

St JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1-3 Holburn Street, Aberdeen

ORGAN RECITAL SERIES - BACH & MENDELSSOHN, KAMIL MIKA Organ

PROGRAMME:

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750) Toccata in F Major BWV 540

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710 – 1784) Fugue in c minor F. 32

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714 – 1788) Sonata in D Major Wq 70/5

Johann Christian Bach (1735 – 1782) Chromatic Fugue on B-A-C-H

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809 – 1847) Sonata in D Major Op.65 No.5

Those of us who attended our Members' recital in Craigiebuckler Church on the 26th March will surely remember the riveting performance by Kamil Mika of César Franck's Grande Pièce Symphonique which completed that day's programme in fine style. Today's recital of music by Mendelssohn and the Bach family will have been equally impressed not only by a fine performance which made the St James organ sound far bigger than it actually is, but also by a wonderfully educational programme that started with a glorious piece by J. S. Bach leading us through a succession of works by the Family Bach which followed on (all very different), then on to Mendelssohn who is remembered as the man who re-introduced J. S. Bach to much wider audiences, and whose organ music is inspired by the master.

Kamil Mika opened with J. S. Bach's Toccata in F Major BWV 540, an organ prelude which was actually the finest piece in the recital and certainly the most technically challenging especially in its virtuoso pedal solos which are enough to scare off many organists but which were a joy to Kamil Mika and to us in the audience. One of the essentials in playing Bach is to have great steadiness of rhythm and Kamil Mika certainly had that. The melodic writing in the piece is delightful, sounding just right, as if Bach rather than composing it had revealed to us something that had always been there, to be drawn down to us from some kind of musical heaven. Most of J. S. Bach's music sounds like that. Bound up with the melody are the rhythms of the piece including near the end explosive chords that set the seal on the music.

The following piece, the Fugue in c minor by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach did sound very much as if it had been composed rather than revealed. The theme was rather unusual in some of the directions it took that were unexpected but as played by Kamil Mika it held together remarkably well.

The Sonata in D Major by Carl Philipp Bach was really interesting as while it still had baroque elements within it, there was a definite movement towards the classical era and as the excellent programme note explained, Mozart said of C. P. E. Bach, *'He is the father, we are his children. Those of us who know anything correctly have learned from him.'*

In the first of the three movements we could hear something that suggested the orchestral string music of the classical era with its sectional contrasts something which Kamil Mika brought out even more clearly with his use of contrasting, sometimes echoing manuals. I particularly liked the slow second movement which had a certain simplicity but with a thematic melodic content that was entirely seductive for the listener.

Johann Christian Bach's Chromatic Fugue on B-A-C-H took us back to the baroque era but it had an extra layer of complexity in its fugal working out that Kamil Mika really made ring out for us especially towards the exciting conclusion.

Mendelssohn's Sonata in D Major was remarkably short but also a real gem of a piece. The programme note suggested a similarity between Mendelssohn's them and the hymn tune 'Ride on, ride on on Majesty!' and that shone through very clearly. I loved the second movement with its rhythmic pedals which drove the music forward as the programme note suggested was like a double bass line. The final movement was bright, invigorating and compelling, taking us back to the excitement of the opening work by J. S. Bach confirming another really great recital from Kamil Mika.

Alan Cooper