Programme note

**Preludes and Afterthoughts - Fantasy-transcriptions on Chopin's Preludes op. 28 (2011)**

**by Douglas Finch**

1 Premonition (Prelude in E-Minor)

2 Memory 1 (Prelude in A-Major)

3 Dream (Prelude in A-Major)

4 Whirlwinds and Sighs (Preludes in B Flat-Minor and E-Minor)

5 Memory 2 (Prelude in A Flat-Major)

6 Dirge-Canon (Prelude in C-Minor)

7 Rounds (Preludes in A Flat-Major, A-Major and E-Minor)

This piece was first written to be performed with dancers at the Laban Centre for Contemporary Dance with Susan Sentler, choreographer, and was premiered at Laban Theatre, Greenwich on 14 and 15 June 2010. The idea for the music originated with work on a musical score for Konstantin Iliev’s play Nirvana (directed by Jonathan Chadwick) at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, 2005, in which two of Chopin’s Preludes appeared in many guises. Preludes and Afterthoughts is a kind of journey through five of Chopin’s most well-known Preludes: E-Minor, A-Major, B Flat-Minor, A Flat-Major and C-Minor.

The use of direct quotations in 2 and 5 and other references are meant not only to provoke dream-like memories, but also to place these pieces into a new context, like historical characters in a drama. For example, the climactic V/b-minor chord in Chopin’s A-Major Prelude becomes a kind of idée fixe, asserting itself as an element of surprise throughout the cycle (and it sounds strangely unclimactic when it appears near the beginning of the backwards version of the A-Major in 3.) Similarly, in 1 a cadential passage linking the E-minor Prelude’s two main phrases is repositioned at the opening, in a retrograde version that seems to unveil an Eastern modality, while in 5 the A Flat-Major Prelude is reduced to a single prolonged dramatic moment (“like a love song on the Titanic”) by submerging it in sustaining pedal. Number 4, Whirlwinds and Sighs, is the most complicated of the set, combining elements of the B Flat-Minor and E-Minor, with a tango-like section, a six-part ricercare based on the E-Minor’s opening melodic ululation, and a final whirlwind of sound - reflecting the piece’s original choreography, which was inspired by a line from Marcel Proust’s poem Chopin (1896): “L’ardeur du tourbillon accroit la soif des pleurs” (the whirlwind’s ardour deludes the sob’s thirst).

The piece is in a kind of cyclic form, falling into seven movements. It is dedicated to Ulrich Dunsche.

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