

10th November 2021

Essence

**“One must love humanity in order to reach out into
the unique essence of each individual.”**

Georg Büchner, Lenz

I went with a friend to see a performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in the Perth Concert Hall. It was to be given by Pavel Kolesnikov, who originates from Russia, was born in 1989 and is a world-renowned pianist. One critic describes him as ... “an engrossing musician ... with his deep and delicate sensitivity to sound ... he is a poet of the piano ...” With this in mind, I was full of anticipation. Then, onto the stage walked a slight figure dressed in black, with a dinner-suit jacket over an open-necked shirt, which was *not* tucked into his trousers. He looked about sixteen – *and he was wearing white trainers. Trainers? TRAINERS!* I ask you!

To be honest, it threw me ... but only for a moment. For when Pavel Kolesnikov delicately offered the opening notes of the *Aria* with which the Goldberg Variations begins, I was transfixed. In moments, this unassuming man had taken me to places of mystery and transcendence. “A poet of the piano” had spun a delicate and entrancing web of beauty and wonder beyond words. Trainers? A shirt-outside-the-trousers? Looking like a teenager? None of that mattered. The playing took me beyond impressions or image to the essence of the man – and that essence was quite wonderful.

The Scottish Poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, wrote in *A Glass of Pure Water*:

*Hold a glass of pure water to the eye of the sun!
This is the nearest analogy to the essence of human life
Which is even more difficult to see.
Dismiss anything you can see more easily;
It is not alive – it is not worth seeking.*

Today I dismiss the things I all too easily saw on the stage of the Perth concert hall – white trainers and a shirt that hangs loose. I commit myself to looking for what is even more difficult to see, the essence of individuals like Pavel Kolesnikov, and, hopefully, to “the unique essence of *each* individual”. That way, I might learn to love humanity all the more.

A prayer for today

*Creator God, my essence is special to you.
Help me to value the essence of others too. Amen*