



The Smithsonian Associates Presents

20th CENTURY CONSORT

November 10, 2001

Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium,
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The Smithsonian Associates
presents
20th Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director

- Richard Barber, contrabass
Paul Cigan, Clarinet
David Hardy, cello
Thomas Jones, percussion
Lisa Emenheiser Logan, piano
Susan Robinson, harp
Tsunaka Sakamoto, viola
James Stern, violin
Sara Stern, flute
Edwin Thayer, French horn
Milagro Vargas, mezzo-soprano
Rudolf Vrbsky, oboe
- Susan Schilperoort, manager
Curt Wittig, electronics
Marcus Wyche, stage manager



Saturday, November 10, 2001
Pre-Concert Discussion 4:00 p.m.
Concert 5:00 p.m.
Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

"Homage to the Breath" by Stephen Jaffe was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. The 20th Century Consort's 2001-2002 performance series is sponsored by The Smithsonian Associates and funded in part by generous contributions from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and the Friends of the 20th Century Consort.



The Smithsonian Associates

Pre-Concert Discussion

Christopher Kendall, Stephen Jaffe, Maurice Wright

Program

"Homage to the Breath"

Chamber Symphony for piano and electronic sounds ^{"MORRIS"} Maurice Wright
Ms. Logan

Homage to the Breath Stephen Jaffe

- I. Running Pulse
- II. Ostinato Elegiaco
- III. Homage to the Breath (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Mr. Barber, Mr. Cigan, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Jones, Mr. Kendall, Ms. Logan,
Ms. Sakamoto, Mr. Stern, Ms. Stern, Mr. Thayer,
Ms. Vargas, Mr. Vrbsky

Intermission

Chamber Music. Luciano Berio

- I. Strings in the earth and air
- II. All day I hear the noise of waters
- III. Winds of May

Mr. Cigan, Mr. Hardy, Ms. Robinson, Ms. Vargas

Chamber Symphony (arr. Webern) Arnold Schoenberg

Mr. Cigan, Mr. Hardy, Ms. Logan, Ms. Stern, Mr. Stern

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

Program Notes

by Steven Ledbetter

MAURICE WRIGHT

Chamber Symphony for Piano and Electronic Sound

Maurice Wright (born in Front Royal, Virginia, October 17, 1949) is rapidly attaining a considerable profile among American composers of his forty-something generation, particularly as indicated not only by the number of works that have recently been recorded but also by the company they keep. Any American composer might well find it daunting to have a piano sonata appear as the "filler" on a compact disc containing Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata*, arguably the most important piano work yet written by an American. Yet there is Wright's *Sonata*, performed on a compact disc by Marc-André Hamelin and finding itself worthy company for the craggy Ivesian work.

Wright studied composition at Duke University with Iain Hamilton and then at Columbia University with Mario Davidovsky, Jack Beeson, Vladimir Ussachevsky, and Charles Dodge. He now teaches at Temple University. As his educational lineage might suggest, Wright's earlier work made considerable use of twelve-tone techniques in the approved academic style of the period. He was also active in the composition of electronic music and of works that combined electronic and acoustic instruments, such as the present *Chamber Symphony for Piano and Electronic Sound*. By the late 1970s he began working in a more tonal, lyrical idiom, with less use of serial precompositional planning.

Wright taught at Columbia University in the mid-1970s, then spent a year at Boston University (1978-79); the following summer he was the composition teacher in the Young Artists Program of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. Since 1980 he has been on the faculty of Temple University in Philadelphia. His works range widely from purely electronic music to a wide range of chamber scores, songs, orchestral works, and two operas, one (still unperformed) based on John Philip Sousa's Faustian novel *The Fifth String* and the other, *The Trojan Conflict*, treating the events of the Trojan War in a parody

of television news reports in which a quartet of Greek gods and goddesses play in a quartet as they watch the war taking place on their television screens. Maurice Wright's output includes several works for percussion instruments, including *Marimba Music of 1981* for marimba with electronic sound and a marimba concerto premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The composer has provided these notes:

Written for pianist Robert Miller, the *Chamber Symphony* was premiered in Alice Tully Hall in 1977 in a series of Bicentennial concerts of American piano music. Each movement was realized with a different synthesis technique using the resources of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, the Columbia University Computer Center, and Columbia's Nevis Physics Laboratory. The electronic sound for the first movement was created by designing and recording every note separately, then using a grease pencil and ruler to mark the duration of the notes, which would then be spliced together. Several stereo tapes made this way were combined on a 4 track master tape which was later mixed to stereo again. I was able to create about 5 seconds of sound for each hour I worked in the studio.

The second movement was put together very quickly using a keyboard synthesizer and a 4 channel tape recorder. By contrast the third movement seemed to take forever to compose and then to realize. In it I was experimenting with an "adaptive canon," in which the imitating voices were scaled in time to fit in the same sized measure as the leading voice. The leading voice of the canon would shift back and forth between 2/2 and 5/4, creating havoc for the voices that followed:



I worked out the durations with a portable calculator and composed the movement during a winter residency at the Yaddo Colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. When I came back to New York City I began the process of realizing the synthesized sound using MUSIC360, a synthesis program written by Barry Vercoe at MIT and based on the original synthesis software born at Bell Labs a decade earlier.

The MUSIC360 program processed two collections of information: a numerically coded "score", and a group of "instruments" which the composer would construct in software from a set of a set of building blocks called unit generators. I typed all this data using a computer terminal in the university computer center then submitted the jobs to the IBM mainframe for batch processing. Sound synthesis was very time-intensive, then requiring about 10 seconds of computer time for each second of finished sound, but most of the jobs submitted by students from other departments would complete in thousandths of a second. The mainframe schedule was based on the user's priority and the estimated time for execution, and often this meant that music programs would run sometime late at night. I would look over the printed results the next morning and try to analyze the error messages that were almost always there. Then I would edit my files and submit them again. If the program ran to completion, I would borrow the data type that held the results of the computation, package it with an audio tape, and take the package to the Physics department office from where a driver would make a daily trip to the high energy physics laboratory in Irvington, New York. The physics labs had an IBM360 computer that could be used for single-user jobs without interruption. Here an operator would convert data tapes to 4 channel audio tape, and the van driver would return the tapes on the next scheduled trip to Manhattan. When the tape arrived on campus I would take it to an electronic music studio and listen to what had I done. In terms of time and physical resources it was quite an undertaking, but one I found to be richly rewarding.

STEPHEN JAFFE

Homage to the Breath (premiere)

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1954, Stephen Jaffe studied at the University of Pennsylvania, where his teachers included George Crumb, George Rochberg, and Richard Wernick. In 1979 he was a Fellow in composition at the Tanglewood Music Center. He also worked at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva, Switzerland, where he received the institution's Premiere Medaille. He has also been the recipient of the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Prize, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Tanglewood, and the Guggenheim Foundation. In 1989, citing his "eloquent and individual voice," Brandeis University awarded him its Creative Arts Citation, and his *First*

Quartet, composed in 1990-91 for the Ciompi Quartet, received a 1991 Kennedy Center Friedheim Award. Jaffe is also active as a pianist and conductor. He now lives in Durham, North Carolina, and is on the faculty of Duke University, where he co-directs the concert series *Encounters: with the Music of Our Time*. In 1999 he was appointed Mary and James H. Semans Professor of Composition.

He composed *Homage to the Breath* in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Twentieth-Century Consort. Regarding the new work, he writes:

Homage to the Breath is a three movement composition written for the Twentieth Century Consort, Christopher Kendall, director, in honor of their twenty-fifth anniversary, and to that end, commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. Subtitled "Instrumental and Vocal Meditations," the first two movements are instrumental, and the third features a part for a mezzo soprano.

The three movements are entitled "Running Pulse," "Ostinato Elegiaco" and "Homage to the Breath."

As I composed the first movement, "Running Pulse," besides musical images, a few metaphorical ones also occurred to me: getting into a groove, coming out into a clearing, equilibrium and disequilibrium; the pulse that runs and running pulse. The ensemble music is by turns exuberant, rhythmically driven, reflective, and exalted, and features the full group, with extended roles for solo instruments as well.

"Ostinato elegiaco" was written in memory of my mother, Elizabeth B. Jaffe. The theme of breath in this movement signifies both vigil and elegy. In the outer sections of the movement, the piano and the percussion (particularly a recurring rattle played on vibraslap, the modern version of the Latin "Quijada del asino" (Jawbone of an Ass) are featured. Later in the piece, the more plaintive voices of the oboe, flute, horn, and strings are heard more prominently, until the music at last evaporates into its quiet conclusion, again featuring the percussion, this time in bent tones of the vibraphone, like the sound of mourning doves.

The final movement, "Homage to the Breath," draws its text from the Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh. The text is an actual meditation exercise from Thay Nhat Hanh's "The Blooming of the Lotus," entitled, "Looking Inward, Healing." I was inspired to set the text as a kind of vocalise, if not as an exercise in meditation (for which use the written text still exists separately). In doing so, I was

able to honor the Twentieth Century Consort's request that I include a part for mezzo-soprano Milagro Vargas. More fundamentally, there is an affirmation in this text which strikes a tone I was striving for, as if in response to the previous two movements. The mezzo soprano's lyrical vocalise is accompanied by the full ensemble, whose music is invented out of motives heard earlier in the piece.

In addition to the mezzo-soprano soloist, "Homage to the Breath" is scored for flute (doubling piccolo), Oboe (doubling on harmonica in the second movement), Clarinets in A and Bb, Horn, Percussion (playing some twenty different instruments), Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass.

[Third movement text]

Looking Deeply, Healing

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Knowing I will get old, I breathe in.
Knowing I can't escape old age, I breathe out | Getting old
No escape |
| 2. Knowing I will get sick, I breathe in.
Knowing I can't escape sickness, I breathe out. | Getting sick
No escape |
| 3. Knowing I will die, I breathe in.
Knowing I can't escape death, I breathe out. | Dying
No escape |
| 4. Knowing one day I will have to abandon all
that I cherish today, I breathe in.
Knowing I can't escape having to abandon all
that I cherish today, | Abandoning what
I cherish
No escape
I breathe out. |
| 5. Knowing that my actions are my only belongings,
I breathe in,
Knowing that I can't escape the consequences of my
actions, I breathe out. | Actions true
belongings
No escape from
consequences |
| 6. Determined to live my days deeply in mindfulness,
I breathe in.
Seeing the joy and benefit of living mindfully,
I breathe out. | Living mindfully

Seeing joy |
| 7. Vowing to offer joy each day to my beloved,
I breathe in.
Vowing to ease the pain of my beloved,
I breathe out. | Offering joy

Easing pain |

Text from Thich Nhat Hanh "The Blooming of A Lotus." © 1993 by Thich Nhat Hanh. English translation by Annabel Laity. Text and translation used with permission of Thich Nhat Hanh and Unified Buddhist Church, Inc.

LUCIANO BERIO

Chamber Music

To Luciano Berio (b. Oneglia, near Imperia, Italy, 1925), music came as a birthright. Both his father and grandfather were composers and church musicians, and he began studying piano and composition with his father while still a schoolboy. After the war, Berio went to Milan, where he studied law briefly but also attended the composition classes of Ghedini at the conservatory. Italy's musical life was conservatively eclectic for the most part. The sole exception among leading composers was Luigi Dallapiccola, the first Italian composer to adopt the twelve-tone system—but to use it in the creation of works that still maintained the traditional sense of Italian vocality. Dallapiccola's influence on Berio was significant, though, ironically, the two Italian composers had to travel to Massachusetts to meet. In the summer of 1951 Berio held a fellowship in composition at Tanglewood; that same summer Dallapiccola was composer-in-residence. Berio learned, from a study of Dallapiccola's scores (perhaps even more than from their sessions together) how a twelve-tone row could give a real impetus to melodic invention.

Berio remained in the United States after that Tanglewood summer and composed *Chamber Music* in 1953. By this time he had already married the late American singer Cathy Berberian, for whom he wrote many of his vocal works, including *Chamber Music*, which he recorded with her and the Juilliard Ensemble. It is a setting of several short lyric poems from James Joyce's youthful collection of the same title. Here, as so often in his later work, Berio would adopt a technical procedure not for its own sake, but as a spark to creativity. The basic tone row of *Chamber Music* first offers the material for the vocal part, but Berio never tries laying out the intricate series of canons that Dallapiccola loved (and that he had learned from Webern's music); he is willing to "break the rules" for expressive purposes. The vocal lines varies strikingly throughout the three movements: almost bel canto in its sustained lyricism at the opening, it becomes a largely chanting on a single pitch in the middle movement (in which the instruments match it for a time before breaking out in a colorful evocation of a wild sea); the last movement calls for the speaking as well as the singing voice while the music offers a large-scale retrograde as balance.

I.

Strings in the earth and air
Make music sweet;
Strings by the river where
The willows meet.

There's music along the river
For Love wanders there,
Pale flowers on his mantle,
Dark leaves on his hair.

All softly playing
With head to the music bent,
And fingers straying
Upon an instrument.

II.

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan;
Sad as the seabird is when going
Forth alone
He hears the winds cry to the waters'
Monotone.

The grey winds, the cold winds are blowing
Where I go.
I hear the noise of many waters
Far below.
All day, all night, I hear them flowing
To and fro.

III.

Winds of May, that dance on the sea,
Dancing a ringaround in glee
From furrow to furrow, while overhead
The foam flies up to be garlanded
In silvery arches spanning the air,
Saw you my true love anywhere?
Welladay! Welladay!
For the winds of May!
Love is unhappy when love is away!

From "Chamber Music"
by James Joyce

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Chamber Symphony, Opus 9, arranged by Anton Webern

Arnold Schoenberg was, for all intents and purposes, a self-taught composer, one who developed a close familiarity with the Austro-

German tradition largely from enthusiastic chamber music performance (he was a cellist), from which he drew insights regarding harmony, thematic development, and structure that formed the core of his musical approach. By the age of twenty-five (in 1899), he produced his first masterpiece, the string sextet *Transfigured Night*, which combined Wagnerian chromaticism with Brahmsian form and thematic intricacy. It was cast as a single-movement sonata, a form that he was to return to in his *First String Quartet* (1904-05) and *First Chamber Symphony* (1906).

The *Chamber Symphony* must have seemed a perverse work when it appeared. Compositions designated "symphony" were cast for the medium of gigantic orchestras, often with chorus (as in some works of Mahler). Schoenberg's work is architecturally as far-reaching as anything by his contemporaries, but its instrumentation was limited to a large chamber ensemble of fifteen instruments, with emphasis on the woodwinds (flute, oboe, English horn, three clarinets, and bassoon). This was by no means a neo-Classical approach either in musical conception or instrumentation. He employed the different colors to limn the strands of his intricate contrapuntal lines.

The *Chamber Symphony* is cast as a single enormous movement of five interwoven sections: Exposition, Scherzo, Development, Adagio, and Recapitulation. Each of these further develops musical ideas generated at the outset and treated in an intricately polyphonic way with intense harmonies, sometimes based on the non-tonal sound of piled-up fourths (as at the beginning) or the whole-tone scale (as in the cello melody that follows). These materials form the basis of almost everything that happens later on. Though the key of E major to which the work eventually resolves is intimated at the outset, it is viewed only distantly for most of the piece. The Scherzo and Adagio develop out of things that happen in the Exposition; the Recapitulation functions as a finale.

To make performances of this small work (small only in the size of the performing ensemble!) even more practical, Schoenberg's student Anton Webern made an arrangement for an even smaller body of instruments—violin and cello, flute and clarinet, and piano. Schoenberg himself conducted the premiere of this version in Barcelona, Spain, in April 1925.

