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presents

THE 20th CENTURY CONSORT

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Monday, February 9, 1976
The Elizabethan Theatre

mf h/c body of INST. WITH KNUCKLE

PROGRAM

Improvisations (Variables No. 5)
for flute, clarinet, violin and cello

Richard Moryl

Three Pieces for Clarinet

Igor Stravinsky

Lux Aeterna (For the Children of the Night)
for soprano, bass flute (and soprano recorder),
sitar and two percussionists

George Crumb

INTERMISSION

Blake Songs
for soprano, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, Celesta,
harp, violin, viola, and cello

George Rochberg

Ah! Sun-flower
Nurse's Song
The Fly
The Sick Rose

Commedia I*
for flute, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet,
cello and percussion

Richard Rodney Bennett

*U.S. Premier

PROGRAM NOTES

Improvisations (1968)

Richard Moryl

"The notation used in this work is "quasi-proportional," and is independent of strict pulse or meter. The performers are not expected to make a precise translation of the notation, but rather a relative one, through their involvement with the music. The work gives a greater amount of freedom to the performer than is usually found in conventional notation." R.M.

Freedom, and it might be added, responsibility. The demanding communication and response element among the performers, replacing pulse and meter as the rhythmic determinant in the work, contributes much to its impact.

Three Pieces for Clarinet (1919)

Igor Stravinsky

Among the best-loved compositions in the clarinet literature, these pieces were written by Stravinsky near the time of his *L'Histoire du Doudat* and *Pulcinella Suite*, as he was entering his "neo-classical" phase. This is one of those works whose impact is so great that subsequent music in the genre can hardly be composed without acknowledging it, either by reflection or conscious rejection.

Along with Stravinsky's characteristically laconic language, the pieces are full at the particular balance and charm of his early neo-classical style.

Lux Aeterna (for the Children of the Night) (1971) George Crumb

This is a typically Crumbsian tour de force of color and atmosphere. Theatrical and esoteric, the music is other-worldly, involving the listener in a play of darkness and light, time and space, at once unfamiliar and beautiful.

Formally, the work alternates between sections marked "Very slow, with a sense of meditative time; pregnant with mystery," and refrains: "Masked Dance: Elegy for a Dead Prince" in which the sitar and soprano recorder play prominent parts. These sections grow proportionally shorter as the work progresses, finally merging at the end.

The Latin text is translated: "May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord. Grant them everlasting rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them."

Blake Songs (1962)

George Rochberg

"The Blake Songs attempt to reveal through voice and instrumental color the hidden, below-the-surface aspects and resonances evoked in the composer by Blake's poetry. The deceptive naiveté of Blake's verbal art is only a thin coating overlaying the dark and potent images he creates - images which appeal directly to the heart.

Each song derives its essential form from its text. The point at which the surface of the form of the music meets the surface of the form of the texts is in the use of "strophe" and "refrain."

"Ah! Sun-flower," whose vocal line is more florid than that of the other songs, expresses the mystery of time and the world-weariness of human existence. "Nurse's Song" is almost somnambulistic, attempting to capture the tenderness of love for children and its accompanying fear and anxiety, while at the same time, looking back down the corridor of time and youth. "The Fly" capsulizes the whole existence of men with incisive whimsical insight and satiric bite. "The Sick Rose" is the dramatic core of the four songs, projecting the corruption of life and the presence of evil in the midst of what is potentially good and even beautiful." G.R.

Ah! Sun-flower

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

Nurse's Song

When the voices of children, are heard on the green
And whispings are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring and your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

Blake Songs -- continued

The Fly

Little Fly

Thy summers play
My thoughtless hand
has brush'd away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink and sing;
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

The Sick Rose

O Rose thou art sick
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm;

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

If thought is life
And strength and breath;
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live,
Or if I die.

Commedia I (1973)

Richard Rodney Bennett

"Commedia" was suggested by the characters of traditional Italian and French comedy; though there is no "plot" the instruments represent these characters (except in the Ensembles) as follows: Flute - Columbine, Bass Clarinet - Pantaloon, Alto Saxophone - Harlequin, Trumpet - Punchinello, Cello - Pierrot." R.R.B.

There is a sort of carnival character in Commedia I - much a result of Bennett's choice of instruments - capable of delightful raucousness and caricatured sentiment. The work is a series of short connected sections for various groupings of instruments, the six ensemble movements serving somewhat in the manner of the chorus of classical Greek drama or the *ripieno* of baroque concerto *grossi*. These sections are in an arch-like form, the second half being a mirror of the first:

Ensemble (*Con fuoco*)

Solo (cello)

Duo (bass clarinet and cello)

Ensemble (*Grazioso*)

Trio (flute, bass clarinet and trumpet)

Solo (alto saxophone with percussion)

Duo (alto saxophone and cello with percussion)

Ensemble (*Vivo*)

Solo (trumpet with ensemble)

Ensemble (*Vivo*)

Duo (flute and bass clarinet)

Solo (bass clarinet)

Trio (alto saxophone, trumpet and cello)

Ensemble (*Grazioso*)

Duo (flute and alto saxophone)

Solo (flute)

Ensemble (*Con fuoco*)

Notes - C. Kendall

THE 20th CENTURY CONSORT

F. Anthony Ames, *percussion*
Lawrence Bocaner, *bass clarinet and celesta*
Dotian Carter, *harp*
William Foster, *viola*
Al Gifford, *flutes and recorder*
Barbara Haffner, *cello and sitar*
Kathleen Hinton, *violin*
Christopher Kendall, *conductor*
Loren Kitt, *clarinet*
Al Merz, *percussion*
Adel Sanchez, *trumpet*
Janet Steele, *soprano*
William Wright, *alto saxophone*

The 20th Century Consort wishes to acknowledge the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the April Fund, and the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation whose generous gifts have made this concert possible. The Consort also expresses its gratitude to Leni Spencer and the Public Programs Department of the Folger Library, the Catholic University School of Music, Mr. Richard Braaten, Mrs. M. H. Davidson Swift, Mr. Normand Stoveland, and others too numerous to mention.

THE 20th CENTURY CONSORT

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THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The Baird Auditorium

Sunday May 2nd, at 8:00 PM

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