



The Smithsonian Associates
presents

20th Century Consort

December 18, 1993

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Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director and Conductor

Eliza Garth, Piano
Thomas Jones, Percussion
Christopher Kendall, Conductor
Lisa Emenheiser Logan, Piano
~~Albert Merz, Percussion~~
Joseph McIntyre, Percussion
S. Mark Alizpoulios, Baritone
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Saturday, December 18, 1993

Lecture-Discussion 6:30 p.m.

Concert 7:30 p.m.

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

The 20th Century Consort's 1993-94 performance series
is funded in part by
the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency,
and the Smithsonian Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Arts and Humanities.



Lecture-Discussion

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director, 20th Century Consort

Concert

"CHESTNUTS"

A Little Suite for Christmas, A.D. 1979

GEORGE CRUMB
b. 1929

The Visitation
Berceuse for the Infant Jesus
The Shepherd's Noël
Adoration of the Magi
Nativity Dance
Canticle of the Holy Night
Carol of the Bells

Mandala

ROLF WALLIN
b. 1957

Intermission

Songs for Christmas

EDVARD GRIEG
(1843-1907)

Symphonic Dances, Opus 45

SERGEY RACHMANINOFF
(1873-1943)



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

The Program

GEORGE CRUMB

A Little Suite for Christmas, A.D. 1979

George Crumb (b. 1929, Charleston, West Virginia) grew up in a musical family and learned from childhood to play the clarinet and piano. He took his undergraduate degree in composition at Mason College of Music and Fine Arts in his native Charleston, then went to the University of Illinois for his master's degree. In the summer of 1955 he was a composition fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. Meanwhile he was working toward his D.M.A. at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Ross Lee Finney, who, after his father, became the strongest musical influence on him. He has been on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania since 1965. In addition to numerous grants and awards from the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for *Echoes of Time and the River*.

Crumb's early music grew out of short musical subjects in which timbre played as important a role as pitch and rhythm. His music has continually been marked by an extraordinarily refined ear for color and astonishing inventiveness in the creation of sounds, often using novel methods of tone production, occasionally with amplification to pick up the delicate overtones that might be lost otherwise. Much of his music has been programmatic, often drawing on a zodiacal cycle or number symbolism or such quasi-dramatic elements as masked performers, to serve the cause of musical illustration with vivid sounds, ranging from the sweet and delicate to the threshold of pain.

Crumb wrote *A Little Suite for Christmas, A.D. 1979* for Lambert Orkis. He drew his original inspiration from the famous Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy, a modest, unprepossessing building that houses one of the world's great artistic monuments; it is there that Giotto painted, early in the fourteenth century, a series of frescoes, in separate panels, illustrating the life of Jesus. These influential frescoes were among the earliest great achievements of Renaissance art, signalized by a wonderfully sensitive portraiture embedded within a design of bold color and an overall intellectual scheme of wonderful balance.

Crumb's suite consists of seven short movements depicting aspects of the Christmas story, of which the first and the fourth are specifically based on panels in the Arena Chapel; the others are musical depictions of images that Giotto himself did not paint: (1) The Visitation; (2) Berceuse for the Infant Jesus; (3) The Shepherd's Noë; (4) Adoration of the Magi; (5) Nativity Dance; (6) Canticle of the Holy Night; and (7) Carol of the Bells. Crumb's writing for the piano is always assured and imaginative, with colorful effects using resources such as pizzicati and string harmonics (both played inside the instrument) and the extended use of the pedal for bell-like sounds. The work ranges from the most extroverted expression of joy to a very intimate sense of mystery.

EDVARD GRIEG

Christmas songs

Edvard Grieg's 150th birthday has been celebrated this year in Norway with major festivals and special publications. Elsewhere in the world, the celebrations have been more modest. Nonetheless, Grieg remains one of the most lovable composers of the nationalist European schools. Hans von Bülow called him "the Chopin of the North," referring, no doubt, to his predilection for the piano, but also to his ability to encapsulate melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements from the folk music of his native country and turn it into elegant miniatures (and sometime larger pieces) with which he enchanted the rest of the world. Outside of Norway, audiences know the music to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and the Piano Concerto, plus a selection of the piano pieces and perhaps a few chamber works. His songs remain, by and large, unknown, simply because few singers undertake the study of Norwegian. And yet Grieg's 140 songs comprise a splendid body of work, richly evocative, atmospheric, superbly vocal. He learned how to write for the voice because he fell in love with and married "a young girl who had a wonderful voice and an equally wonderful gift of interpretation." And it was for his wife Nina that he composed virtually all of his early songs, and many of the later ones as well.

SERGEY RACHMANINOFF

Symphonic Dances, Opus 45

Most of Rachmaninoff's activity in his last years was devoted to concertizing as a pianist and committing his works to records. In 1940 he composed what proved to be his last work. Oddly enough, though he had spent a good part of his time in this country from as early as 1918, the *Symphonic Dances* was the first score actually written here. Previously he had retreated during summer breaks from his exhausting concert tours to a villa near Lucerne, Switzerland. The outbreak of war in 1939 had caused Rachmaninoff to leave Europe for the last time and to settle first on Long Island and later in the still-salubrious air of Beverly Hills.

As with so many of his compositions, the *Symphonic Dances* caused him a great deal of anxiety, but he finished the main work of composition rather quickly. When, on 21 August 1940, he first announced completion of the score to its dedicatee Eugene Ormandy, it bore the title *Fantastic Dances*. By the time of the premiere, he had changed the name to *Symphonic Dances*, fully appropriate given the scope and richness of the score. Rachmaninoff's original intention had been to give the three movements the titles "Midday," "Twilight," and "Midnight" (possibly intended as an analogy with youth, maturity, and death), but these did not survive the process of orchestration, and he eventually settled on the tempo designations alone. For a time he negotiated with the choreographer Leonid Fokine about the idea of creating a ballet, as Fokine had already done with the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Fokine's death soon after left Rachmaninoff sad and bitter: "Chaliapin, Stanislavsky, Fokine—this was an epoch in art. Now all are gone! And there's no one to take their place. Only trained walrus are left, as Chaliapin used to say."

Rachmaninoff decided to write in the first movement an extended part for saxophone, an instrument for which he had never written before. Concerned to choose the proper member of that family of instruments, he consulted his friend Robert Russell Bennett, best known as Broadway's leading orchestrator for four decades or more, the man who created the "sound" of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, among many others. Bennett's recollections give us a charming and unusual glimpse of the usually sober and dour Rachmaninoff:

At that time he played over his score for me on the piano and I was delighted to see his approach to the piano was quite the same as that of all of us when we try to imitate the sound of the orchestra at the keyboard. He sang, whistled, stamped, rolled his chords, and otherwise conducted himself not as one would expect of so great and impeccable a piano virtuoso.

Though the premiere by the Philadelphia Orchestra was reasonably successful, a repetition in New York soon after was critically panned. The *Symphonic Dances* entered into a limbo from which the work has only recently emerged, a change that has been concurrent with a general reevaluation of Rachmaninoff's work as a whole. The orchestral version is heard with considerable frequency; but like many composers of his generation, Rachmaninoff prepared a version for two pianos, which (unlike his solo piano performance for Bennett) allowed him to retain all of the musical material.

Like so much of his music, the *Symphonic Dances* contain some references to the chants of the Russian Orthodox church, and it quotes the Roman Catholic *Dies irae* melody as well, a tune used by Rachmaninoff probably more frequently than by any other composer in the history of music. The score also gave the composer an opportunity to come to terms with the most catastrophic failure of his life—and this coming-to-terms was, in his mind, an entirely private affair, one that he did not expect us ever to recognize. The premiere of his First Symphony in 1897 under the baton of Alexander Glazunov—reputedly drunk at the time—must have been indescribably bad, to such an extent that the manuscript was put aside for revisions (never made) then apparently lost in the Russian Revolution. Only after his death did the orchestral parts turn up in the Leningrad Conservatory. The failure of the symphony at its premiere had deeply affected Rachmaninoff. Evidently he still recalled his greatest failure in 1940, since the coda to the first movement of the *Symphonic Dances* quotes the first theme of his First Symphony, music that he was sure no one would ever hear again—only he turned the darkly somber melody into something altogether more resigned, as if all that he had produced in the meantime had somehow laid to rest the bogey of that first bitter failure.

A brief introduction hints at the most prevalent rhythm of the first movement before presenting one of the two main themes in the orchestra's aggressive block chords. Immediately the principal material, built on a descending triad in a characteristic rhythm (two sixteenth-notes as

pickup to an eighth-note), begins its elaboration, through varied harmonies and orchestral colors. The middle section begins wonderfully with a gently rocking figure that becomes the background to a ravishing melody. The return to the opening material comes by way of a developmental passage based on the principal themes of the opening. After elaborate development, the home key of C minor closes into C major; here begins the coda, in which Rachmaninoff converts the dark, chantlike theme from his failed First Symphony into something altogether consoling in the major, a broad melody set against brightly kaleidoscopic figures.

Though written in 6/8 time, the second movement is a waltz, but not one of those lilting carefree Viennese waltzes that seduces the listener into *joie de vivre*; it is altogether more melancholy. It is oddly chromatic, turning strange melodic corners. When the theme begins to run in parallel thirds (a technique characteristic of the most sugary romantic waltzes), we hear that the sweetness has turned to vinegar. These waltzes are resigned and anxious by turn. They recall the end of an era—much as Ravel's *La Valse* does, and as Stephen Sondheim was later to do in his waltz score to *A Little Night Music*, the harmonic turns of which recall Rachmaninoff's waltz etched in acid.

The last movement harks back to two of Rachmaninoff's favorite sources for thematic inspiration: the chant of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, and the *Dies irae* melody of the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead—unlikely source material for a dance piece! But here, as in many of his earlier pieces, Rachmaninoff subjects his musical ideas to rhythmic syncopations which some commentators have wanted to link to the influence of American jazz or other dance music; but given his old predilection for the device, the connection seems unlikely. The *Dies irae* appears in the outer sections of the movement, sometimes quite plainly, sometimes cleverly disguised. An important new theme is a rhythmically disguised version of the Russian chant sung to the words "Blessed be the Lord" as set by Rachmaninov himself in his *All-Night Vigil* of 1915. It forms the basis for a lengthy exhilarating dance passage. Shortly before the end of the work, Rachmaninoff introduces a new chant-related melody; this coda is, in effect, a transcription of part of that *cappella* choral work. It is perhaps at the same time the composer's own hymn of thanks for having the strength and imagination to finish this, his last, score. Rachmaninoff's thoughts are made still clearer at the end of the manuscript, where he wrote the words, "I thank thee, Lord."

Notes by Steven Ledbetter

ROLF WALLIN
Mandala

Rolf Wallin (b. 1957, Oslo) is a leading figure in contemporary Norwegian music; he is currently living in Oslo, where he works as composer and teacher. Wallin's principal studies took place at the Norwegian State Academy of Music, where his teachers included Finn Mortensen and Olav Anton Thommessen. But it was a year spent in the United States, at the University of California in San Diego, a hotbed of advanced musical thought and experimentation, that played the most direct role on the style of his Mandala for two percussionists and two pianists. He was in San Diego when he completed the work, on October 20, 1985, though he revised it somewhat the following year. He composed Mandala for the Oslo new-music ensemble K4, which has recorded the piece on the Albedo label.

Wallin began as a performer in experimental jazz and rock groups, and this direct and varied experience has played a role in his own composition as well, particularly in his interest in performance art. San Diego is home to many composers of advanced tendencies who have, in various ways, combined elements of minimalism or repetitive music, of non-western (and especially Asian) music, of computer-oriented technology and higher mathematics, particularly the recent development of fractal theory. Many of his works are conceived for the stage, and even abstract concert compositions, like Mandala, have an undeniable visual/theatrical element.

The word "mandala" (from the Sanskrit word for "circle") refers to a circular design containing concentric geometric forms that symbolize the universe of the totality of all things in Hindu and Buddhist thought. The second and fourth parts of this five-movement work are described by the composer as the "large mandala" and the "small mandala." As the composer notes in the score, "the large mandala starts at the edges of the page and moves toward the center in a clockwise spiral." If there is no conductor (an option offered by the composer), the instruments visually cue one another's entrance according to timings on a clock that is reset at the beginning of the second movement. Otherwise the cues are naturally given by the conductor. The last movement is the "small mandala," which begins in the center of the page, "the other lines creating an outward-going clockwise spiral."

The movements of this 16-movement work overlap; each player has segments of musical material, or modules, that are to be repeated or presented in certain specific ways, though with a certain flexibility of timing inside the overall scheme. Entries are cued as to the earliest point at which a player is to introduce the next musical idea, though the performers are adjured "to continue their current line some seconds more" before shifting to the new material in order to create a smooth and gradual transition between old and new material.

S. MARK ALIAPOULIOS, baritone, has appeared as a soloist with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, performing with such leading international conductors as Leonard Slatkin, Seiji Ozawa, Erich Leinsdorf, and Lukas Foss. In the area of contemporary music, he has premiered works by Daniel Pinkham and Kenneth Fuchs written especially for him. He sang the role of the father in the world premiere of The Juniper Tree by Philip Glass at the American Repertory Theatre and created the role of Creon in the world premiere of Medea by Ray Luke. He is the baritone for the American VocalArts Quintet (prize winners in the 1987 Concert Artists Guild Competition) and has recorded with them on the Titanic label. Mr. Aliapoulos is currently Assistant Professor of Voice and Director of the Undergraduate Opera Program at Boston University.

JOSEPH MCINTYRE, percussionist, earned degrees in music performance and education from the University of Maryland. As an Affiliate Artist, McIntyre has performed solo marimba concerts throughout the United States and Japan. In the orchestra field, he has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra, the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, the National Gallery Orchestra, the Richmond Symphony, and is currently Principal Timpanist for the Maryland Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Barry Tuckwell. McIntyre founded One Earth Percussion Theatre in 1993.

About the Artists

CHRISTOPHER KENDALL, Artistic Director and Conductor, is also founder and lutenist of the Folger Consort. He regularly conducts the symphony and chamber orchestras at the Juilliard School in New York, and from 1987-1992 he served as Associate Conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. His recent guest conducting appearances include the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in Canada, Music Today Ensemble, San Francisco Chamber Symphony, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Mr. Kendall has recorded on the Delos, Nonesuch, Bard and Smithsonian Collection labels.

THOMAS JONES, Percussionist, graduated from the University of Maryland and is a freelance musician who enjoys playing many styles of music. He plays drums and percussion at the Kennedy Center, National Theater, and Wolf Trap. He is the timpanist with the Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra, percussionist with the 20th Century Consort and works regularly as the drummer in a variety of bands. He has long experience in recording studios as a drummer and percussionist.

LISA EMENHEISER LOGAN, Pianist, is a graduate of the Juilliard School where she received both Bachelor's and Master's of Music degrees as a student of Ania Dorfmann. She has performed in recitals at Alice Tully Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Carnegie Recital Hall, and appears frequently at the Kennedy Center and National Gallery. She has appeared as soloist with both the Baltimore Symphony and the Richmond, Virginia Symphony. As an established chamber musician, Ms. Logan has performed across the globe with such artists as Julius Baker, Eugenia Zuckerman, Ransom Wilson, Jean-Pierre Rampal and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. She has recorded for Pro Arte Records, VAI Audio, and Delos. Ms. Logan is the pianist of The Opus 3 Trio.

ELIZA GARTH, Pianist, has achieved a considerable reputation as a performer of contemporary and traditional repertoire, through her appearances each season in New York (where she is professionally based) and other major cities. She is a resident member of the Chamber Players of the League of Composers/International Society for Contemporary Music (New York). She is one of only a handful of pianists who play the monumental sonata PIANISSIMO by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Donald Martino. After performing it on a League/ISCM concert in New York in 1987, she was invited to record it for broadcast on the BBC Radio 3 program "Music in Our Time," and subsequently performed it in Paine Hall at Harvard University in a solo recital honoring the composer's sixtieth birthday. Her CD recording of solo music by Martino was recently released on the Centaur label. Eliza Garth has performed contemporary solo or chamber works for Collage (at the Symphony Hall in Boston), the 20th Century Consort, Parnassus, the Washington Square Contemporary Music Series, the New York New Music Ensemble, the New Music Consort, and the Fromm Foundation concert series in Boston, among others. Her frequent collaborations with mezzo soprano Carolyn Sebron have taken her to places as varied as the Opera Comique in Paris and Riker's Island prison in New York City. She is a member of the faculty of St. Mary's College of Maryland, and of the Tidewater Chamber Players.