

Programme Note by Chris Darwin: please use freely for non-commercial purposes

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) 'Le tombeau de Couperin' for piano (1918)

Prélude. Vif

Fugue. Allegro moderato

Forlane. Allegretto

Rigaudon. Assez vif

Menuet. Allegro moderato

Toccata. Vif

Musically, 'un Tombeau' is a piece written in memory of someone. Ravel's original six movement piece for piano is patriotically titled as being in memory of François Couperin (1668-1733), who established a distinctively French keyboard style of composition; but each of the movements is also dedicated to the memory of a different close friend killed in the first world war. When war broke out Ravel was working on his piano trio, the symphonic poem *La Valse* and a few other projects including *Le Tombeau*. He completed the piano trio in five weeks and then volunteered for service. His several attempts to enlist as an aircraft pilot were turned down on health grounds, but he finally became a driver in the motor transport corps. Despite the death in January 1917 of his mother, who was perhaps the only person to whom he was ever closely emotionally attached, Ravel finished the six pieces of *Le Tombeau* and planned to perform them. When bombing postponed the initial performance, Ravel used the time to create an orchestral version of four of the original six movements.