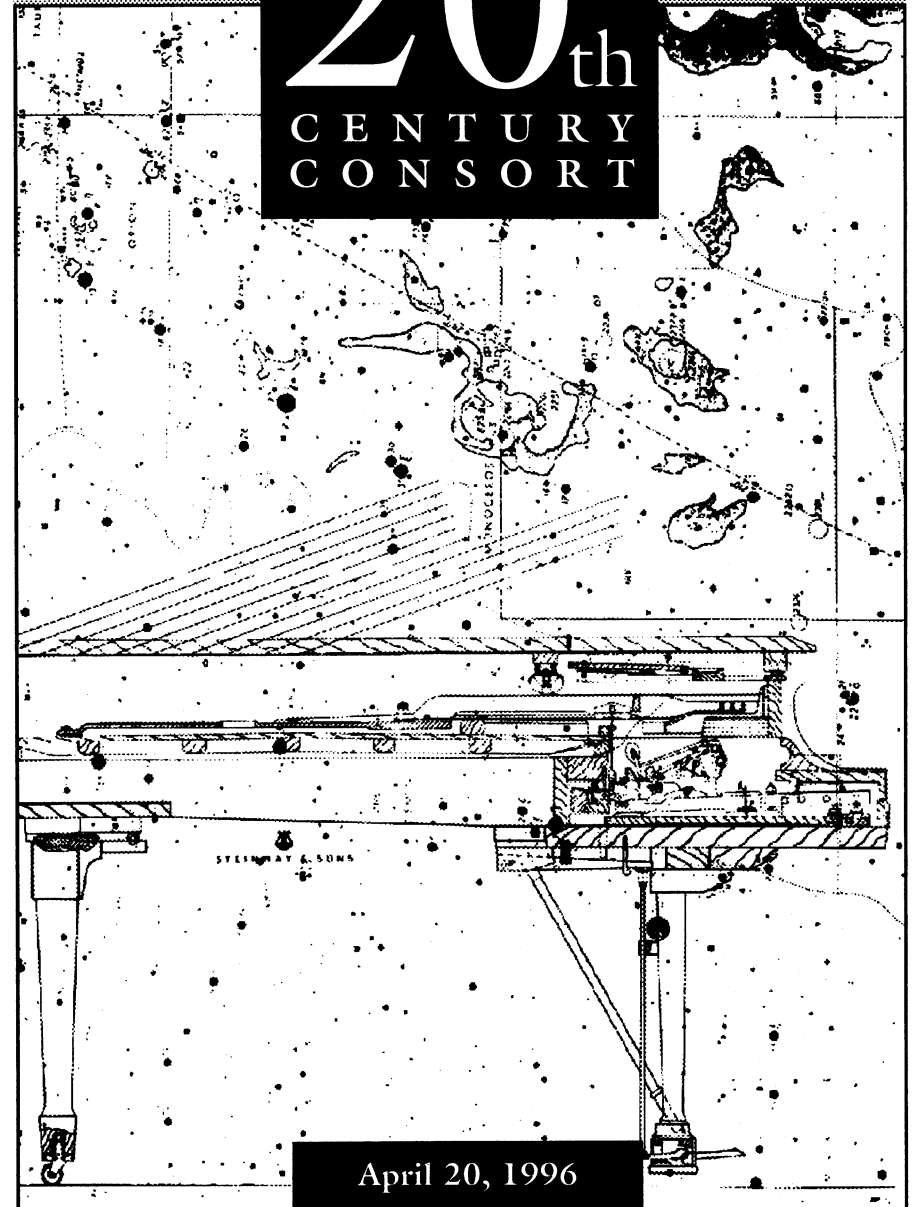


The Smithsonian Associates  
presents

# 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CONSORT



April 20, 1996

The Smithsonian Associates  
presents

# 20th Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director and Conductor

Lisa Emenheiser Logan, piano  
Edward Newman, piano



Saturday, April 20, 1996  
Lecture-Discussion 4:30 p.m.  
Concert 5:30 p.m.  
Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



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## Lecture-Discussion

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director, 20th Century Consort,  
David Froom, Nicholas Maw, Composers

## Program

"20 Fingers/18 Feet"

Stepping Stones: a ballet ..... Joan Tower

1. Introduction
2. Meeting
3. Alone
4. Interlude
5. Love and Celebration

Ms. Logan, Mr. Newman

Elegy, Rag and Boogie ..... Paul Schoenfield

Ms. Logan, Mr. Newman

## Intermission

Perspektiven ..... Bernd Alois Zimmermann

Music for an Imaginary Ballet

1. Grave
2. Tranquillo molto

Ms. Logan, Mr. Newman

La Valse ..... Maurice Ravel

Ms. Logan, Mr. Newman

# The Program

JOAN TOWER

*Stepping Stones*

In recent years, Joan Tower has emerged as one of our most significant composers. Her first orchestral work, *Sequoia*, had the distinction of being the only American work on the 1982 United Nations Day concert of the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, following performances on their regular subscription series at Lincoln Center, and it quickly entered the repertory. She spent three years (1985-88) as composer-in-residence at the St. Louis Symphony as part of the Meet-the-Composer Residency program. *Silver Ladders*, composed during that period, won the 1990 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition.

Born in New Rochelle, N.Y., in 1938, Joan Tower grew up in South America, where her father worked as a mining engineer. When she returned to the United States, she attended Bennington College and Columbia University, and founded the Da Capo Players (winner of the Naumburg Award for Chamber Music in 1973), of which she was the pianist for fifteen years, until her composing career took off so brilliantly. (Indeed, she once joked that she used to be known as a pianist who composed; now she is a composer who also plays the piano.)

Her many grants include some from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Institute & Academy of Arts & Letters, the Koussevitzky Foundation, and the Fromm Foundation. She has also been the subject of a nationally broadcast TV documentary produced by WGBH-TV that won Honorable Mention at the American Film Festival. Joan Tower has taught at Bard College since 1972. She is currently Asher Edelman Professor of Music there.

*Stepping Stones* is a ballet score, originally composed for orchestra, but later adapted by the composer into the two-piano version heard here. Tower created the ballet jointly with choreographer Kathryn Posin, and it was first performed in Milwaukee on April 1, 1993. The two-piano version followed in October 1995.

Traditionally, a composer and a choreographer have worked separately, the one providing the music (sometimes to a pre-planned scenario), the other working out suitable dance steps to the already-composed music or else, as in the case of the classic ballet masters of

the nineteenth century, ordering so many measures of 6/8 time in Adagio tempo, or whatever else was required to match the planned dance patterns. *Stepping Stones* began with an unusual collaboration in Joan Tower's back yard, in which the composer suggested some of the dance ideas and the choreographer some of the music. The basic idea had been to create a ballet about women; the final shape of the piece involved twelve women and six men. Half of the women, with different characters from quite young to fully mature, were elevated on stairs, which represented stages of the women's development.; the remaining women, who danced on the floor, represented the "selves" of the women on the "stepping stones."

Once the basic ideas and the opening section had been worked out, composer and choreographer realized that continuing their collaboration in its original close way, though stimulating and fun, was taking an enormous amount of time. So they worked out a scenario for the rest of the ballet, and the work then developed in the more traditional way, with Tower composing the music, and Posin working out the dances. The women and their inner selves are introduced and have "a hopscotch session" (one of Tower's ideas); they encounter the six men; there is a trio for women and a love duet before the final celebratory dance for the full company. Part of the action involves the building of a human chain that the women themselves sometimes break in rancor; sometimes the men disrupt it. "The dance is about struggling to rebuild the chain in the women's terms," the composer has explained. "The celebration which ends the ballet signifies that on some level the women and their selves and the men have been able to find a kind of unity."

Rhythm, which is a central feature of Tower's music, plays a predominant role here, sometimes very complex. Though the shaping of the dance was highly structural and mathematical, Tower told an interviewer that the music was largely intuitive. "I composed serial music for ten years, but I've gone totally the other way." At another point she commented, "I don't trust systems at all. Even A-B-A can be a straitjacket." The score, running nearly twenty minutes, is by turns muscularly athletic and lyrical, with a transcendent close.

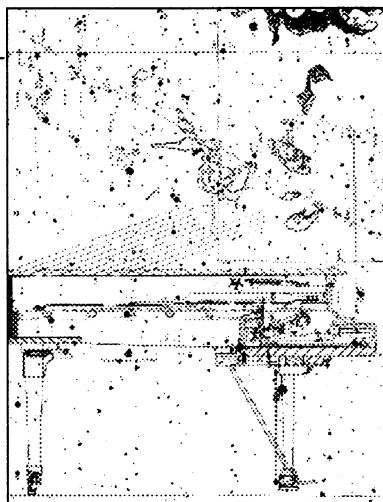
PAUL SCHOENFIELD

*Elegy, Rag, and Boogie*

Paul Schoenfield was born in Detroit on January 24, 1947, and lives in Israel. He is one of an increasing number of composers whose music is inspired by the whole world of musical experience—popular styles

both American and foreign, vernacular and folk traditions, and the “normal” historical traditions of cultivated music-making, often treated with sly twists. He frequently mixes in a single piece ideas that grew up in entirely different worlds, making them talk to each other, so to speak, and delighting in the surprises their interaction evokes.

(Who would imagine Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* turning up in a country fiddle piece? But it happens, in one of Schoenfield’s earliest works to be recorded, *Three Country Fiddle Pieces* for violin and piano.) Schoenfield is a



pianist and composer who, he says, “ran away at 16” from his native town; he studied at Carnegie-Mellon Institute and the University of Arizona. After living in Minnesota for about six years, he moved to Ohio, where he joined the faculty of the University of Akron before moving to Israel. Schoenfield’s shorter chamber works with characteristic titles—*Three Country Fiddle Tunes*, *Vaudeville*, and *Cafe Music*—and longer pieces, such as a recent piano concerto, often refer to popular styles of entertainment music, even though Schoenfield transmutes them clearly into concert works—serious compositions with a sense of humor.

*Elegy*, *Rag*, and *Boogie* obviously draws elements of style and gesture from certain popular genres, though each movement also carries a specific program that explains the choice of musical style. The work comes from a jazz suite commissioned by the Schubert Club, and composed in 1985.

The image that lies behind *Elegy* is the lonely wail of a saxophone at night in a New York subway station. At the same time that it evokes the quintessential urban wind instrument, the movement also unfolds in a purely pianistic way, with a persistent triplet motive that lends some of the nostalgic quality of a Brahms intermezzo.

The *Rag* obviously draws from the tradition of African-American music that changed the whole personality of popular music at the beginning of this century, when its syncopations were taken up by a new generation of songwriters—many of them the sons of Jewish immigrant families—for an extraordinary flourishing of popular song. So it is only natural for Schoenfield to draw on this tradition for a piece inspired by a letter from “A Bintel Brief” (the advice column that

appeared in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a prominent Yiddish newspaper from the early years of the century, in which a mother bewails the fact that her son has fallen in love with a girl of a different faith).

The final movement is a modern updating of the *Boogie*, a type of instrumental blues that built its melodic variations over a recurring bass figure. Schoenfield’s boogie is far more complex, with a continuing development and distortion of the bass figure, and its placement at all levels of the texture in what the composer calls a “wanton and frenzied dance.”

BERND ALOIS ZIMMERMANN

*Perspektiven*

In recent years, Bernd Alois Zimmermann has gradually been recognized as a particularly significant figure in contemporary music. But this recognition came tragically late, only after the composer carefully and deliberately put an end to his own life in 1970 at the age of fifty-two. Zimmermann belonged to that generation of Germans whose adolescence was essentially nonexistent, whose childhood ended in enforced military service for the glorification of a state and a tyrant. A deeply religious man educated until age seventeen at a boarding school run by the Convent of the Salvatorians at Steinfeld in the Rhineland, Zimmermann first pursued interests in literature and art, though he was also learning to play the organ. At graduation from high school, he planned to pursue a degree in classical philology, but music was becoming a more powerful influence, and in 1939, at the age of twenty-one, he enrolled in the Musikhochschule in Cologne. His education was violently interrupted by his conscription into the German army the following year, against his will. Following a period spent in a military hospital in 1942, he was able to resume intermittent studies with his teachers, Heinrich Lemacher, the leading Catholic church musician of his time, and Philipp Jarnach, himself a pupil of Busoni.

But Zimmermann’s education was really only completed when he enrolled in the Darmstadt summer courses in the late ‘40s—and by then a younger generation of talented musicians (including Henze and Stockhausen) was already on the scene. It must have seemed as if his own generation never had a real chance of making its mark. Certainly Zimmermann’s own career moved in fits and starts, at least as far as performance and public recognition was concerned. His musical ideas were enriched by his wide knowledge of literature, and he frequently employed ideas drawn from medieval Catholic philosophy.

This is particularly apparent in his conception of time, which saw past, present, and future as existing together in a unity (a notion drawn from the teaching of St. Augustine). One musical result of this view was his predilection for musical collage, for the quotation of musical ideas from older works embedded (sometimes obviously, sometimes very subtly) in his own. The listener was not necessarily expected to hear and recognize all of them. Each quotation is an element that once existed in a historical context, which has been stripped away. The absolute details of pitch and rhythm remain as an ingredient in the new musical structure, where it becomes one of many elements in a pluralist universe. The influence of literary techniques espoused by James Joyce and Ezra Pound and of certain techniques of modern art may have played a role.

His *Perspectives* for two pianos actually consists of two movements composed about a year apart—the first movement in April 1955, the second the following spring—as a response to his encounter with the serialism of late Webern. The two movements are based structurally on a tone row that is composed of four segments of three notes, each consisting of the leap of a third followed by a second. Yet rather than emphasizing the structural nature of the score, Zimmermann gave it a subtitle—“Music for an imaginary ballet”—that emphasizes its undeniable sensual qualities. Both movements are rich in sonorous qualities and pianistic effects and an apparent improvisatory quality.

#### MAURICE RAVEL

##### *La Valse*, Choreographic poem

Joseph Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure in the Basque region of France just a short distance from the Spanish border, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris on December 28, 1937. *La Valse* was composed in 1919 and 1920, based on sketches made before the war for a symphonic poem with the intended title “Wien” (“Vienna”). He had found it difficult to return to normal work after the ravages of the First World War. Quite aside from the long interruption in his compositional activity and the loss of many friends, he was suffering from recurring insomnia that plagued him for the rest of his life and played a considerable role in the dramatic reduction of new works. Before the war he had already started sketching a symphonic poem that was intended to be a musical depiction of Vienna; naturally it was a foregone conclusion to cast the work as a grand orchestral waltz. Ravel

had never yet visited the Austrian capital, but he “knew” Vienna through the composers, going back to Schubert and continuing with the Strauss family and many others, who had added a special Viennese lilt to the waltz. (In this sense Ravel was as familiar with Vienna as Bizet and Debussy were with Spain, when they composed what we still regard as the most convincing “Spanish” music ever written.)

The first sketches for *Wien* apparently date from 1907. He began orchestrating the work during 1914 but ceased after the outbreak of hostilities. After the war, Ravel was slow to take up the composition again. Only a commission from Serge Diaghilev induced him to finish it, with the new title *La Valse*, *Poème choréographique*, and intended for production by the Ballets Russes. When the score was finished, however, Diaghilev balked. He could see no balletic character in the music, for all its consistent exploitation of a dance meter, and he refused to produce the ballet after all. (Not surprisingly, this marked the end of good relations between the composer and the impresario.) *La Valse* was first heard in concert form—played by two pianos, with Ravel and Alfredo Casella as the performers—at a concert of Arnold Schoenberg’s Society for Private Musical Performances in November 1920. Only in 1928 did Ida Rubinstein undertake a ballet production of the score. For the ballet, Ravel set the piece in 1855, a significant date: It marked roughly the halfway point of the century of Vienna’s domination by the waltz—the captivating, carefree, mind-numbing, seductive dance that filled the salons, the ballrooms, and the inns, while the whole of Austrian society was slowly crumbling under an intensely reactionary government, the absolutism of Emperor Franz Joseph, who was twenty-five in 1855 and reigned until the middle of the First World War. The social glitter of mindless whirling about concealed the volcano that was so soon to erupt. Ravel’s *La Valse* has the captivating rhythms in full measure, but the music rises to an expressionistic level of violence, hinting at the concealed rot of the society. Would *La Valse* have been different if composed before the horrors of the war? Who can tell? In any case, consciously or not, Ravel’s brilliantly orchestrated score captures the glitter and the violence of a society that, even as he was composing, had passed away.

—Program notes by Steven Ledbetter  
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# About the Artists

LISA EMENHEISER LOGAN, pianist, is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where she received both Bachelor and Master 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 and Richmond Symphonies. As an established chamber musician, Ms. Logan has performed across the globe with such artists as Julius Baker, Eugenia Zucherman, 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.

EDWARD NEWMAN, pianist, received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Juilliard School. The top prizewinner in the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition, Mr. Newman has given critically acclaimed performances in Europe, Australia, and across the United States, including appearances with the Boston Pops. He joined the American Chamber Players in 1993, and makes frequent tours with the group along with his wife, violinist Elisabeth Adkins. Mr. Newman also serves on the music faculty of George Mason University.

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