



Smithsonian Institution

Three Centuries of Chamber Music

20th Century Consort

with the Emerson String Quartet

Christopher Kendall, Artistic
Director

8:00 p.m.

Monday, May 4, 1981

Baird Auditorium

National Museum of Natural **History**

Presented by Smithsonian
Performing Arts

James R. Morris, Director

The Program

Fantasy Quintet

for piano and computer

Dexter Morrill

(b. 1938)

Ringing

Our Hearts' Delight

Ragtime

Mr. Orkis

String Quartet No. 6, 1939

Béla Bartók

(1881-1945)

Mesto—Vivace

Mesto—Marcia

Mesto—Burletta

Mesto—Molto tranquillo

Mr. Setzer, Mr. Drucker, Mr. Dutton, Mr. Finckel

Intermission

Ancient Voices of Children

George Crumb

for soprano, child soprano, oboe, mandolin,

(b. 1929)

musical saw, harp, amplified piano, percussion (3), conductor

I The little boy was looking for his voice

Dances of the Ancient Earth

II I have lost myself in the sea many times

III From where do you come, my love, my child?

("Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle")

IV Each afternoon in Granada, a child dies each afternoon

Ghost Dance

V My heart of silk is filled with lights

Ms. Shelton, Ms. Basescu, Ms. Golding, Mr. Perry, Mr. Turner,

Ms. Carter, Mr. Orkis, Mr. Jones, Mr. Merz, Mr. Day, Mr. Kendall

Notes on the Program

Dexter Morrill received his musical education at Stanford and Cornell, studying composition with Leonard Ratner, William Skelton, and Robert Palmer. He has been working in computer music for the last ten years, and is particularly interested in works which combine live performers and tape. He has received grants from the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and was recently a guest researcher at Ircam, the Boulez Institute in Paris. Mr. Morrill teaches at Colgate University, where he also directs the computer music studio.

The composer has provided the following comments on his **Fantasy Quintet for Piano and Computer**:

The work was written in 1978 for pianist Dwight Teltzer on a commission from the National Endowment for the Arts. The work is cast in three movements, with cadenza-like material appearing in the middle of the first movement and near the end of the final movement. It was my intention from the beginning to compose a work that would allow the performer to play with some degree of freedom and in a virtuoso style. Throughout most of the work, the computer is limited to four voices, each having its own speaker.

The *Fantasy Quintet* is meant to resemble a chamber concerto in terms of its volume and its frontal stage characteristic. In at least one sense, this rather traditional and perhaps heroic plan would seem to be out of step with the medium using loudspeakers, which people often view in a detached or impersonal way, yet it was that

condition which I wanted very much to investigate in the *Fantasy Quintet*. The work attempts to personalize the speakers, and their sounds are those of naturalistic instruments such as the trumpet, the clarinet, and the drum.

The musical material in the *Fantasy Quintet* varies considerably. The first movement, *Ring*ing, is based on the old bell ringing or change ringing idea. The rhythms of the four instruments (speakers) and the piano are derived from a ringing plan using two note values and one rest. The piano begins by simply fitting in with the scheme as a fifth part, but soon elaborates on the whole scheme. It reaches a point where there is no coordination between parts, but eventually the piano reenters the ringing music and ends as it began. The material for *Our Hearts' Delight* was drawn from a volume of Victorian piano music that I had bought some years ago at a local library sale. The piano performs bits and pieces of these old popular melodies in an improvised fashion against the loudspeaker sounds. The final movement, *Ragtime*, seemed like a natural piece to do for an ending, and it allowed me to use my computer brass band, which keeps getting distracted and turning into other sounds. The ragtime melodies are original, or perhaps as original as I could make them, given my hours of listening to Joplin and early jazz.

Bartók composed his *String Quartet No. 5* in 1934, while on commission from the Coolidge Foundation. From that time until the completion of the **String Quartet No. 6**, in November of 1939, Bartók worked almost exclusively on commission, making his situation appear to him something "like that of the old-time musician . . . summoned as the guest of

a *Maecenas*." In August of 1939, he was asked by Z. Székely to write a work for the New Hungarian Quartet. In mid-stream, however, Bartók changed his mind as to the dedication, and the completed work, finished only after Bartók's return to Budapest from Switzerland, was inscribed to the Kolisch Quartet, who gave the premiere performance in New York in January 1941. The Kolisch group had already performed the earlier quartets, and Bartók, who had by this time emigrated from Hungary and was thus out of touch with Székely, was naturally appreciative of the American ensemble's efforts.

The *Sixth Quartet* marks a retreat from the strictly-observed arch forms of its two immediate predecessors in the form, but this retreat must not be viewed as a sign of any weakening in Bartók's creative genius, but simply as yet another new direction. Similar departures from precedent may be observed in the progress from the first to the second quartet, or even within the three middle quartets themselves, each of which employs the large arch.

The four movements of the last quartet are each introduced by a *Mesto* (mournful) theme, heard before the first movement as a viola solo, before the second in a two-voice setting dominated

by the cello, and before the third in a three-part version. The finale derives virtually all of its material from this *Mesto* melody, which brings with it a pervading sense of despair.

The *Marcia* and *Burletta* movements both include trio sections, and each movement is ironic in flavor, with the humor of the *Burletta* of a particularly savage intensity. The violins play in quarter-tones which emphasize the surface coarseness of the piece, which yet displays consummate technical control.

The opening movement is in a rarefied sonata form, with only two themes. In addition to the readily perceptible motivic relationships, myriad smaller-scale interconnections attest to the care taken by the composer to present a work of great formal logic.

Ultimately, it is this logic which provides the creative link from the first quartet to the last. The various approaches to the problem of form serve to illuminate different facets of Bartók's musical character which, though interestingly multi-sided, always retains an admirable inner conviction.

George Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia, in 1929, received the M.M. from the University of Illinois in 1952, studied further at the Berlin

Hochschule für Musik, and took the D.M.A. at the University of Michigan before beginning a teaching career which started at the University of Colorado and later took him to his present position at the University of Pennsylvania. Despite his essentially academic career, Crumb remains an exceptionally innovative composer. The recipient of grants from the Rockefeller, Guggenheim, and Coolidge foundations, Crumb received national recognition with his *Echoes of Time and the River: Four Processionals for Orchestra* for which he was given the Pulitzer Prize in music after its 1968 premiere by the Chicago Symphony.

Ancient Voices of Children was composed at Tanglewood during the summer of 1970 on commission from the Coolidge foundation. Crumb writes of the work:

This forms part of an extended cycle of vocal compositions based on the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca which has absorbed much of my compositional energy over the past eight years. It was first performed on October 31, 1970, as part of the Coolidge Foundation's 14th Festival of Chamber Music at the Library of Congress, by mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, boy soprano Michael Dash, and the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, under the direction of Arthur Weisberg.

In *Ancient Voices of Children*, as in my earlier Lorca settings, I have sought musical images that enhance and reinforce the powerful, yet

strangely haunting imagery of Lorca's poetry. I feel that the essential meaning of this poetry is concerned with the most primary things: life, death, love, the smell of the earth, the sounds of the wind and the sea. These "ur-concepts" are embodied in a language which is primitive and stark, but which is capable of infinitely subtle nuance. In a lecture entitled *Theory and Function of the "Duende"*, Lorca has, in fact, identified the essential characteristic of his own poetry. *Duende* (untranslatable, but roughly: passion, élan, bravura in its deepest, most artistic sense) is for Lorca "all that has dark sounds . . . This 'mysterious power that everyone feels but that no philosopher has explained' is in fact the spirit of the earth . . . All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned. . . ."

The texts of *Ancient Voices* are fragments of longer poems which I have grouped into a sequence that seemed to suggest a "larger rhythm" in terms of musical continuity. The two purely instrumental movements—*Dances of the Ancient Earth* and *Ghost Dance*—are dance-interludes rather than comments on the texts. These two pieces, together with the third song, sub-titled *Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle* (which contains a rising-falling ostinato bolero rhythm in the drums), could be performed by a solo dancer.

The vocal style in the cycle ranges from the virtuosic to the intimately lyrical . . . Perhaps the most characteristic vocal effect in *Ancient Voices* is produced by the soprano singing a kind of fantastic vocalise (based on purely phonetic sounds) into an amplified piano, thereby producing a shimmering aura of echoes. The inclusion of a part for child soprano seemed the best solution for those passages in the text where Lorca

Notes on the Artists

clearly implies a child's voice. The child soprano is heard offstage until the very last page of the work, finally joining the mezzo-soprano onstage for the closing vocalise.

The instruments employed in *Ancient Voices* were chosen for their particular timbral potentialities. The pianist also plays a toy piano (in the fourth song), the mandolinist a musical saw (second song)—although a separate player may be used for the saw—and the oboist a harmonica (fourth song). Certain special instrumental effects are used to heighten the "expressive intensity"—e.g., "bending" the pitch of the piano by application of a chisel to the strings (second song); use of a paper-threaded harp (in *Dances of the Ancient Earth*); the frequent "pitch-bending" of the oboe, harp, and mandolin. The mandolin has one set of strings tuned a quarter-tone low in order to give a special pungency to its tone. The three percussionists command a wide range of instruments, including Tibetan prayer stones, Japanese temple bells, and tuned tom-toms. The instrumentalists are frequently called upon to sing, shout, and whisper.

In composing *Ancient Voices of Children* I was conscious of an urge to fuse various unrelated stylistic elements. I was intrigued with the idea of juxtaposing the seemingly incongruous: a suggestion of Flamenco with a Baroque quotation (*Bist du bei mir*, or a reminiscence of Mahler with a breath of the Orient. It later occurred to me that both Bach and Mahler drew upon many disparate sources in their own music without sacrificing "stylistic purity."

It is sometimes of interest to a composer to recall the original impulse—the "creative germ"—of a compositional project. In the case of *Ancient Voices* I felt this impulse to be the climactic final words of the last song: "... and I will go very far ... to ask Christ the Lord to give me back my ancient soul of a child."

Kenneth Slowik

20TH CENTURY CONSORT

Anthony Ames, Executive Director

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

The 20th Century Consort is an ensemble of musicians drawn from the symphonic, chamber, and solo concert worlds. The Consort, a nonprofit organization, has three fundamental aims: to perform important 20th-century chamber works; to educate a broad-based audience about the pleasures and merits of this music; and to stimulate composition in a variety of chamber forms. By offering audiences an opportunity to hear not only a few standard works, but also many other substantial though lesser-known compositions, the Consort is making an active contribution to the emergence of a larger and more permanent repertoire.

The Emerson String Quartet

Eugene Drucker, Violin

Philip Setzer, Violin

Lawrence Dutton, Viola

David Finckel, Cello

The Emerson String Quartet, winner of the 1978 Naumburg Award, is appearing in over twenty concerts this season at the Smithsonian Institution. During 1980-81, the Quartet is performing the complete quartets of Béla Bartók in

Washington, New York, Cleveland, and at Stanford University. It will appear this summer at the Spoleto Festivals in the U.S. and Italy, as well as the Vermont Mozart Festival, Festival Ottawa, Tanglewood, and the Martha's Vineyard Music Festival.

Nina Basescu, child soprano

Manhattan School of Music, preparatory division, where she is concertmistress in the junior orchestra and sings in the choir. Study with Nancy Basecu. Performed in chorus of William Schumann's *Mighty Casey*. Tonight is Ms. Basescu's solo debut.

Dotian Carter, Harp

Curtis Institute. Principal Harp, National Symphony Orchestra.

Douglas Day, Percussion

Peabody Conservatory of Music. Freelance percussionist with Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra and National Symphony Orchestra.

Kathleen Golding, Oboe

Northwestern University. Freelance oboist, Washington, D.C., National Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony.

Thomas Jones, Percussion

University of Maryland. Contemporary Music Forum, American Camerata for New Music, Theater Chamber Players.

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director, Conductor

Antioch College, University of Cincinnati. Conducting with Thomas Schippers and Louis Lane. Founder and lutenist, Folger Consort.

Albert Merz, Percussion

Eastman School of Music, Catholic University of America. National Symphony Orchestra, Contemporary Music Forum, Theater Chamber Players.

Lambert Orkis, Piano

Curtis Institute of Music, Temple University. Faculty, Temple University. Penn Contemporary Players.

David Perry, Mandolin

North Carolina School of the Arts, American University. Spoleto USA Festival, Shakespeare Festival at the Kennedy Center, Folger Shakespeare Library, Lincoln Center.

Lucy Shelton, Soprano

Pomona College, New England Conservatory. Studied with Jennie Tourel, Jan DeGaetani, Gerard Souzay. The Jubel Trio. Winner, 1980 Naumburg Award.

Jim Prichard Turner, Musical saw

Performances with Denver Symphony, Aspen Music Festival and at the Smithsonian Institution, as well as frequent television appearances.



Smithsonian Institution

May 1981

Coming Events

Sunday, May 10	Smithsonian Jazz Repertory Ensemble (Jazz Heritage Series)
Friday, May 15 through Sunday, May 17	Romantic Chamber Ensemble, (Renwick Series)
Sunday, May 17	Scott A. White Family (Black Gospel Series)
Thursday, May 21 through Sunday, May 24	Songs of Kurt Weill (Musical Theater Series)
Wednesday, May 27 and Thursday, May 28	Kathakali (World Explorer Series)
Call 357-1500 for ticket information	

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Acknowledgements

The 20th Century Consort wishes to acknowledge the National Endowment for the Arts for its generous support.

Please note

The taking of pictures and the use of recording equipment is strictly prohibited. In case of emergency, see the house manager or an usher.

Rest rooms

Located in the center lobby and Associates Court.

ANCIENT VOICES OF CHILDREN (1970)

|

El niño busca su voz.
(La tenía el rey de los grillos.)
En una gota de agua
buscaba su voz el niño.

No la quiero para hablar;
me haré con ella un anillo
que llevará mi silencio
en su dedo pequeño.

||

Me he perdido muchas veces por el mar
con el oído lleno de flores recién cortadas,
con la lengua llena de amor y de agonía.
Muchas veces me he perdido por el mar,
como me pierdo en el corazón de algunos niños.

|||

¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?
De la cresta del duro frío.
¿Qué necesitas, amor, mi niño?
La tibia tela de tu vestido.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
En el patio ladra el perro,
en los árboles canta el viento.
Los bueyes mugen al boyero
y la luna me riza los cabellos.
¿Qué pides, niño, desde tan lejos?
Los blancos montes que hay en tu pecho.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
Te diré, niño mío, que sí,
trinchada y rota soy para ti.
¡Cómo me duele esta cintura
donde tendrás primera cuna!
¿Cuando, mi niño, vas a venir?
Cuando tu carne huela a jazmín.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!

IV

Todas las tardes en Granada,
todas las tardes se muere un niño.

|

The little boy was looking for his voice.
(The king of the crickets had it.)
In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.

I do not want it for speaking with;
I will make a ring of it
so that he may wear my silence
on his little finger.

||

I have lost myself in the sea many times
with my ear full of freshly cut flowers,
with my tongue full of love and agony.
I have lost myself in the sea many times
as I lose myself in the heart of certain children.

|||

From where do you come, my love, my child?
From the ridge of hard frost.
What do you need, my love, my child?
The warm cloth of your dress.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!
In the courtyard a dog barks,
in the trees the wind sings.
The oxen low to the ox-herd
and the moon curls my hair.
What do you ask for, my child, from so far away?
The white mountains of your breast.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!
I'll tell you, my child, yes,
I am torn and broken for you.
How painful is this waist
where you will have your first cradle!
When, my child, will you come?
When your flesh smells of jasmine-flowers.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!

IV

Each afternoon in Granada,
a child dies each afternoon.

V

Se ha llenado de luces
mi corazón de seda,
de campanas perdidas,
de lirios y de abejas.
Y yo me iré muy lejos,
más allá de esas sierras,
más allá de los mares,
cerca de las estrellas,
para pedirle a Cristo
Señor que me devuelva
mi alma antigua de niño.

V

My heart of silk
is filled with lights,
with lost bells,
with lilies, and with bees,
and I will go very far,
farther than those hills,
farther than the seas,
close to the stars,
to ask Christ the Lord
to give me back
my ancient soul of a child.

Excerpts from "Selected Poems" by Federico García Lorca.
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ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

W. S. Merwin (I)
Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili (II)
J. L. Gili (III and V)
Edwin Honig (IV)