

WILLY BURKHARD

David C F Wright DMus

Willy Burkhard enjoyed acclaim in his native Switzerland in his short life. He was born in Evilard in the canton Of Berne on 17 April 1900 and died on 18 June 1955. He Undertook teacher training and graduated from Muristalden. He studied with E Graf in Berne and with Karg-Elert (1877 - 1933) and Robert Teichmuller (1863- 1939) in Leipzig in the early 1920s and his early tutelage shows a sense of traditionalism which remains in his work throughout most of his life. Then he moved on to Munich to study with Walter Courvoisier and on to Paris to study with Max d'Ollone.

While he continued with many studies in aspects of music in 1924 he studied composition at Berne and was appointed to the Conservatory there in 1928. He conducted choirs and small orchestras.

His health was always a problem and he suffered a severe attack of tuberculosis in 1932. From 1933 and for a few years following, he spent time in Montana and Davos for health reasons but settled in Zurich in 1942 where he taught music theory. The love and kindness shown to him by Christians in his illness drew him to this faith which was a great comfort to him from 1932 until his death. Understandably, he wrote many sacred works. He suffered severe ill health for the last 23 years of his life

All his works are of high quality and his choral works have earned him a deserved reputation, He was a prolific composer writing about an hundred works. He was a very original composer of operas, incidental music, oratorios, cantatas, sonatas, suites, serenades, orchestral works, chamber music and much else.

Putting aside for a moment his choral and vocal works, he composed two violin concertos Op 7 of 1925 and Op 69 of 1943, two symphonies Op 21 of 1926-8 and Op 73 of 1944, a concerto for strings Op 50 of 1939, a cello concerto Op 64 of 1940, an organ concerto Op 74 of 1945, a konzertstück for organ and orchestra Op 75 of 1945, a viola concerto op 93 of 1954.

There is a fine piano sonata Op 66 of 1943 and the String Quartet no 2 Op 68 of 1943

His work is cleverly contrapuntal and linear with strong hints of the baroque style. It is often serious and taut and he sometimes majors on bitonality. His oratorio *Der Gesicht Jesajas* which occupied 1933 to 1935 is a fine work in which bitonality is used with triads that are not related. This also applies to his cantata *Herbst* of 1935 and his next cantata *Blatterfall* of 1937. The sobriety is lessened in the cantata *Das Ewige Brausen* of 1937 and the music has more colour and variety.

Das Jahr is an oratorio of 1942 and probably inspired by the composer's love of nature and may be based on the seasons. The lessening of bitonality gives way to traditional tonality. It shows the Germanic influence but his usage of vocal line shows his marvellous understanding of voices.

The Mass Op 85 for a cappella choir is a serious but effective piece.

In the last year of his life he composed the Cantata *The Flood* recounting the story of Noah.

There are few recordings of this neglected composer and it is hoped that this serious omission's may soon be rectified. However his music is very serious and may not appeal to everyone.

LIST OF WORKS

Dramatic

Im Zeichen des Kreuzes, incidental music, 1938–9

Laupenspiel, op.56, radio score, 1939

Oedipus rex, op.72 (incidental music, Sophocles), speaking choruses, wind, timp, 1944
Die schwarze Spinne (op, 2, R. Faesi, G. Boner after J. Gotthelf), op.80, 1948, rev. 1954

Accompanied Choral

Choral duets, op.22/1 (C. Morgenstern), male chorus, tpt, trbns, op.22/2 (C.F. Meyer), chorus, vn, fl, 1926–8
Till Ulenspiegel, cantata, op.24, T, B, male chorus, orch, 1929
Vorfrühling (cantata, Morgenstern), op.27, chorus, str, 1930
Te Deum, op.33, chorus 2vv, tpt, trbn, timp, org, 1931
Spruchkantate, op.38 (J. von Eichendorff), male chorus, str, 1933
Musikalische Übung, op.39 (Ps xii, trans. M. Luther), chorus, org, 1934
Das Gesicht Jesajas, oratorio op.41, 1v, chorus, org, orch, 1933–5
Die Versuchung Jesu, cantata., op.44, A/B, unison vv ad lib, org, 1936
Ps xciii, op.49, unison vv, org, 1937
Genug ist genug (cant., Meyer), op.53, chorus, 2 tpt, timp, str, 1938–9
Lob der Musik, cant., op.54, solo vv, chorus, orch, c1939
Cantate Domino, op.61/2, S, chorus, str, timp, 1940
Heimatliche Kantate (G. Keller), op.61/3, Mez/Bar, unison vv ad lib, orch, 1940
Kreuzvolk der Schweiz (Meyer), op.61/4, chorus, org, 1941
Das Jahr (orat, H. Hiltbrunner), op.62, solo vv, chorus, orch, 1942
Christi Leidensverkündigung, cant., op.65, T, small chorus, org, 1942
Cantique de notre terre (J.P. Zimmermann), op.67, solo vv, chorus, orch, 1943
Mass, op.85, S, B, chorus, orch, 1951
Psalmen-Kantate, op.90, S, chorus, org, chamber orch, 1952
Ps clxviii, op.96, unison vv, insts, 1954

Unaccompanied choral

2 Choruses, op.2, 1923
Cant. (Bible), op.3, T, chorus, 1923
Motets, op.10, boys' and male chorus, 1925
8 Sprüche aus dem 'Cherubinischen Wandersmann', 2 sets op.17/1, 2 (Silesius), 1927
Ezzolied, op.19, motet, 1927; 5 Gesänge (R. Dehmel), op.26, 1930
24 Melodien aus den Hassler'schen Choralgesängen, op.30, 4vv, 1931
Das deutsche Sanctus, 2 unison choruses, 1932
Neue Kraft (suite, Bible etc.), op.34, 1932
4 Choruses, op.35, male chorus, 1936
Der Tod, chorus 4vv, 1933
Vermahnlied, 2–4vv, 1934
Bärnerlüt, male chorus 4vv, 1935
2 Gesänge, chorus 4vv, 1936
Choruses, op.47, male chorus, 1936
Die Verkündigung Mariä, motet, op.51, 1938
5 Choräle, chorus, 1939
Sommerzeit, op.61/1, 1940
9 folksong arrs. and chorus, female chorus, 1942
2 Choruses: Mon âme, bénis l'éternel, Oui, glorifiez l'éternel, 1942
Kleiner Psalter, op.82, 1949; Frühlingsglaube (Keller), male chorus, 1950
Wer das längere Lebensteil wünscht, male chorus 4vv, 1950
2 Gesänge, 2vv, 1952
Die Sintflut, cant., op.97, chorus 8vv, 1954

Orchestral

Violin Conc. no.1, op.7, 1925

Suite aus der Musik zu einem Weihnachtsmärchen, op.12, 1926
Symphony op.21, 1926–8
Ulenspiegel-Variationen, op.37 [prelude to op.24], 1932
Fantasy, op.40, str, 1934
Kleine Serenade, op.42, str, 1935
Concerto op.50, str, 1939
Hymnus, op.57, 1939
Concertino, op.60, vc, str, 1940
Violin Conc. no.2, op.69, 1943; Sym., 1 movt, op.73, 1944
Concerto., op.74, org, str, brass, 1945
Konzertstück, op.75, org, orch, 1945
Canzona, op.76, 2 fl, low str, 1945
Kleine konzertante Suite, op.79, 1946
Piccola sinfonia giocosa, op.81, small orch, 1949
Fantasia mattutina, op.83, 1949; Toccata, op.86, 1951
Sonata da camera, op.89, str, perc, 1952
Viola Conc., op.93, 1953
Concertino, op.94, 2 fl, hpd, str, 1954
Divertimento, op.95, str, 1954

Chamber and instrumental

Fantasia, op.1, pf, 1922
Variationen über ein Volkslied, op.8, pf, 1925
Inventionen, op.14, pf, 1926
String Trio, op.13, 1 movt, 1926
Kleine zweistimmige Suite, op.14a [arr. op.14], 11 insts, 1926
3 Preludes and Fugues, op.16, pf, 1927;
2 Trio Sonatas, op.18, org, 1927;
Kleine Serenade, op.15, vn, va, 1927;
Stinis Puppe Theresli, pf, 1928;
String Quartet no.1, op.23, 1929;
Variations on a *Minuet by Haydn, op.29, pf, 1930
Variations on Chorale settings by Hassler, op.28, org, 1930
Kleine Stücke, op.31, pf, 1931
Fantasia, op.32, org, 1931
Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten, partita, org, 1932
Grosser Gott wir loben dich, partita, org, 1932
Praeludium und Fuge, E, org, 1932
Was die Hirten alles erlebten, pf, 1935
Piano Trio, op.43, 1936
Sonatina, op.45, vn, pf, 1936
Suite, op.48, 2 vn, 1937
8 kleine Klavierstücke, 1938
Sonatina, op.52, org, 1938
Fantasy and Chorale 'Ein feste Burg', op.58, org, 1939
Sonata, op.59, va, 1939
Etude concertante, vc, pf, 1940
Sonatina, pf, 1940
Weihnachtssonatine, op.71/1, pf, 1940
Sonata, op.66, pf, 1943
String Quartet no.2, op.68, 1943
Suite en miniature, op.71/2, vn, pf, 1944
Serenade, op.71/3, fl, gui, c1945

Serenade, op.77, fl, cl, bn, hn, vn, va, db, hp, 1945
4 intermezzi, op.77a, hp, 1945
Sonata, op.78, vn, pf, 1946
Canzona, op.76a, 2 fl/fl, ob, pf/org, 1947
Sonata, op.87, vc, pf, 1952
Lyrische Musik, op.88, fl, va, vc, pf, c1952
Choral-Triptychon, op.91, org, 1953
Serenade, op.92, fl, cl, 1953
Suite, op.98, fl, 1955
6 Preludes, op.99, pf, 1955
Romanze, hn, pf

Solo vocal

7 Songs, op.4, 1v, pf, 1924–5
6 Songs, op.5, 1v, pf, 1923–5
4 Nachtlieder, op.6, 1v, pf, 1924
Frage, op.9, song cycle, 1v, pf, 1925
3 Duets, op.11 (F. Hebbel), 2S, vn, 1926
2 Rilke Cycles, op.20/1, B, chbr orch, op.20/2, S, chbr orch, 1927
10 Songs, op.25, 1v, pf, 1930
Herbst (cant., Morgenstern), op.36, S, pf trio, 1932
Das ewige Brausen (K.L. Hamsun), op.46, B, orch, 1936
Der Sonntag (cant., Gotthelf), op.63, Mez/Bar, pf trio, 1942
Magnificat, op.64, S, org, 1942, arr. as op.64a, S, str, 1942
9 Songs, op.70 (Morgenstern), 1v, pf, 1943
Und als der Tag der Pfingsten erfüllt war, op.84, A/B, org, 1951
Psalmenmusik, S, orch, 1953

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