



FEBRUARY 22, 1986

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

THE 20TH CENTURY CONSORT

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

Saturday, February 22, 1986

Lecture-Discussion: 4:30 p.m.

Concert: 5:30 p.m.

Auditorium

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

A dozen years ago, an issue of *The New Yorker* somehow found its way to me in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in it was a delightfully bizarre piece called "The Show" by Donald Barthelme. It so appealed to the sense of the absurd which graduate school was instilling in me at the time (as did Barthelme's novels *Snow White* and *Unspeakable Practices and Unnatural Acts*) that I saved it all these years. When Stephen Dembski received a grant from Chamber Music America to write a piece for the Consort, I realized that "The Show" must go on; there was something ineluctably right about a Princeton-trained composer setting to music passages like "... serial music with its raisins of beauty. . . ."

"... Sad themes were played by the band, bereft of its mind by the death of its tradition . . ." is another fascinating tidbit from "The Show," especially in light of Barthelme's use (and cunning misuse) of old etchings and lithographs. Composers in the early 70s were doing the same sort of thing with musical quotations of earlier works, in an effort to come to terms with tradition — and perhaps their own genuinely traditional musical impulses — in the context of a prevailing musical orthodoxy that was attempting to lay to rest various aspects of Western musical tradition.

All this has changed so fundamentally in the last decade or so, that to hear a piece like Mario Davidovsky's "Synchronisms No. 1" — a wonderful classic in its own right — is to hear a piece so recently in the language of the avant-garde which seems now quite from an era gone by.

Consort audiences have no doubt observed that we perform a fair amount of recent music which is as inclined to embrace tradition in new ways as to reject it. We stoutly maintain that by so doing we have avoided being bereft of our minds!

On the other hand let me take this opportunity to particularly urge you to come to our May 10 concert in which Elisabeth Adkins and Lambert Orkis will perform a fine and wildly virtuosic specimen of crazed bluegrass music — Paul Schoenfield's "Three Country Fiddle Tunes." Also on the program will be Lukas Foss' delightful "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," and George Crumb's deeply affecting "Music for a Summer Evening."

Do join us!

Christopher Kendall
Artistic Director

THE PROGRAM

LECTURE-DISCUSSION

Stephen Dembski,
composer

Edward P. Lawson, Chief, Education Department
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

CONCERT

The Show (1986)

World Premiere

Carmen Pelton, soprano
Loren Kitt, clarinet
Elisabeth Adkins, violin

Stephen Dembski

(b. 1949)

Lambert Orkis, piano
Thomas Jones, percussion
Christopher Kendall, conductor

Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro (1980)

Shadowinnower
Black Anemones

Carmen Pelton, soprano
Lambert Orkis, piano

Joseph Schwantner

(b. 1943)

Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano (1978)

Allegro con brio
Andante
Presto

Elisabeth Adkins, violin
Loren Kitt, clarinet
Lambert Orkis, piano

Thomas Christian David

(b. 1925)

INTERMISSION

Synchronisms No. 1 for Flute and Electronic Sounds (1963)

Sara Stern, flute

Mario Davidovsky

(b. 1934)

Spring Songs (1981)

I. Sarabande (Interlude I)
II. In His Own Write
III. Music for the Hunt (Entr'acte)
IV. Love-child (Interlude II)
V. Song (Postlude)

Carmen Pelton, soprano
Loren Kitt, clarinet

Thomas Jones, percussion
Lambert Orkis, piano

William Doppman

(b. 1934)

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Stephen Dembski: *The Show*

Stephen Dembski's *The Show* is a thirteen-minute setting for soprano, clarinet, violin, piano, and percussion of a short story by avant-garde writer Donald Barthelme (b. 1931). The idea for this work originated with Christopher Kendall, artistic director of the Twentieth Century Consort, who suggested to Dembski that he compose a piece based on Barthelme's witty short story, "The Show." The challenge of setting this fantastical and fragmented prose (which is visually enhanced with collages of steel engravings) intrigued Dembski; he was fascinated with the text's black humor and unusual narrative style, as well as its myriad possibilities for musical interpretation. Dembski cast *The Show* in one movement, and treated Barthelme's text dramatically as an opera libretto. Alternately dark, macabre, ironic, and satirical, the neo-classic score contains many dance-like and song-like fragments, and sets the tone and establishes the context for Barthelme's words. (The music, however, does not always simultaneously mirror the mood of the words.) In setting the text, Dembski interprets the sounds of the words, as well as their meanings. He emphasizes the text's topical relationships and onomatopoeic imagery through various melodic and rhythmic means and the referential use of related music. Subtle *leitmotif*-like structures help link these associations over long spans of musical time by recalling textures and specific aspects of the harmonic structures, as well as melodies. *The Show*'s text is intoned dramatically as well as sung; using a vocal style more complex than *sprechstimme*, the soprano employs in her delivery rhythmically notated speech, melodically contoured speech, and lyrical song. As it is textually based, *The Show* is an atypical work for Dembski — its purely musical, or "absolute," elements are downplayed in service to the text's dramatic structure, and its mood and character are lighter than that of his other works. The text is from *Sadness* (Nov. 19, 1972; Farrar, Straus, & Giroux); copyright 1970 by Donald Barthelme. It originally appeared in *The New Yorker*, and is reproduced by permission.

The Show was commissioned by Chamber Music America; it receives its world premiere performance in this afternoon's concert.

Joseph Schwantner: *Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro*

Poetic imagery has long influenced the music of Joseph Schwantner. All his works, with or without text, have been related in some way to Schwantner's response to poetry, his so-called "creativity generator." His Pulitzer Prize-winning orchestral work, *Aftertones of Infinity* (1979), for example, used as creative impetus the mystical imagery and mood of a poem he had written, "Dreams from a Dark Millennium."

When soprano Lucy Shelton commissioned a new work from Schwantner in 1980, he turned for inspiration to *Sombraventadora/Shadowinnower* (1979), a bilingual Spanish-English poetry collection by the American-born Spanish poet Agueda Pizarro (b. 1941). Its surrealistic images and magical poetic landscape enchanted Schwantner, and for his composition, entitled *Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro*, he selected the poems "Shadowinnower" and "Black Anemones," described by Pizarro as "meditations on a single mental vision." They are lucid and transparent illuminations of a woman's journey through her inner solitude. Schwantner then cloaked this poetry, translated into English by Barbara Stoler Miller, in the accessible, highly expressive compositional style he now favors, having rejected strict serialism in his work for neo-Romanticism.

The eleven-minute *Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro* opens with "Shadowinnower," whose brilliant colors vividly reflect the poetry's stark images of sun, fire, and nakedness. It contrasts intensely dramatic sections with mysterious, dream-like passages, and is characterized by intricate dynamic shadings. Pulsing with rhythmic energy, "Shadowinnower" is filled with repeated notes, ostinati, and reiterated melodic kernels. "Black Anemones," the sweepingly romantic second song, deals with a daughter's relationship to her mother. Although the daughter's love for her mother is first revealed in the soprano's floating, *cantabile* vocal line, the ambivalence of her feelings ("You don't know how fearful your beauty is . . .") is then illustrated in a contrasting section, filled with ostinati. A musical recapitulation of the opening, transposed one-half step higher, concludes the movement by emphasizing the immutable link between the two women, co-perpetuators of humankind's life-cycle.

Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro was premiered in New York City on November 25, 1980 by Lucy Shelton and pianist Margo Garrett. In 1983 Schwantner, commissioned by the St. Louis Symphony, orchestrated the work and expanded it to a multi-movement song cycle by adding two of Pizarro's Spanish poems, "Blanco" and "Magabunda." A recording of this cycle, *Magabunda: Four Poems of Agueda Pizarro*, is available on Nonesuch Records.

Thomas Christian David: *Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano*

Thomas Christian David's fifteen-minute *Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano* was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio. In this composition, David, himself a flutist, harpsichordist, and conductor, sought to challenge each of the instrumentalists' tremendous technical, tonal, and soloistic capabilities, while requiring them at the same time to skillfully blend together as an ensemble. The *Trio's* three contrasting movements — *Allegro con brio*, *Andante*, and *Presto* — are unified by David's conservative and traditionalist compositional style. Although it has been influenced by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Bartók, and Berg, David's music is not stylistically derivative, as it successfully synthesizes the techniques and spirit of these past masters into an integrated personal and highly communicative style. The *Trio's* score alternately displays neo-baroque inventiveness, transparent classical textures, and the brooding, dark colors of late romanticism and the early works of the Second Viennese School. Its extended tonality features a high degree of chromaticism, cycles of harmonic progressions, and intervallic symmetries which emphasize the intervals of a perfect fourth and minor second. Thematic development, melodic imitation, dynamic contrast, and the exchange of voice parts among the instruments are also highlighted in this skillfully crafted score, which is animated with a subtly playful spirit.

A recording of the *Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano* by members of the Verdehr Trio — violinist Walter Verdehr, clarinetist Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, and pianist Gary Kirkpatrick — is available on Crystal Records.

Mario Davidovsky: *Synchronisms No. 1*

Mario Davidovsky provides the following notes for *Synchronisms No. 1*:

The *Synchronisms* are a series of short pieces wherein conventional instruments are used in conjunction with electronic sounds. The attempt here has been made to preserve the typical characteristics of the conventional instrument and of the electronic medium respectively — yet to achieve integration of both into a coherent musical structure.

In the planning and realization of these pieces, two main problems arise — namely, proper synchronization of a) rhythm, and b) pitch. During the shorter episodes where both electronic and conventional instruments are playing, rather strict timing is adhered to. However, in the more extended episodes of this type, an element of chance is introduced to allow for the inevitable time discrepancies that develop between the live performer and the constant-speed tape recorder.

To achieve pitch coherence between the conventional instrument which uses the 12-tone chromatic scale and the electronic medium which is non-tempered, use is made of tonal occurrences of very high density — manifested, for example, by a very high speed succession of attacks, possible only in the electronic medium. Thus, in such instances — based on high speed and short duration of separate tones — it is impossible for the ear to perceive the pure pitch value of each separate event; though in reacting, it does trace, so to speak, a statistical curve of the density. Only in a very few instances have tempered electronic pitches been employed in the *Synchronisms*. Throughout the piece the tape recorder has been used as an integral part of the instrumental fabric.

William Doppmann: *Spring Songs*

William Doppmann's *Spring Songs*, a twenty-minute song cycle for soprano, clarinet, piano, and percussion, deals with the passage and renewal of the life-cycle, symbolically reflected through the succession of the seasons and told from a woman's point of view. Doppmann began the cycle in 1971 with "Sarabande,"

a setting, for voice and piano, of the opening seventeen lines from the Prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. But *Spring Songs* did not begin to assume its final form until 1976. As Doppmann explains: "Coming back to this isolated effort five years later, I was struck—and gripped—by the almost incongruous shift of mood that occurs near the end, at the mention of 'holy blissful martyr,' Thomas à Becket. The music is overcome by images of the Crucifixion; a phrase in the clarinet quotes Bach's setting in the *St. Matthew Passion* of Jesus' words '*lama sabachthani?*' ('Why hast thou forsaken me?'), and the piano plunges to its deepest notes. This unexpected poignancy and desolation, set against the song's initial and sustained high spirits with its buzzing and twittering nature, seemed to provide the necessary tension, the growth energy, to exfoliate a set of songs." Doppmann expanded the instrumentation of "Sarabande," and selected a group of historically and stylistically diverse texts by John Lennon, Robert Burns, an anonymous biblical psalmist, Willa Doppmann (the composer's wife), William Shakespeare, and Donald Justice to complete the cycle. Its songs progress chronologically from Lent to winter; their texts treat a wide variety of subjects, ranging from a mother's fear for her child's survival to a tiny singing pig! Although Doppmann reaffirms the beauty and value of life in *Spring Songs*, he also presents in it dark and frightening images, emphasizing his "unshakable feeling that sacrificial propitiation must be made and deemed worthy if the [life-cycle's] wheel is to turn again." (Indeed, a tragic event greatly affected Doppmann's composition; the night after he began

scoring the second song, set to a poem from John Lennon's book *In His Own Write*, the former Beatle was murdered. This coincidence led Doppmann to transform his projected third song, Robert Burns' "Music for the Hunt," from an idyllic *aubade* into a savage and relentless hunting song presided over by an imperial Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt.) Doppmann then set the cycle's texts in a variety of musical styles, which he intuitively mixed in a freely associative manner to emphasize bold, and sometimes violent, contrast. Colorful timbres abound in the score, such as the surreal, quasi-electronic sounds (created by bowing a vibraphone block, suspended cymbal, or tam-tam with a well-rosined contrabass bow) heard in "Entr'acte" to depict the pangs of a frightened child being born into a hostile world. The soprano alternately sings, declaims, whispers, or speaks the cycle's texts, and each ensemble member plays additional instruments, such as autoharp, recorder, harmonica, crotales, and tubular chimes, as a means of augmenting the available colors. Much interplay occurs between the performers; the instrumentalists themselves are occasionally called upon to deliver whispered and spoken words of text. Although no strict formal structure governs this cycle, it is divided into two halves by an *entre'acte*, and subdivided further with interludes and a postlude.

Spring Songs was commissioned by members of Chamber Music Northwest, and premiered by them in July 1981 at their summer festival in Portland, Oregon. This cycle, dedicated to the memory of John Lennon, has been recorded by members of the Twentieth Century Consort for release on the Smithsonian label.

The participation of composer Stephen Dembski in today's program was made possible in part by a grant from **Meet The Composer**, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, American Express Foundation, ASCAP, BMI, Bristol-Myers Company, CBS Inc., Dayton Hudson Corporation, Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S., Exxon, Fromm Music Foundation, Grace Foundation, L.A.W. Fund, Inc., Metropolitan Life Foundation, NBC Co. Inc., Paul Foundation, Inc., and the Helena Rubenstein Foundation.

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Elisabeth Adkins is presently serving her third season as Associate Concertmaster of the National Symphony Orchestra. A founding member of the American Chamber Players and the recently-formed Washington Chamber Players, she is one of Washington's most sought-after chamber musicians. A native of Denton, Texas, she received her Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University School of Music where she studied with Oscar Shumsky.

Thomas Jones is a graduate of the University of Maryland. A free-lance percussionist who appears as soloist with the Consort regularly, he is also a member of the faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

Christopher Kendall is the artistic director of the 20th Century Consort, founder and lutenist for the Folger Consort, and artistic director of Millenium, Inc. A graduate of Antioch College and the University of Cincinnati, he studied conducting with Thomas Schippers and Louis Lane. He has appeared as guest conductor with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Washington Sinfonia.

Loren Kitt is principal clarinetist for the National Symphony, with which he has also appeared as soloist in works by Debussy, Mozart, Messiaen, and Copland. A graduate of the Curtis Institute, he was a member of the faculty of the Oberlin Conservatory before coming to Washington. His extensive chamber music activities include appearances with the Theater Chamber Players of Kennedy Center, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Emerson String Quartet.

Lambert Orkis has performed as soloist and chamber musician in concerts at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Spoleto Festival U.S.A., and the Martha's Vineyard Music Festival. Principal keyboardist of the National Symphony Orchestra, he also serves as Professor of Piano and Coordinator of the Master of Music Program in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music at Temple University.

Carmen Pelton is a native of Wisconsin and a graduate of the Eastman School, where she was a student of Jan de Gaetani. Equally in demand for opera, orchestral, and recital engagements, Ms. Pelton has become well known for her performances of works by Virgil Thomson, including over 50 performances of the role of Susan B. Anthony in his opera, *The Mother of Us All*.

Sara Stern is a native of Washington, D.C. As solo flutist for the 20th Century Consort, she has recorded on the Smithsonian label and performed a number of world premieres of significant contemporary compositions, including Maurice Wright's *Solos for Flute and Electric Sounds*, which was commissioned by the Consort. She is also principal flutist of the Kennedy Center Terrace Theatre Orchestra.

The 20th Century Consort's performances are supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency. The Consort also gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Mr. Sidney G. Albert.

The receptions following this season's concerts are sponsored by the Friends of the 20th Century Consort. For information on how you can become a member of this important group working to further the cause of contemporary music, telephone 298-7545, or write to the 20th Century Consort, 1235 Potomac Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20007.

PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS

Sponsored by the Resident Associate Program

February-March-April

February 23/7 p.m. <i>Richard Todd</i> , French horn Pro Musicis Series	Grand Salon Renwick Gallery 17th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
February 25, 26/8 p.m. <i>Smithsonian Chamber Players</i> Beethoven-Schubert Program	Hall of Musical Instruments National Museum of American History 12th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
March 2/7:30 p.m. Poet <i>John Ciardi</i> reads from Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i>	Auditorium Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden 7th Street & Independence Avenue, S.W.
March 9/7:30 p.m. <i>The Allen Houser Sextet</i> Music by Tadd Dameron and Horace Silver	Baird Auditorium National Museum of Natural History 10th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
March 14, 15/8 p.m. <i>Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra</i> Mozart-Beethoven Program	Baird Auditorium National Museum of Natural History 10th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
March 21/8 p.m. <i>Home, Sweet Home</i> with <i>The Dear Friends</i>	Baird Auditorium National Museum of Natural History 10th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
March 25, 26/8 p.m. <i>Smithson String Quartet</i> Haydn-Beethoven Program	Hall of Musical Instruments National Museum of American History 12th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
April 6/3:30 & 7:30 p.m. <i>The Best of Gilbert & Sullivan</i> with Stars from the D'Oyly Carte Opera	Baird Auditorium National Museum of Natural History 10th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.
April 8, 9/8 p.m. <i>Anner Bylsma</i> , cellist Solo Recital	Hall of Musical Instruments National Museum of American History 12th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.

For information about these and other RAP activities, telephone 357-3030

Robert McC. Adams, *Secretary*, Smithsonian Institution
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Please note: The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly prohibited.
Rest rooms are located at either side of the cloakroom in the lower lobby.

