

GUEST ARTIST RECITAL

CLIVE SWANSBOURNE, piano

*Friday, October 27, 1989
12:30 p.m. in the
Shepherd School Recital Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

- Sonata in E^b, Op. 81A* *Ludwig van Beethoven*
(1770-1827)
Das Lebewohl: Adagio - Allegro
Abwesenheit: Andante espressivo
Das Wiedersehen: Vivacissimamente
- Persona No. 2 (1973)* *Nicholas Maw*
(b. 1935)
(from Three Personae)
- Sonata No. 3 (1973)* *Sir Michael Tippett*
(b. 1905)
Allegro
Lento
Allegro
- Two Mazurkas* *Frédéric Chopin*
(1810-1849)
Op. 50, No. 2 in A^b
Op. 24, No. 4 in B^b Minor
- Impromptu in F Minor, D. 935, No. 4* *Franz Schubert*
(1797-1828)
- Two Preludes* *Sergei Rachmaninoff*
(1873-1943)
Op. 32, No. 12 in G[#] Minor
Op. 23, No. 7 in C Minor

This performance is presented in association with
Houston Grand Opera's British Opera Festival.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata No. 3 Sir Michael Tippett

Sir Michael Tippett is generally considered the greatest living English composer. His works include five operas (the fifth receives its world premiere by Houston Grand Opera this evening), three oratorios, four symphonies, three concertos, four string quartets, and four piano sonatas. His style has shifted significantly throughout his career, but especially since the fifties has emerged as one of the most ruggedly individual voices of this century. It is a complex, contrapuntal style with a constant profusion of ideas and activity, but the textures are always transparent, and the language never becomes obscure. Along with the immense energy of the music come moments of extraordinary visionary serenity, usually in the slow movements.

Sonata No. 3 is cast in traditional sonata structure of three movements, here joined together without a break. The work's primary influence is Beethoven's Hammerklavier (indeed Tippett dubbed it his "late Beethoven sonata"). Beethoven has always been the composer with whom Tippett shares the closest spiritual affinity, and in this sonata the tribute can be heard everywhere, notably in the energetic rhythmic drive of the outer movements, the serene and deeply felt introspection of the long central slow movement and the ubiquitous use of the trill.

Tippett was fascinated by the ability of the two hands to constitute opposing forces and a great deal of the writing is in two parts, often in free contrary motion. The work opens with a fierce duet in which the hands play at opposite ends of the keyboard in rhythmic canon and are soon attracted towards each other for a contrasting idea of soft, widely-spaced chords emanating from the center of the keyboard. This leads in turn to a florid and lyrical passage, and then a dotted rhythm propels the music into the development section. The opening theme returns cloaked in showers of trill. The bustle of the first movement ends abruptly and is dramatically offset by the calm still waters of a seventeen-chord theme with four variations. The initial presentation of these richly sonorous chords becomes more decorative as it progresses, sometimes breaking into sinuous two-part counterpoint. The first two variations treat the progression with complex harmonic elaboration, the third is an arioso with harp-like accompaniment and the fourth dissolves in a haze of three and four-voice trills. The finale is boisterous and athletic, a perpetual turbulence of sixteenth notes, whose irrepressible headlong career occasionally meets with the stern discouragement of a series of eight strident repeated chords, one of which finally halts it altogether.

Nicholas Maw is one of Britain's most highly-acclaimed composers. Born in Lincolnshire in 1935, he studied at the Royal Academy in London where he became interested in serial techniques. Later he studied in Paris with Schönberg's pupil Max Deutsch. Despite his early decision to abandon serialism, the harmonic language of Schönberg has remained one of his primary influences, which along with the sonorities of Richard Strauss, Debussy, and others, contributes to a rich and subtle individual style. Maw lives in Washington, D.C. and is currently Composer-in-Residence at the Yale School of Music.

His Six Personae for piano were composed in two sets of three pieces published in 1973 and 1985, respectively. They constitute his only work for piano, but a very substantial one. Some of them are of immense technical difficulty and explore a huge range of sonorities. No. 2 is the shortest, a wistful improvisatory piece with a middle section of translucent and magical arabesques in the high registers.

-- Notes by Clive Swansbourne

BIOGRAPHY

The 35-year old English pianist CLIVE SWANSBOURNE graduated from the Royal College of Music in London, and received his Doctorate in Performance from the Yale School of Music, where he was a student of Claude Frank. He has given over 200 performances across the U.S., including critically acclaimed debuts in every major city. He has been Artist-in-Residence for two years at the Lucerne Chamber Music Festival, was Founder and Music Director of the Missouri Southern International Piano Competition and Festival, and has taught on the faculties of the University of Houston and Iowa State University. He is currently teaching at the University of Texas, Permian Basin, in Odessa.

Mr. Swansbourne recently won First Prize in the Concerts Atlantique International Competition, for which he was awarded a Carnegie Recital Hall performance next winter. Other awards include top prizes at the Maryland International Piano Competition, the Royal College of Music Concerto Competition, and the Artists International Auditions in New York.

Last year Mr. Swansbourne gave the first performances of Tippett's Sonata No. 4 in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Today's performance of Tippett's Sonata No. 3 is the first in Houston, and this season Mr. Swansbourne will also give first performances of this work in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Dallas.