

**The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program
and
The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**

present

The 20th Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

Elisabeth Adkins, violin
Eric deWaardt, viola
Holly Hamilton, violin
David Hardy, cello

James Lee, cello
Harold Robinson, contra bass
David Teie, cello
Denise Wilkinson, viola

Guest Artist

Lucy Shelton, soprano

Saturday, April 22, 1989

Lecture-discussion 4:30 p.m.

Concert, 5:30 p.m.

**Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**

The 20th Century Consort's 1988-89 performance series is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency.

THE PROGRAM

LECTURE-DISCUSSION

Christopher Kendall, 20th Century Consort
Warren Benson, composer
Michael Finckel, composer
Nicholas Maw, composer

CONCERT

The Old King's Lament (1982)

Nicholas Maw
(b. 1935)

Mr. Robinson

Moon Rain and Memory Jane (1982)

Warren Benson
(b. 1924)

Ms. Shelton, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Teie

INTERMISSION

The Red Cow Is Dead (1965)

Michael Finckel
(b. 1945)

Ms. Shelton
Mr. Hardy, Mr. Lee, Mr. Teie
Mr. Robinson

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4 (1899)
(*Transfigured Night*)

Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1951)

Ms. Adkins, Ms. Hamilton
Mr. deWaardt, Ms. Wilkinson
Mr. Hardy, Mr. Teie

The audience is invited to join the artists in the Plaza lobby after the concert for a wine-and-cheese reception, sponsored by the Friends of the 20th Century Consort.

1989-90 Concert Series — 20th Century Consort

October 21

Music by Richard Bennett, Henri Lazarof,
Elaine Erickson, and Bruce McCombie

December 9

Works by James Willey, Jon Deak,
William Doppmann, and Francis Poulenc

January 27

Music by Chinariy Ung, Maurice Ravel,
and Frank Bridge

March 3

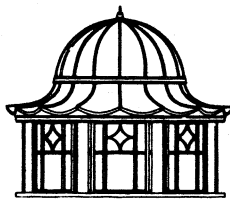
Compositions by James Primosch, Charles Fussell,
Robert X. Rodriguez, and Nicholas Maw

April 14

Music by Seymour Shifrin, Charles Wuorinen,
John Harbison, Luciano Berio, and Jan Welcher

20th Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, *Artistic Director*
Alyce Rideout, *Manager*



Smithsonian Institution

Robert McC. Adams, *Secretary*

James T. Demetrian, *Director*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Janet W. Solinger, *Director*, Resident Associate Program

Marcus L. Overton, *Manager*, RAP Performing Arts

The Resident Associate Program is the continuing education, cultural, and membership arm of the Smithsonian Institution for metropolitan Washington, and relies on the support of its more than 60,000 members to support its activities. The Program brings distinguished performing artists to the Washington area in more than 100 performances annually. Please telephone 357-3030 for membership information.

Please note:

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment
are strictly prohibited.

Restrooms are located in the lower lobby adjacent to the escalators.

NICHOLAS MAW: The Old King's Lament

Born in Grantham, England, and now residing in Washington, Nicholas Maw has composed voluptuous music that does not turn its back on the traditions of the past, even when it projects the composer's own personal vision. In addition to a considerable amount of passionate instrumental music, he has produced a substantial body of work for voice, ranging from song-cycles such as The Voice of Love for mezzo-soprano and piano through the three-act opera The Rising of the Moon, composed for Glyndebourne, to settings of old Italian poems in La Vita Nuova, performed earlier this season by the Consort.

Composed as the test piece required of all participants in the 1982 Isle of Man International Double Bass Competition, The Old King's Lament is at once a technical tour-de-force for the soloist, who creates the very voice of the title character in his performance, and a highly expressive interpretation of the character and personality of the "old king." It is a dramatic study in contrasts, and of disintegration, with three very different kinds of music depicting varying states of mind.

The following commentary was provided by the composer:

This piece is a portrait in music of the character of King Lear. It is prefaced by some lines from the play:

"...A poor, infirm, weak, and despised
old man...
...my cue is a villainous melancholy,
with a sign like Tom o' Bedlam...
Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!
rage! blow!"

Taking my cue from these lines (not all of them spoken by Lear), I have attempted to portray the king's melancholy and awareness of his own fate (the canto-like theme heard at the beginning), his sudden outbursts of rage (the agitato repeated-note music), and his descent into madness (a repeated tritone played pizzicato, the rough stamping motive that frequently interrupts the main flow of the music, the eerie end of the piece, and the frequent sense of dislocation throughout.) All these elements are developed and juxtaposed throughout the piece not, as is often the case, to achieve closer integration, but rather to emphasize ever more strongly their opposing characteristics.

WARREN BENSON: Moon Rain and Memory Jane

After study at the University of Michigan, Warren Benson joined the Detroit Symphony as timpanist. As a composer, however, he is essentially self-taught. This has not stood in the way of an impressive teaching career, beginning in 1953 at Ithaca College and continuing (in 1967) at the Eastman School, where he was named Kilbourn Professor in 1980 and University Mentor in 1984. Much of his output makes use of percussion, naturally enough, but by no means all of it; and the range of his musical expression can be glimpsed in a partial list of organizations which have commissioned work from him--the New York Choral Society, the Kronos Quartet, the United States Air Force Band, the Pendulum Jazz Duo, and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

Composed for Lucy Shelton, Moon Rain and Memory Jane employs three melody instruments--soprano and two celli--to achieve an almost unimaginably wide range of textural combinations. A 1980 Guggenheim Fellowship enabled Benson to undertake the final organization of the texts (six short poems by as many poets assembled over a period of 20 years) and set them to music. Two poems dealing with death frame the work; both are by personal friends of the composer, May Swenson and Liz Rosenberg. The remaining texts elevate common, even prosaic, subjects like housekeeping or nursery rhymes to a level of high seriousness.

MICHAEL FINCKEL: The Red Cow Is Dead

Already composing as a child in his native Bennington, Vermont, Michael Finckel heard a performance of his first effort, a string quartet, at the age of nine. Early studies with Louis Calabro and at Bennington College were followed by sessions on composition, orchestration, and conducting with Henry Brant. Finckel is also an active instrumentalist; in a 1980 appearance with the Vermont State Symphony, he not only conducted the premiere of his own Cello Concerto (in which his brother was soloist), but also undertook the solo part in the Dvořák Cello Concerto.

His compositions, mostly chamber works, feature a wide variety of instrumental combinations. He applies dramatic, even theatrical procedures, exploring new technical means for his personal expressive ends. Here is his brief commentary on The Red Cow Is Dead:

This setting of E. B. White's poem The Red Cow Is Dead was composed in 1965 during a spring study break from Oberlin College and was intended to be included in a group of humorous poems by E. B. White concerning various members of the animal world. The cycle--to be called "Pierrot Bestiale" (an unabashed parody of Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire)--is represented, to date, by this single work, originally scored for a quartet of celli and speaking voice. In it, the horrible fate of Sir Hanson Rowbotham's red polled cow is dramatically eulogized. A death knell is heard throughout and the unlucky cow is finally laid to rest with a chorus of tolling bells.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG: Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night), Op. 4

Written at the very end of the nineteenth century, Verklärte Nacht's popularity certainly has something to do with the work's palpable links to the era that was ending, but it is at the same time a remarkably forward-looking work that foreshadowed the music to come which established Schoenberg as a giant among twentieth century composers.

Throughout the 1890s Schoenberg had composed string quartets, the medium he knew best as a performer (he played the cello). Most of these he destroyed, but one score--an enormously assured and competent quartet in D, dating from 1897--shows how much he had learned in his self-directed study, and from his few formal lessons with his friend Alexander von Zemlinsky. Yet even this could scarcely prepare us for the artistic maturity of the string sextet he was to create two years later.

Like so many Schoenberg scores, Verklärte Nacht was composed at a furious pace, the bulk of the work being completed in just three weeks in September, 1899, though the composer did not sign and date the score until December 1. The overt inspiration was a poem by Richard Dehmel (1863-1920) whose Weib und Welt (Woman and World) had made something of a stir in 1896 when government censors found some of the poems offensive. Schoenberg set texts from this book almost at once in the early songs of Opus 2 and 3. Verklärte Nacht was a natural choice as an inspiration for the composer, since Dehmel's poem is laid out almost in a musical way. The last line, for example, is a transformed echo of the opening line, a device that is brilliantly mirrored in Schoenberg's music.

The poem is laid out in five short sections, of which the first, third, and fifth are impersonal narration describing the unnamed man and woman walking along on a moonlit night. At first the natural surroundings seem cold and bare. The second section is a speech by the woman, who confesses that she carries another man's child. Before she met her companion, she explains, she had felt that motherhood would provide her with purpose. Now she has fallen in love with him and must confess her fault. A brief narrative interlude describes her faltering step and the moonlight flooding down upon them. The man's response comprises the fourth section of the poem. He is understanding and magnanimous. The radiance of the natural world convinces him that the love they feel will draw them together and make the child theirs as well. The poem closes with another description of the moonlit night--now bright with hope.

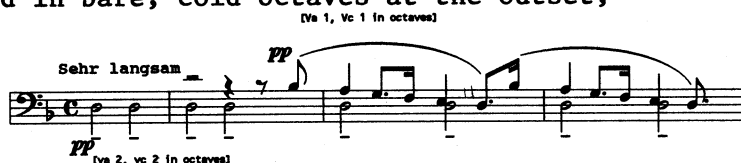
Perhaps the biggest surprise in the score is Schoenberg's decision to write a piece of program music on this scale for a chamber ensemble, especially as the medium chosen--two each of violins, violas, and celli--was a new one for the composer. It had been

used twice by Brahms, whom Schoenberg greatly admired. Yet the style reflects the composer's new absorption of Wagnerian chromaticism (indeed, one of the most notorious comments ever made about this work came from a Vienna Tonkünstlerverein program reviewer charged with deciding whether to recommend new works for performance: it looked, he said, as if the score for Tristan had been smeared while the ink was still wet.)

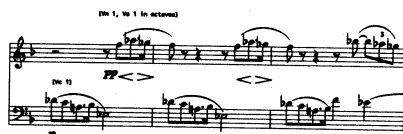
For all its reflection of the original poem, though, Verklärte Nacht thoroughly transcends the usual point-to-point descriptiveness of run-of-the-mill romantic program compositions and provides a completely satisfying musical shape on its own terms. It is the first of many works--including the Kammersymphonie and Pelléas und Melisande--that Schoenberg lays out as a large single-movement sonata. It is, in fact, a double sonata, following the five sections of Dehmel's poem. The "narrative" parts are quite brief, but the second and fourth sections (representing the words of the woman and the man, respectively) are full-scale sonata forms, the first in D minor and the second in D Major (through it must be remembered that these keys are already stretched considerably in their tonal function.) Moreover, the second of these two sections is built out of musical ideas that affirm expressive ideas heard more tentatively in the first. From the literary point of view, this can be seen as a reflection of the woman's anguish on the one hand and the man's generous confidence on the other. But it functions equally well from a purely musical point of view, with the second sonata section truly completing and "transfiguring" the first.

Schoenberg is so prodigal in inventing gradual transformations of his themes that the listener can discover new relationships even after many hearings of the score. The few examples given here barely begin to indicate the wealth of his imagination.

The nocturnal scene, with its two walking figures, is represented by a soft march-like descending line, heard in bare, cold octaves at the outset,



but transformed at the very end of the score into a passage shimmering with light. The first sonata-form section, in the minor mode, includes the following split-level theme, divided between the cello and upper parts.



Later on, this very "Tristanesque" material serves as a "second theme":



The second sonata-form section opens with this characteristic figure in the cellos (the man's voice?):



but it immediately develops thematic ideas heard earlier as well, now predominantly in the major. New sonorities and the major mode reinforce the melodic development to provide a rich, satisfying conclusion in which the "transfiguration" of the night is musically suggested by Schoenberg's eloquent and shimmering transformation of the opening music.

TEXTS

MOON RAIN AND MEMORY JANE

I. WHY WE DIE

Saw a grave
upon a hill
and thought
of bones
as still
as sticks
and stones
and thought
that mouldering flesh
is worth
as much as earth
and wondered why
we die
and said
because we want to die
and be as dead
as things that
lacking thought beget
no hope and no regret
No man yet
has dared to stay
within himself
till death
dissolved away
Hunger makes him break the fast
and take a taste of death at last
Who'll forego
the craving
who will be
discoverer of
eternity?
MAY SWENSON

II. CHILD'S GAME

Tick-A-Lock rock-a-bye
chopper-chin peeper-eye
Janey with a crooked smile
switched her pony-tail and blew
all three candles peek-a-boo
toddled all her crooked mile
upsy-daisy ring-around
ashes ashes we all fall down
night night sleep tight
we all fall down hands around
hands are home fingers steeple
open the door blackbirds soar
all the while a crooked file
of moon rain and memory Jane
hide-and-seek in hearts of people
see the pretty petals close
dreaming comes gaming goes
night night sleep tight

JUDSON JEROME

III. TO MY FATHER

You gathered incredible strength
in order to die
to seem calm and fully conscious
without complaint, without trembling
without a cry
so that I would not be afraid
Your wary hand
slowly grew cold in mine
and guided me carefully
beyond into the house of death
so I might come to know it
Thus in the past you used to take my hand
and guide me through the world
and show me life
so I would not fear
I will follow after you
confident as a child
toward the silent country
where you went first
so I would not feel a stranger there
And I will not be afraid.

BLAGA DMITROVA

English translation by Joanna Bankier

PLEASE TURN THE PAGES QUIETLY AND ONLY
AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH SONG....

THANK YOU...

IV. DUST

Agatha Morley
All her life
Grumbled at dust
Like a good wife.

Dust on a table,
Dust on a chair,
Dust on a mantel
She couldn't bear.

She forgave faults
In man and child
But a dusty shelf
Would set her wild.

She bore with sin
Without protest,
But dust thoughts preyed
Upon her rest.

Agatha Morley
Is sleeping sound
Six feet under
The mouldy ground.

Six feet under
the earth she lies
With dust at her feet
And dust in her eyes.

SYDNEY KING RUSSELL

V. MOURNING POEM FOR THE QUEEN OF SUNDAY

Lord's lost Him His mockingbird,
His fancy warbler;
Satan sweet-talked her,
four bullets hushed her.
Who would have thought
she'd end that way?

Four bullets hushed her. And the world a-clang with evil.
Who's going to make old hardened sinner men tremble now
and the righteous rock?
Oh who and oh who will sing Jesus down
to help with struggling and doing without and being colored
all through blue Monday?
Till way next Sunday?

All those angels
in their cretonne clouds and finery
the true believer saw
when she rared back her head and sang,
all those angels are surely weeping.
Who would have thought
she'd end that way?

Four holes in her heart. The gold works wrecked.
But she looks so natural in her big bronze coffin
among the Broken Hearts and Gates-Ajar,
it's as if any moment she'd lift her head
from its pillow of chill gardenias
and turn this quiet into shouting Sunday
and make folks forget what she did on Monday.

Oh, Satan sweet-talked her,
and four bullets hushed her.
Lord's lost him his diva,
His fancy warbler's gone.
Who would have thought,
who would have thought she'd end that way?

ROBERT HAYDEN

VI. ENDLESS LIFE

Let me lay my hand on the head of the Reaper
at the moment of death when the curtains part
for mourners drawn to the feet of the still sleeper.

The River Styx tonight lies overlapping Baltimore,
a city languorously shining. And the body, worn
thin as a shall, makes its last journey.

We the living feel the wave creep by
which carries it off. Then silence drifting,
a slow pull of darkness from below;

and faith spins out the rescuer's rope
from which we learn to hang--
till in the end the waters open.

Gathered into a knot, and flecked
with foam, loom the survivors:
the bright sould, immortal lovers.

LIZ ROSENBERG

THE RED COW IS DEAD

Toll the bell, fellow, this is a sad day at Wellow:
Sir Hanson's cow is dead,
his red cow bitten on the udder by an adder.

Spread the bad news!
What is more sudden,
what sadder than udder stung by adder?
He's never been madder, Sir Hanson Rowbotham.
The red polled cow is dead.

The grass was lush at very last,
and the snake (a low sneak)
passed, hissed, struck.

Now a shadow goes across the meadow,
Wellow lies fallow.
The red polled cow is dead,
and the stories go round.

"Bit in the teat by a dog in a fit."
"A serpent took Sir Hanson's cow--
a terrible loss, a king's ransom."

A blight has hit Wight:
the lush grass, the forked lash,
of adder torn, bleeding udder;
the cow laid low, the polled cow dead,
the bell not yet tolled (a sad day at Wellow.)

Sir Hanson's cow never again to freshen,
never again bellow with passion--
a ruminant in death's covenant,
smitten, bitten, gone.

Toll the bell young fellow.

E. B. WHITE