

MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS

Performed by Richard and Rupert Jeffcoat

Saturday October 22nd: 7.30pm at the New Music Room Rugby School CV22 5EH

Sergei Rachmaninoff – Piano Suite No. 2

John Adams – Hallelujah Junction

Camille Saint-Saens – Variations on a Theme of Beethoven

Admission £7, further information from 024 7659 4916

PRESS RELEASE

Richard and Rupert Jeffcoat are two of five brothers brought up in Edinburgh, all of whom are musically talented. At secondary school they were lucky enough to work on two grand pianos together fairly regularly and have been enjoying both the piano duet and two-piano repertoire ever since. As Richard says, “it's a bit like Rugby Union and Rugby League: you'll risk a black eye if you confuse the two genres. Piano duet is less dramatic but much harder, because you spend the whole time negotiating elbows, and two-piano stuff is generally more clangorous but pretty good visceral fun.”

For nearly a decade Richard was on the staff of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and for a similar period Rupert was Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral. They both now live in the Midlands, as freelance conductors, players, composers and writers.

Rachmaninoff's second piano suite has four movements - Introduction, Valse, Romance and Tarantella – and was one of the first pieces he wrote after a three year depression following the poor reception of his First Symphony in 1898. Its technical complexity befits the work of a composer who was himself a piano virtuoso and the possessor of extremely large hands!

The American composer John Adams said of Hallelujah Junction (named after a truck-stop on the California-Nevada border): "Here we have a case of a great title looking for a piece. So now the piece finally exists: the 'junction' being the interlocking style of two-piano writing which features short, highly rhythmicized motives bouncing back and forth between the two pianos". Much of the rhythmic structure of the piece is based on the stresses of the word "Hal-le-LU-jah".

Saint-Saens' piano music, while not as deep or as challenging as that of some of his contemporaries, occupies the stylistic ground between Liszt (who was a great friend) and Ravel. The *Variations on a Theme by Beethoven* is based on the trio from sonata no. 18, op 31 no 2, and shows the brilliance, transparency and idiom typical of this composer's music for two pianos.

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