the solstice thunders (2004)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 11 January 2019 16:06 -

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1. *Nocturne, for double chamber orchestra* 11:11 2. *Concerto for cello, strings & percussion* 14:31 3. *Bright Meniscus, for orchestra* 8:54 4. *Heart's-Clarion, for trumpet & strings* 12:35 5. *Harvesting the Solstice Thunders, for orchestra* 12:35
Sue-Ellen Paulsen - cello (2) Geoffrey Paine - trumpet (4) Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra David Porcelijn - conductor

Gordon Kerry was born in 1961 in Victoria and is another in this impressive ABC Australian Composers Series with its complement of full notes and very persuasive performances. One or two of the discs seem to have been sourced elsewhere. The Sitsky Violin Concertos that I also reviewed for example originally appeared on that other prominent Australian label Tall Poppies.

Kerry is a versatile musician and a writer on music as well, at ease writing for opera as he is for community projects. He was in his early to mid thirties when he composed the Nocturne for double chamber orchestra. Kerry himself notes that he'd recently heard Berg's Chamber Concerto and it seems to have cast a creative pull. There are expressionist hints here as well, full of colour and full of incident, both horizontal and vertical. There's a limpid piano part and an occasionally chilly but by no means waspish absorption of the Second Viennese School.

A year later he finished the Concerto for cello, strings and percussion, so adeptly performed here by Sue-Ellen Paulsen. It was written for Truls Mørk. Once again the syntax is decidedly Bergian with plenty of terse and tense material. But there's also a welcome lightness and vitesse – with a cello glissando of dynamism and cushioning orchestration. Still, Kerry doesn't go easy on his audience; the finale of this compact fourteen-minute work is somewhat elliptical.

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There's a great deal of space between the Concerto and Bright Meniscus even though they were written barely a year apart. Bright Meniscus is positively Straussian in its ebullience and colour. There are even some brass calls that put me in mind of Egmont – and there are also some cinematically pulsing moments as well. Heart's-Clarion for trumpet and strings was written when Kerry was in his late twenties. With it we return to some strongly Berg-influenced writing. String textures are powerful and there's a fine section for muted trumpet – the spatial effects evoked are also worthy of note.

Finally there is Harvesting the solstice thunders which was the very work that cellist Truls Mørk heard in its premiere performance and which so impressed him that he asked Kerry for a work to perform. This one extends the range of Kerry's influences to include Debussy – there's a fine control here over pacing and structure. Tone colours are subtle and nature painting is involving. Even the more squally moments and grainier, graver textures are articulate.

Kerry's is a strong and individual voice and he's been outstandingly well served by his forces here. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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