

THE SMITHSONIAN RESIDENT ASSOCIATE PROGRAM
PRESENTS

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THE 20th CENTURY CONCERT



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SUNDAY, MAY 16 AT 8:00 PM
BAIRD AUDITORIUM
1976

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PROGRAM

Soli III

Ellsworth Milburn

for clarinet, cello and piano

Time Cycle

Lukas Foss

for soprano, clarinet, cello, percussion and
piano/celesta

I We're Late

W. H. Auden

II When the Bells Justle

A. E. Housman

III Sechzehnter Januar

from Franz Kafka's "Diaries"

IV O Mensch, Gib Acht

Friedrich Nietzsche

INTERMISSION

In Aeternam

Joseph Schwantner

for cello, with flute/alto flute, clarinet/bass
clarinet violin/viola and percussion

Chamber Symphony, Op 9

Arnold Schoenberg

arranged by Anton Webern for flute, clarinet,
violin, cello and piano

Like the Schönberg Chamber Symphony at the end of the program (and unlike the two works between), Soli III plunges the listener immediately into an impassioned and highly subjective musical experience and never retreats for an instant into detachment or distance. Dissonant and dense instrumental textures combined with expressive linear writing combine to give the work its emotive strength. (The sense of imminence in the quieter passages makes them as penetrating as the intervening explosive ones.) Motivic material featuring the minor second and the minor third permeates the work, giving it a compact and unified effect. Formally, the piece consists of sections of unmeasured music (in which the performers co-ordinate their parts without benefit of a set pulse or meter) alternating with successively shorter measured sections. In the middle of the piece, the performers can be heard playing a "game" of initiation and response: each player repeats a fast quiet pattern of notes over and over until someone suddenly and loudly interrupts with a new pattern - the other two must respond as quickly as possible, changing to their own next pattern. All this soon dissolves into a piano cadenza of spun-out groups of pitches played "as fast as possible," which leads back to the contrapuntal densities and dark colors which are the primal ingredients of the work.

TIME CYCLE (1960)

Lukas Foss

The four songs of the Time Cycle are not tied to each other by either motive or row. Only a chord, a single sound - C[#] A B D[#] which undergoes various alterations - serves as a unifying element. Though there is no overall musical motive, there is a literary one: the "time-motive." Each poem refers to time, clocks or bells.

I. "We're Late" W.H. Auden

Clocks cannot tell our time of day
 For what events to pray
 Because we have not time, because
 We have not time until
 We know what time we fill,
 Why time is other than time was.
 Nor can our question satisfy
 The answer in the statue's eye:
 Only the living ask whose brow
 May wear the Roman laurel now;
 The dead say only how.
 What happens to the living when we die?
 Death is not understood by death; nor you, nor I.

This poem is the most objective of the four; it is also the most "riddle-like." Auden's paradoxical inversions, "clocks do not show the time of day...Nor does the question satisfy the answer...What happens to the living when we die..." led to the final mirror canon, of which the sound is as enigmatic as the poem, but on closer examination, just as precise.

II. "When the Bells Justle" A.E. Housman

When the bells justle in the tower
The hollow night amid
Then or my tongue the taste is sour
Of all I ever did.

Housman's frightening four lines form the scherzo of the cycle. The "justling" of the bells is first introduced not by bell sounds, but by clarinet, cello and vibraphone. These become bells. So does the voice.

III. "Sechzehnter Jänner" from Franz Kafka's Diaries
(translation by the composer)

January 16. This last week was like a total breakdown - impossible to sleep, impossible to wake, impossible to bear life, or more accurately, to bear the continuity of life. The clocks do not synchronize; the inner one chases in a devilish, or demonic, or at any rate inhuman manner; the outer one goes haltingly at its usual pace. What else can happen than that the two different separate, or at least tear at one another in a terrifying manner. The solitude, forced upon me to some extent (but what else is this than being forced?) is taking an unmistakable course toward the extreme limit. Where will it lead? It may (this seems most plausible) lead toward madness. Nothing further can be said about this, the chase goes through me and tears me apart. - But then again I may, I may, be it only to the smallest degree, hold myself up, let the chase "carry me." Then where does this bring me? "Chase" is but an image - one might say instead, onslaught against the last frontier...

One of the principal musical techniques used in the cycle was suggested by the sentence, "the clocks do not synchronize; the inner one chases in an inhuman manner, the outer one goes haltingly at its usual pace." (Foss says, "it was when I came across this sentence that I had the time song-cycle idea.")

IV. "O Man! Take heed!" from Friederich Nietzsche's
Thus Spake Zarathustra (translation by the composer)

One! - O Man! Take heed!
Two! - What speaks the deep midnight!
Three! - "I slept, I slept -

Four! - "From deep dream I awoke:
Five! - "The world is deep,
Six! - "And deeper than the day.
Seven! - "Deep is its woe -
Eight! - "Lust deeper than heartache,
Nine! - "Woe speaks: begone:
Ten! - "But lust desires eternity.
Eleven! - "Desires deep, deep eternity."
Twelve! -

(the German word LUST is a composite of pleasure,
joy, lust, ecstasy.)

Nietzsche separates each line of poetry from the next by a stroke of the midnight clock. The vocal line is thus constantly interrupted; when it proceeds it takes up where it left off before. The vocal line and its accompaniment form one music which is diatonic and tonal. On another level a chromatic, atonal canon of the fourth weaves through the piece (beginning with the vibraphone and clarinet). This is time flowing by, as it were, between the strokes of the clock. These strokes form yet another music (first heard in the celesta and piano). The organization of this third (serial) music works as follows: when the "clock" strikes, say seven, the seven pitches begin their entrance on the seventh beat of a 7/4 bar. A little later eight pitches will enter on the eighth beat of an 8/4 bar. In between the 7/4 and the 8/4 there is no feeling of any bar line, though for practical reasons, 3/2 measures are indicated to keep the ensemble together. But the ear does not sense 3/2. It hears three "musics," each having its own time and tempo, each its own organization. This most highly organized of the songs is also the most lyrical. (adapted from the composer's notes for the Columbia recording)

IN AETERNAM (1973)

Joseph Schwantner

"The title, In Aeternam, in Latin means 'forever,' and relates to a set structure employed which generates thirty-six pitches in a closed intervallically symmetrical cycle or loop with each pitch of the twelve tone chromatic appearing exactly three times...In Aeternam varies between sections that present highly specified measured rhythms and sections where the rhythmic relationship of individual parts among the players is more 'performer-decision oriented.' Here the attempt was to provide a soloistic and individualistic framework for the players, within limits, which would allow for a variability of interpretation from performance to performance." J.S.

Apart from these technical matters, it might be said that the effect in this work is a remarkable synthesis of vigorous avant garde instrumental writing and music with a marked sensitivity for atmosphere and evocative sound. The piece approaches and leaves the listener as if from a great distance framing it with a sort of three dimensional aural perspective.

Inside this frame are passages in which the whole ensemble plays music of intense complexity, and passages in which the cello emerges from this texture in its solo role. At times the cello's monologues are set against a background which recalls the distance of the opening section with its other-worldly accumulation of percussion sounds (all the performers play percussion instruments), lending an especial immediacy to the variously poignant and dramatic quality of the cello writing. It is in this affective continuity, along with the tightly conceived compositional matter, which enables the work, with its diversity of musical substance, to provide a unified and moving whole.

CHAMBER SYMPHONY OPUS 9 (1906)

Arnold Schönberg

Schönberg called his Opus 9 "the climax of my first period." The work forms a bridge between the largely romantic 19th century works which preceded it and the subsequent music in which tonality is ever more and systematically rejected in favor of extended chromaticism, atonality and later, the techniques of 12 tone composition. In the Chamber Symphony, Schönberg's predilection (tempered by a concern for the projection of classical form) for intense and impassioned expressive breadth is much in evidence. In the words of Egon Wellesz, however, the work "bears evidence of the striving after conciseness of expression which was to become characteristic of Schönberg's later writing."

Formally, the work can be viewed as a large sonata form into which a scherzo and adagio are inserted, giving the overall contour of the classical symphonic form, but in one highly integrated movement. This unity is achieved through the relationship of the motivic material and by an emotional continuity which hardly relaxes for a moment during the entire work.

Originally scored for chamber orchestra, the Chamber Symphony was arranged by Schönberg's student, Anton Webern (whose influence on 20th century musical thought has been hardly less than Schönberg's own) for the present instrumentation. One can speculate that Webern's intention in arranging the work was not only to make it more accessible to performance, but perhaps also to clarify the work's musical ideas in a more economical less cumbersome setting. Yet the most striking characteristic of the work remains unaffected: the extreme density of motivic and contrapuntal writing which gives the Chamber Symphony its almost incredible quality of passionate expressiveness.

Notes by Christopher Kendall

THE 20th CENTURY CONSORT

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

F. Anthony Ames, *percussion*
Lawrence Bocaner, *clarinet/bass clarinet*
Helmut Braunlich, *violin/viola*
Al Gifford, *flute/alto flute*
Barbara Haffner, *cello*
William Haroutounian, *violin*
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