



Smithsonian Institution

The Hirshhorn Series

20th Century Consort

with The Emerson String Quartet

Christopher Kendall,
Artistic Director

7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 14, 1980

Auditorium

Hirshhorn Museum and
Sculpture Garden

Presented by Smithsonian
Performing Arts

James R. Morris, Director

The Program

Overture on Hebrew Themes, Op. 34

for clarinet, piano, and string quartet
Mr. Kitt, Mr. Orkis, Mr. Drucker, Mr. Setzer,
Mr. Dutton, Mr. Finckel

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Piano Trio No. 3

for piano, violin, and cello
Mr. Orkis, Mr. Setzer, Mr. Finckel

Nicolai Roslavetz
(1881-1944)

A Little Suite for Christmas A.D. 1979

(after Giotto's Nativity frescoes in
the Arena Chapel at Padua)
for piano solo
Mr. Orkis

George Crumb
(b. 1929)

Intermission

String Quartet No. 3

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

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

To Wake the Dead

for soprano, flute, alto flute, clarinet,
bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, harmonium,
and conductor
Ms. Shelton, Ms. Stern, Mr. Kitt, Mr. Setzer,
Mr. Finckel, Mr. Orkis, Ms. Orkis, Mr. Kendall

Stephen Albert
(b. 1941)

Notes on the Program

This evening's program opens with two pieces which are in certain respects musical counterparts of some of the artwork found in the current Hirshhorn exhibition "The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives." This period saw an exceptionally high level of experimentation among all the arts, a reaction to the upheaval of the economic and social structures caused by the first World War and the Bolshevik revolution.

The Russian avant-garde period, now officially condemned as anti-Soviet, may be divided into four overlapping movements. The earliest of these, Neo-Primitivism, adopted the Russian folk idiom in a firm rejection of Western influences. Prokofiev's **Overture on Hebrew Themes**, though of a somewhat later date, is composed along similar lines. The years immediately before the war saw the development of Cubo-Futurism, an interpretation of French Cubism and Italian Futurism. The beginning of the war forced many Russian artists living abroad to return to their native country, bringing with them current European artistic concepts. The melding of these with nationalistic Neo-Primitivism in the caldron of turmoil leading to the Revolution formed two new movements, Constructivism and Suprematism. The former began with three-dimensional application of Cubist principles, but soon led to a totally abstract style. Suprematism was one of the first non-objective schools, emphasizing, in the words of Kazimir Malevich, its leading exponent, "pure feeling in art." Although Roslavetz later turned against the expression of sentiment in music, his *Piano Trio* is a product of the same emotional and intellectual stimuli which inspired early Suprematism.

With the death of Lenin in 1924, a new period culminating in the repressive Stalinist regime began. After Stalin's ascent in 1928, all artistic experimentation was suppressed and Social Realism, still the officially accepted style of Soviet art, was installed. Prokofiev was in the West during the transition to Stalinism and for the first years of this totalitarian regime. Upon his return to the Soviet Union, he

was able to work within the guidelines established by the Party.

Roslavetz, on the other hand, found the post-Lenin period extremely difficult. A staunch Marxist, he was for a short time entrusted with the chairmanship of the Political Division of State Music Publishing, but in 1925 came under attack by the press for his Western musical leanings. Roslavetz felt that the prime goal of the composer was to arrange his tonal materials in a "sensible" manner, in this way rendering even the most complex music easily accessible to the proletariat. This view was apparently at variance with official doctrine, however, and though an unconvinced Roslavetz made a brief attempt at writing light theatrical music in the sanctioned style, he was banished to Siberia in the '30s, and presumably died there.

Prokofiev's *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, composed in 1910, is written in an ABA'B' form with coda. The work takes its Hebrew flavor from frequent use of devices such as the melodically "exotic" augmented second, gradual transformation of motives through elaboration, and accompaniment patterns imitative of folk instruments. The opening section sets a characteristic theme above a rustic accompaniment. A sinuous scale passage leads to reiterated static harmonies which are enlivened by rapid motion within each chord. The B section, immediately set apart by a sudden shift in texture, includes several chant-like melodies. The second A section subjects its themes to various manipulations including inversion, at one point treating one of the chant melodies as counterpoint to the livelier material. The final B section reverses this procedure, accompanying the chant with harmonically static figurations derivative of certain A themes. A short coda with rapid stringendo leads to the emphatic close.

The **Piano Trio No. 3** of Nicolai Roslavetz is a quasi-rhapsodic work in one multi-sectional movement. The texture is for the most part rather thick, owing to the complexity of the piano writing. The harmonic plan is reminiscent of Scriabin, but seems carried to new

lengths. Many of the sections share the rising motive heard in the first measure, while in others a general tendency towards ascent of melodic lines subtly suggests a link to the material of the opening.

George Crumb completed his **A Little Suite for Christmas A.D. 1979** in February of this year. It was composed as a Christmas present for Lambert Orkis, who gives the work its premiere this evening. In a telephone conversation, Mr. Orkis described the work:

The *Little Suite* encompasses Crumb's basic philosophies of the origins of good and evil. For instance, in *The Visitation* (the first piece), a solemn atmosphere is established through the use of mysterious block chords. Suddenly, bell sounds of great violence ring out. Later, however, the initial mood is recaptured, and the piece concludes as it began.

The *Berceuse for Infant Jesu* which follows is very simple, and occupies only two systems on the page. A treble tune is set above an Alberti-type bass. No matter how optimistic and charming this may seem, however, Crumb never quite buries certain sinister premonitions. In this case, the tune is interrupted by low harmonics.

The third movement, *Shepherd's Noël*, is appropriately pastoral in nature. Sudden sonic flashes are heard like shooting stars jutting out of the heavens. Crumb usually employs a good deal of pedal, but in this movement there are several passages explicitly marked "senza pedal." The right and left hands chase each other in quasi-canonic imitations.

Adoration of the Magi begins with an unaccompanied tune played directly on the muted strings of the piano. The sostenuto pedal is depressed throughout this section, lending the luminosity of sympathetic vibrations to the melody. In this movement, Crumb quotes himself, borrowing material from "Music for a Summer Evening," part of his *Makrokosmos III*. While the quotation is a distinctive series of notes, it is probably unrecognizable unless one is familiar with *Makrokosmos III*. Still, the thematic sequences are presented very logically, making the movement easily accessible.

The *Nativity Dance* is a relatively "un-Crumbian" work, as exuberant, quick movements of this type are unusual in Crumb's music prior to "Celestial Mechanics (Cosmic Dances)," the fourth work in the *Makrokosmos* series. Here, the entire cosmos dances in celebration of Christ's birth. Shifts of metrical pulses (groups of 3, 5, and 7) and syncopation provide a lively rhythmic interplay.

The *Canticle of Holy Night* makes use of the 1591

Coventry Carol in a very quiet, mysterious, and quite slow setting. The strings of the piano are strummed while the carol is played silently on the keyboard. In another section of the piece, the performer is instructed to pluck the notes of the melody with the right hand while the left provides open octave, fourth, and fifth harmonies, resulting in a medieval flavor. Here, two thoughts are separated in space and in tonal area, yet remain unified, often with the assistance of a descant which serves to bind the whole together.

Crumb marks the *Carol of the Bells* "giocoso, jubilant, mechanical-sounding," yet an undercurrent or sense of forboding may often be perceived. Several ideas, including metallic bell sounds, enthusiastic peals, ominous pauses, and sinister strums are set in close juxtaposition within a clearly defined structure which concludes with references to the end of *The Visitation*, rounding the entire *Suite*.

Bartók's **String Quartet No. 3**, dating from 1927, is the most concise and intense of his six works of this genre. In it, the importance of motivic development as a formal device, already evident in the second quartet of ten years earlier, is carried further. Harmonically, Bartók explores relationships far removed from traditional tonality; he will surpass these experiments only in the works of the next several years before turning his course once again toward charted waters.

The third quartet is in one continuous movement of four sections which vary in character. In their titles, *Prima parte*, *Seconda parte*, *Ricapitolazione della prima parte*, and *Coda* (based on material from the second section), one may see for the first time the arch form which Bartók used to strengthen and unify the next two quartets as well as the violin concerto. The two *prima parte* sections anchor the arch of the third quartet, in which the *seconda parte* may be said to represent the keystone.

The arch structure is built on only a few motives, which through manipulation and development allow the movement to unfold in a manner at once almost organic, yet brilliantly contrived.

The *prima parte* consists of a working out, or rather, working through, of two contrasting motives. The first, an ascending fourth followed by a falling minor third, provides material for polyphonic development by canon. The second, an iambic rhythm applied

to a semitone, makes its first appearance in the atmospheric "night music" passage typical of Bartók's work from this time on.

The *seconda parte* may be considered a set of contrapuntal variations on a theme presented by the cello in a series of pizzicato chords. This motivic pattern is so transformed in the ensuing sections, each of which employs exceptional coloristic devices, that often only its contour remains. Yet the evolutionary process is completely logical and totally fascinating.

The *recapitulazione* is by no means literal, but rather a distillation of the ideas of the *prima parte*. Its brevity is counterpoised by the complexity of the coda, a contrapuntal *tour de force*, culminating in a series of percussively brutal chords which serve as a reminder of the taut structure of the entire work.

Stephen Albert's **To Wake the Dead**, recently recorded by the 20th Century Consort for the Smithsonian Collection, takes its text from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, that all-but-incomprehensible novel of rich imagery, mysterious atmosphere, and fascinating rhythm. Albert's powerful and moving settings, strongly melodic and thoroughly tonal, clarify the dream state of the texts, which are unified in theme (Birth, Death, and Transfiguration) if not in detail. The music for the cycle is based to a large extent on Joyce's version of "Humpty Dumpty" (see particularly the second song). A few excerpts from *A Skeleton Key to Finnegan's Wake* by Joseph Campbell provide a useful summary:

Tim Finnegan of the old vaudeville song is an Irish hod carrier who gets drunk, falls off a ladder, and is apparently killed. His friends hold a death watch over his coffin; during the festivities someone splashes him with whiskey at which Finnegan comes to life again and joins the general dance.

. . . Finnegan's fall from the ladder is Lucifer's fall, Adam's fall, the setting sun that will rise again, the fall of Rome, a Wall Street crash . . . it is Humpty Dumpty's fall and the fall of Newton's apple. And it is every man's daily recurring fall from grace. . . .

. . . By Finn's coming again (Finn-again)—in other words, by the reappearance of the hero— . . . strength and hope are provided for mankind.

Kenneth Slowik

TEXTS

1) **How it ends**

Oaks of ald lie in peat
Elms leap where ashes lay
Phall if you but will, rise you must
In the nite and at the fading.
What has gone,
How it ends,
Today's truth
Tomorrow's trend.
Forget remember
The fading of the stars
Forget . . . begin to forget it.

2) **Riverrun** (ballad of Perse O'Reilly)

Have you heard of one Humpty Dumpty
How he fell with a roll and a rumble
And curled up like Lord Olafa Crumple
By the butt of the Magazine Wall
Hump helmet and all.
He was once our king of the castle
Now he's knocked about like a rotten
old parsnip
And from Green Street he'll be sent
by the order of his worship
To the penal jail of Mount Joy
Jail him and joy.
Have you heard of one Humpty Dumpty
How he . . .
Riverrun, riverrun
Past Eve's and Adam's
From swerve of shore to bend of bay—
. . . how he fell with a roll and a rumble
And not all the king's men nor his horses
Will resurrect his corpus
For there's no true spell in Connacht or Hell
That's able to raise a Cain.
—Riverrun, riverrun—

3) **Pray your prayers**

Loud hear us
Loud graciously hear us
O loud hear the wee beseech of thees
We beseech of these of each of thy unlitten
ones
Grant sleep.
That they take no chill
That they ming no merder, no chill,
Grant sleep in hour's time.
Loud heap miseries upon us
Yet entwine our arts with laughter low.
Loud hear us
Hear thy we beseech of these.
Say prayers Timothy.

4) **Instruments** (voice tacit)

5) **Forget, remember**

Rush, my only into your arms
So soft this morning ours
Carry me along
I rush me along
I rush me only into your arms.
What has gone
How it ends
Today's truth
Tomorrow's trend.
Forget
Remember.

6) **Sod's brood, Mr. Finn**

What clashes here of wills
Sod's brood be me fear.
Arms apeal
With larms apalling
Killy kill killy a-toll a-toll
What clashes here of wills
Sod's brood.
He points the death bone . . .
Of their fear they broke
they ate wind
They fled
Of their fear they broke
Where they ate there they fled
Of their fear they fled
They broke away.
O my shining stars and body.
Hold to now
Win out ye devil, ye.
. . . and the quick are still
He lifts the life wand
And the dumb speak.

Ho Ho Ho Ho Mister Finn
You're goin' to be Mr. Finnagain
Come day morn and O your vine
Send-days eve and, ah, your vinegar.
Ha Ha Ha Ha Mister Fun
Your goin' to fined again.

7) **Passing Out**

Loonely in me loonelyness
For all their faults I am passing out,
O bitter ending.
I'll slip away before they're up
They'll never see nor know nor miss me.
And it's old, it's sad and weary.
I'll go back to you
My cold father
My cold mad feary father
Back to you.
I rush my only into your arms.
So soft this morning ours
Yes
Carry me along
Taddy
Like you done through the toy fair
Taddy
The toy fair
Taddy
First we pass through the grass
behush the bush to.
To whish a gull
Gulls
Far far crys
Coming far
End here
Us then Finnagain
Take, bussoftthe memormee
Till thou sends thee
Away alone
A last a loved
along the

Notes on the Artists

20TH CENTURY CONSORT

Anthony Ames, Executive Director

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

The 20th Century Consort is an ensemble of professional 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 merits and pleasures 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.

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director,

Conductor

Antioch College, University of Cincinnati.

Conducting with Thomas Schippers and Louis Lane. Founder and lutenist of the Folger Consort.

The Emerson String Quartet

Eugene Drucker, Violin

Philip Setzer, Violin

Lawrence Dutton, Viola

David Finckel, Cello

Winners of the 1978 Naumburg Award in Chamber Music, the Quartet was formed while its members were students at The Juilliard School, under the tutelage of Robert Mann, first violinist of the Juilliard String Quartet. The Emerson String Quartet is perhaps the only quartet performing today in which two violinists share equally the position of first violin. The Quartet has made two recordings of string quartets by American composers.

Loren Kitt, Clarinet

Curtis Institute of Music. Principal clarinet, National Symphony Orchestra.

Lambert Orkis, Piano

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

Lucy Shelton, Soprano

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

Sara Stern, Flute

Studied with Richard Townsend, Merrill Jordan, Marcel Moyse. Romantic Chamber Ensemble, Anechoic Wind Quintet, Washington Philharmonia.



Smithsonian Institution

December 1980

Coming Events

Wednesday, December 17 and Thursday, December 18	Handel's Messiah (Special Event)
Saturday, December 20 and Sunday, December 21	Bobby Hutcherson and Walt Dickerson (Jazz Heritage Series)
Friday, December 26 through Wednesday, December 31	Holiday Celebration (Special Event)

Coming up in the Hirshhorn Series

Sunday, February 1	Works by Sullivan, Wernick, Yannatos, Bartók
Sunday, April 12	Works by Wernick, Bartók, Wright, Berio
	Call 357-1500 for ticket information

Smithsonian Institution	Secretary—S. Dillon Ripley
	Assistant Secretary for Public Service—Julian Euell
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	Technical Director—Harold Closter
	House Manager—Naomi S. Kaitz
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.
