

The Smithsonian Associates
presents

20th Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director and Conductor

Susan Bender, Soprano
David Hardy, Cello
Lisa Emenheiser Logan, Piano
Sara Stern, Flute



Saturday 20 November, 1993
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 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
Joseph Schwantner, Composer

MEET THE COMPOSER

funding provided through the Composers Performance Fund, supported by the
Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Xerox Foundation,
Metropolitan Life Foundation, and Dayton Hudson Foundation.

Concert

"WHISTLING IN THE DARK"

Jet Whistle

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS
(1887-1959)

Ms. Stern, Mr. Hardy

Cello Sonata

FRANK BRIDGE
(1879-1941)

Mr. Hardy, Ms. Logan

Intermission

Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER
b. 1943

Ms. Bender, Ms. Logan

Vox Balaenae
(Voice of the Whale)

GEORGE CRUMB
b. 1929

Ms. Stern, Mr. Hardy, Ms. Logan



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

The Program

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

Assobio a Jato (The Jet Whistle) (1950)

Brazilian-born Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) was given cello lessons by his father, and later he attained a rare mastery of the guitar. But as a composer he was almost entirely self-taught. As a young man intended for the medical profession, he preferred to spend his days in the bohemian life of the street musician, developing the ability to improvise guitar accompaniments to the capricious modulations of the popular instrumental music known as the *choros*. Between ages 18 and 25, he traveled extensively throughout the country studying the various types of Brazilian popular music, and noting its characteristic features. At first his music was scorned in his own land for its novelty, but in the 1920s it was taken up enthusiastically in Paris, where Villa-Lobos attracted wide interest in many circles of the avant-garde. Throughout his long life he continued to pour forth an unending stream of new works, almost all of them marked by a freshness of melodic line (often marked by Brazilian popular styles), a rhythmic vitality, and imaginative instrumental color.

In 1930 Villa-Lobos returned to his homeland and quickly became established as a leading "official" musician, devoting himself to musical education for the masses and organizing the teaching of music in the public schools. During the years of his most intense academic activity (1930-1945), Villa-Lobos composed his best-known works, the series of nine *Bachianas brasileiras* (Brazilian Bach-style works), in which he sought a consciously nationalistic style, one that would demonstrate his conviction that Brazilian folk music had, at heart, a fundamental affinity for the style of J.S. Bach, to whose music he was deeply attached. Like one of these, *Bachiana brasileira* No. 6, for flute and bassoon, the 1950 *Assobio a Jato* (The Jet Whistle) is a kind of Brazilian folk-influenced two-part invention, with the most varied treatment of its two instruments, flute and cello, presented in delightfully contrasting colors and modes of articulation.

FRANK BRIDGE

Cello Sonata (1917)

Frank Bridge (1879-1941) is remembered today by most people, if at all, as the source of the theme used by Benjamin Britten as the basis of a brilliant set of variations for string orchestra. The choice of the theme, of course, was Britten's homage to Bridge, who had recognized the extraordinary talent in the young boy, had taken it seriously, and had become his most important teacher. But one of the reasons Bridge was such a significant figure to Britten was that he was himself an excellent composer of forward-looking tendencies in a country that was wrapped in a thick muffler of musical conservatism. And though Bridge earned considerable respect from the musical community, his works were not performed with anything like the frequency of those of the aging Elgar or the young Vaughan Williams.

Bridge studied violin and composition at the Royal College of Music and won a reputation as an outstanding conductor and chamber music player. His compositional technique was masterly, and his early work was finely crafted both to the taste of the performers and of the audience. But his musical style developed to a far greater degree than that of any of his contemporaries, possibly owing to his overwhelming conviction that the First World War marked a real end of an epoch, for his post-war works move ever closer to the kind of total chromaticism that marks the early works of the "Second Viennese School," and by the time he wrote his Third and Fourth quartets (1926, 1937), he seemed determined to keep all 12 chromatic notes in play and to compose with a limited number of thematic motives that pervaded the textures of his works.

This development is prefigured in the earlier *Cello Sonata*, which—owing to his despair over the futility of the war and the condition of his country and seemingly of the whole world—took some four years—1913 to 1917—to bring to conclusion, years that shattered the old notions of glory, honor, chivalry, and patriotism, as a whole generation of young men on both sides went to the most horrible of grisly deaths in the grinding, unending hell of trench warfare. The first movement, displaying an arch-shaped sonata form, may have been completed before the war broke out, but the second movement germinated in the long nights when, as a contemporary reported, Bridge would walk around the streets of Kensington, unable to sleep or even rest, in despair at the continuing bloodshed. He had originally planned a separate slow movement and scherzo, but as he worked on them, and as the musical language became progressively more chromatic in the former and even aggressively bitonal in the latter, he chose to join them into a single compact arch, completing the sonata with an extended coda that reworks the music of the first movement's opening. The effect of the sonata is dark, rapturous, in-drawing, and at times agonizing, reflecting the agonies that drew it forth.

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER

Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro (1981)

Joseph Schwantner (b. 1943, Chicago) became exposed to music in grade school, where he played in the band and studied classical guitar, the instrument to which he devoted his earliest efforts as a composer. He first intended to compose jazz, and after attending the National Stage Band Camp after his senior year in high school, he enrolled in the Chicago Conservatory College, where he majored in composition, studying with Bernard Dieter. A radio broadcast of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, one of the world's premiere new-music festivals, proved seminal. "I never imagined music could sound like that, and I lay awake all night thinking about it." Jazz began to recede in his interests, as he immersed himself in a whole new body of music. In 1964 he entered Northwestern University as a graduate student in composition; his principal teachers there were Alan Stout and Anthony Donato. From that point he began to make his mark with remarkable speed, winning three BMI Student Composer awards before graduation.

By the early 1970s the composer had consolidated his technique—based on the rationality of serial devices that were very much part of the academic training of the day—and was pursuing new devices of color, texture, and timbre. These are perhaps most obvious in his works for larger ensembles, but even in the combination of piano and voice his highly coloristic imagination is apparent. It was certainly apparent to audiences that heard his first mature orchestral work, *Aftertones of Infinity*, which won the 1979 Pulitzer Prize for Music.

A prize like the Pulitzer, when it comes at a fairly early stage in a composer's career, almost always gives a terrific boost by highlighting an individual out of the crowd of new, young composers and marking the young composer as a likely candidate for commissions. Certainly Schwantner has not lacked opportunities to compose for specific performers. Soon after the Pulitzer announcement, he completed a new work for Lucy Shelton and the Twentieth Century Consort. This was *Sparrows*, an opulent setting of haiku texts by Issa (in English translation), and a return to the tonal and neo-romantic character of passages from much of his recent music. Moreover the piece demonstrated a real familiarity with the vocal quality and technical abilities of the singer for whom it was composed, something that has not always been the case with contemporary composers for the voice, though it used to be a very much prized element of the composer's craft from Handel and Mozart to Rossini and Bellini. Thus, when Lucy Shelton won the Naumburg award, which included the opportunity to give a recital at Tully Hall in Lincoln Center, it was only natural for her to request a new work from the composer who had so effectively written for her voice.

The result was *Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro* for voice and piano, which she performed with Margo Garrett at her Naumburg Vocal Arts Recital in Tully Hall. (Later on, while composer-in-residence of the St. Louis Symphony in 1982-83, Schwantner expanded the piece to four songs for soprano with orchestra, scoring the original two songs, sung in English, as numbers 1 and 3 of the larger work, and adding two more songs, sung in Spanish, to create the composition he called by the title of the fourth song, *Magabunda*.)

Agueda Pizarro is a writer of American birth whose poetic language is Spanish; she originally wrote all the poems in that language, though they have also been published in English translations by Barbara Stoler Miller with the poet's assistance. Her poetry is filled with surreal images partly created by her linguistic device of coining new words out of the combination of two existing words to produce a striking image. The title of the first song—*Sombraventadora* or "shadowinnower"—is but the first of many examples. The richness and dreamlike quality of the verbal images inspires the composer to striking, theatrical gestures in the music, with coloristic effects in the piano and a rhapsodic vocal part often sustained in the higher register for extended periods, though also requiring rapid change of register, lavish ornamental gestures, and the vaguely pitched speech of *Sprechstimme* here and there. Throughout the score the varied colors, the alternation of tiny, obsessive ostinato figures with great swashes of sound, and the broad cantilena of the vocal part invite the lis-

tener to be seduced into an enchanted world, where magic is at work and both dreams and nightmares seem to exist simultaneously.

Shadowinnower

Naked,
fierce to the waist
where the grass flows,
strong sowing,
I comb my hair with sun teeth
in solitude,
the earth's day.
A rolling fog,
my damp hair
is tangled,
cradled
in my death.
The battle of arms
armed
with combs against sleep
tumbles in seeds,
light
falling on my belly.
While the dark dries
at my fire feet
my female mane,
loosened,
awakes,
a crown in flames
for the shadowinnower.

Black Anemones

Mother, you watch me sleep
and your life
is a large tapestry
of all the colors
of all the most ancient
murmurs,
knot after twin knot,
root after root of story.
You don't know how fearful
your beauty is while I sleep.
Your hair is the moon
of a sea sung in silence.
You walk with silver lions
and wait to estrange me
deep in the rug
covered with sorrow

embroidered by you
in a fierce symmetry
binding with thread
of Persian silk
the pinetrees and the griffins.
You call me blind,
you touch my eyes
with black anemones.
I am a spider that keeps spinning
from the spool in my womb,
weaving through eyes
the dew of flames
on the web.

Text used by permission of the publisher.

Sombraventadora/Shadowinnower, by Agueda Pizarro, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller with the poet, c 1979 Columbia University Press, New York, N.Y.

GEORGE CRUMB

Vox Balaenae

(Voice of the Whale) (1971)

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.

Many of Crumb's works, including *Vox Balaenae* (*Voice of the Whale*), make use of overtly theatrical elements: the players may need to wear masks, to move around on the platform in specifically defined ways, to

interact with one another or with the audience the way an actor does, rather than to remain firmly fixed in a seat with their eyes on the printed part. Very often the dramatic element comes through the use of ritualistic gestures that suggest the operation of primordial myths.

Vox Balaenae was inspired by the eerily beautiful singing of humpback whales, recorded by oceanographers for the first time in the 1960s. Crumb heard a tape of this "singing" in 1969, and it strongly shaped his image of the piece, which "can be performed under a deep-blue stage lighting, if desired" to enhance the effect of hearing something that comes from the depths of the ocean, the ever-ongoing quality of which is suggested in the composer's evocative movement titles. The following notes by the composer are drawn from the book *Profile of a Composer: George Crumb*, issued by his publisher C. F. Peters:

The form of *Voice of the Whale* is a simple three-part design, consisting of a prologue, a set of variations named after the geological eras, and an epilogue.

The opening *Vocalise* (marked in the score: "wildly fantastic, grotesque") is a kind of cadenza for the flutist, who simultaneously plays his instrument and sings into it. This combination of instrumental and vocal sound produces an eerie, surreal timbre, not unlike the sounds of the humpback whale. The conclusion of the cadenza is announced by a parody of the opening measures of Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

The *Sea-Theme* (solemn, with calm majesty) is presented by the cello (in harmonics), accompanied by dark, fateful chords of strummed piano strings. The following sequence of variations begins with the haunting sea-gull cries of the *Archeozoic* (timeless, inchoate) and, gradually increasing in intensity, reaches a strident climax in the *Cenozoic* (dramatic, with a feeling of destiny). The emergence of man in the *Cenozoic* era is symbolized by a partial restatement of the *Zarathustra* reference.

The concluding *Sea-Nocturne* (serene, pure, transfigured) is an elaboration of the *Sea-Theme*. The piece is couched in the "luminous" tonality of B major and there are shimmering sounds of antique cymbals (played alternately by the cellist and flutist). In composing the *Sea-Nocturne*, I wanted to suggest "a larger rhythm of nature" and a sense of suspension in time. The concluding gesture of the work is a gradually dying series of repetitions of a 10-note figure. In concert performance, the last figure is to be played "in pantomime" (to suggest a *diminuendo* beyond the threshold of hearing!).

Program notes by Steven Ledbetter

About the Artists

SUSAN BENDER, soprano, has been a favorite of Washington concert-goers since she was heard on the live broadcast of the Winners' Concert sponsored by the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Since that time she has appeared with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, the Fairbanks and Syracuse Symphonies, the Concert Artists of Baltimore and the Iowa Bach Festival. Locally, she has performed with the Washington Opera, Interact Theater, Opus 3, the Folger Consort, and with Signature Theater, where her portrayal of Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* earned her a nomination for a Helen Hayes Award. In the fall of 1992 Ms. Bender was a touring member of the U.S. Information Agency's Cultural Exchange Program and performed the music of the roaring '20s and contemporary American musical theater in South Central Asia. Her most recent 20th Century Consort appearance was for Stephen Albert's "To Wake the Dead" in February, 1993.

DAVID HARDY, cellist, is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory and was the top-ranking American prizewinner at the Seventh International Tchaikovsky Cello Competition in Moscow. He has studied with Laurence Lesser, Stephen Kates, Berl Senofsky, and Mstislav Rostropovich. He made his solo debut with the Baltimore Symphony at the age of 16. In 1981 he became the Associate Principal Cellist of the National Symphony. Performances in Washington have included recitals at the British Embassy, Wolf Trap, and the Phillips Collection. He also performs with the Opus 3 Trio. Mr. Hardy has recorded for Melodiya.

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 Fischer 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 Zukerman, 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.

SARA STERN, flutist, specializes in chamber music with a repertoire encompassing the full range of the flute literature. As solo flutist with the 20th Century Consort, Ms. Stern has performed many contemporary compositions, including several significant world premieres. She has also served as Principal Flute of the Kennedy Center's Terrace and Eisenhower Theater Orchestras, and the Virginia Chamber Orchestra. As flutist with the Rosewood Consort, Ms. Stern has toured widely and has also concertized extensively with harpist Dotian Levalier. A series of guest appearances with the Emerson String Quartet and a Carnegie Hall debut recital in 1989 have established her as an artist of major stature. Ms. Stern has recorded on Smithsonian, Pro Arte, and Nonesuch labels.

