

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program Presents

# 21st CENTURY CONSORT

February 11, 2006

Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium,  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program  
presents

# 21st Century Consort

Christopher Kendall, Artistic Director  
Christopher Patton, Managing Director

Elisabeth Adkins, violin  
Paul Cigan, clarinet  
Lisa Emenheiser, piano  
Gabrielle Finck, horn  
Tom Jones, percussion  
Tsunasakamoto, viola  
William Sharp, baritone  
Laurent Weibel, violin  
Rachel Young, cello

Curt Wittig, Electronics  
Kevin McKee, Stage Manager

Saturday, February 11, 2006  
Pre-Concert Discussion 4:00 p.m.  
Concert 5:00 p.m.

Marion and Gustave Ring Auditorium  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



The 21st Century Consort's 2005-2006 Season is sponsored by The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program and funded in part by generous contributions from The Cafritz Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and the Board and Friends of the 21st Century Consort. We would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Fromm Foundation for the commissioning and performance of *The Palace at 4 am*, by Scott Wheeler.



Smithsonian  
Resident Associate Program

## Pre-Concert Discussion

Christopher Kendall with composers Scott Wheeler and David Fromm

## Program

### "Time and Memory"

Moz-Art . . . . . Alfred Schnittke

Ms. Adkins, Mr. Weibel

String Quartet in Four Parts . . . . . John Cage

Quietly Flowing Along  
Slowly Rocking  
Nearly Stationary  
Quodlibet

Ms. Adkins, Ms. Sakamoto, Mr. Weibel, Ms. Young

### INTERMISSION

Mozart Adagio . . . . . Arvo Pärt

Ms. Adkins, Ms. Emenheiser, Ms. Young

Piano Trio . . . . . David Fromm

Restless  
Graceful  
Driving

Ms. Adkins, Ms. Emenheiser, Ms. Young

The Palace at 4 A.M. . . . . Scott Wheeler

Text by William Maxwell

Ms. Adkins, Mr. Cigan, Ms. Emenheiser, Ms. Finck, Mr. Jones, Mr. Kendall,  
Ms. Sakamoto, Mr. Sharp, Ms. Young

# Program Notes

## ALFRED SCHNITTKE (1934-1994)

### *Moz-Art* (1976)

Born in Russia but with no Russian ancestry, son of a Latvian Jewish father and German mother, Alfred Schnittke was a composer without a home country, ostracized as a Jew in Soviet Russia and as a Russian in Germany. His music, much of which is as cogent a rendering of alienation into music as one is likely to encounter, was the work of a man who was a foreigner everywhere he went. Thanks to the repressive Soviet state, for many years there was little chance of his going very far: the lives of Russian composers were rigidly controlled by the all-powerful Composer's Union, run with a whim of iron and in close collaboration with the KGB by Schnittke's sometime benefactor, sometime nemesis, Tikhon Khrennikov. As a result, between 1964 and 1984 Schnittke was prevented from attending the premieres of nineteen of his new compositions because they took place in the West, and, although Khrennikov allowed the performance of Schnittke's *Symphony No. 1* in 1974, the premiere was relegated to the city of Gorky, a provincial outpost hundreds of miles north-east of Moscow.

After a period of experimentation with serial techniques in the 1950s and early 60s, Schnittke developed his concept of "polystylism," in which musical styles from a wide range of periods are juxtaposed, with quotations used freely. *Symphony No. 1*, a wildly theatrical piece that juxtaposes divergent styles and has orchestra members wandering on and off stage, is an early and extreme example. Schnittke's facility with almost any style made him an ideal composer for film, and in the 22 years between 1962 and 1984 he wrote 66 film scores for Mosfilm and other film companies, as well as music for over a dozen theatre productions. He struggled to reconcile his two professional worlds, once stating: "I dream of the Utopia of a unified style, where fragments of "U" (*Unterhaltungsmusik*—light music) and "E" (*Ernste Musik*—serious music) are not used for comic effect but seriously represent multi-faceted musical reality."

Ironically (and irony can be found in abundance both in the

composer's music and in his life), in 1985, just at the time when *glasnost* freed Russia's composers from the strictures of the Composer's Union and the KGB, Schnittke suffered the first of a series of debilitating strokes that placed their own restrictions on his movements. Nevertheless, his prodigious output continued until his death, in Hamburg, Germany, in 1998.

*Moz-Art* is based on Wolfgang Mozart's K. 416d, which consists of a few remaining fragments of music for a carnival pantomime that Mozart is said to have acted in himself. It is an example of Schnittke's polystylism at its most light-hearted. The composer closely juxtaposes contrasting themes, sometimes combining them in polyphonic textures in which disparate melodies are played simultaneously. According to the composer's friend and biographer, Alexander Ivashkin, the work's abrupt thematic changes and mood shifts represent the startling contrasts of different masks at a pantomime. Commissioned by violinist Gidon Kremer, the piece must have been a success, because Kremer ultimately commissioned three versions of it. The first, for nine instruments, was for a New Year's Eve party in Moscow in 1976. The rather random instrumentation that Schnittke chose represented the musicians available to play that night. Later Kremer commissioned the two-violin version we will hear today, and, in 1980, a third version for six instruments. The composer later used the same material for a chamber orchestra work, *Moz-Art a la Haydn* (1977, first performed 1983); and reworked it one more time in a version for eight flutes and harp, *Moz-Art a la Mozart* (1990).

## JOHN CAGE (1912 – 1992)

### *String Quartet in Four Parts* (1950)

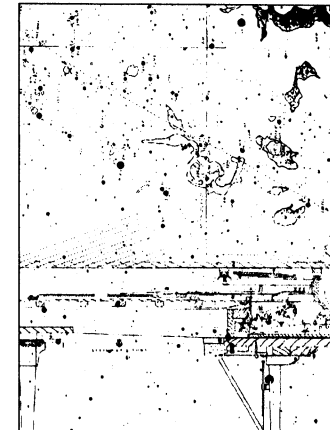
The career of John Cage, one of the most influential American composers of the 20th century, can be divided into two phases: the work he did before he began employing random procedures (what he referred to as "chance operations"), and everything that came after. The dividing line was the year 1950, an extraordinarily creative period of change and expansion for the composer, and the year in which he composed the *String Quartet in Four Parts*.

In the 1940s, much of Cage's work was composed for prepared piano, a technique he pioneered in which the sounds that result from striking individual piano keys are altered by the insertion of a variety of foreign objects into the strings of the instrument. As Cage refined this technique, his aesthetics were increasingly affected by the influence of Asian religious and philosophical thought. In 1942, he spent several months sharing an apartment in Greenwich Village with the dancer Jean Erdman and her husband, mythologist Joseph Campbell. Campbell introduced Cage to the work of the Indian writer/philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy, whose book *The Transformation of Nature in Art* profoundly influenced the composer. In 1948, Gita Sarabhai arrived in New York, seeking to study the growing impact of European music on the traditional musical arts of her native India. She approached Cage and inquired how much it would cost to study with him. The composer replied that if she would teach him about Indian music, he would consider himself amply repaid, and the two began a lasting and mutually rewarding friendship. He took to heart Sarabhai's definition of the purpose of music "to quiet and sober the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences." As a result, a new aesthetic began to emerge in Cage's work, one that included a simplification of means that reflected his growing respect for silence. In 1949, around the time he began work on the *String Quartet*, Cage traveled to Europe and met French composer and *enfant terrible* Pierre Boulez. Although their music could hardly have been more disparate, the two composers took to each other immediately, and began a long and excited dialogue that continued in letter form for several years.

In the months following his return to New York, Cage made several connections that were to have a defining influence on the rest of his career. After a performance of Webern's *Concerto op. 24* affected him so profoundly that he felt compelled to leave the concert early, he encountered the composer Morton Feldman doing the same thing. The two struck up an acquaintance that was to prove profoundly influential on both. As their relationship grew and deepened, they were able to give each other permission for some of their most radical and innovative ideas.

One idea, that Cage had already begun to explore in his prepared piano pieces, was the concept of the "gamut," a carefully controlled selection of sounds that he used as the building blocks of his pieces. In the *String Quartet in Four Parts*, Cage took the gamut concept further: the gamut consists of a very limited set of sonorities from which he constructed the entire work. Each element is always played in the same position on the instrument, with no transposition, fragmentation, or arpeggiation. The players are also instructed to "play without vibrato and with only minimum weight on the bow." This gives the piece a singularly static quality, and incidentally poses a real challenge to the performers, who must abandon much of their training in order to faithfully reproduce the composer's intent. This static quality is exactly what the composer was seeking: he wanted to free his music from the tyranny of harmonic progression. He later referred to this as "getting rid of the glue... so that the sounds could be themselves." He conceived of the piece as being without harmony in any conventional understanding of the word, and described it as a "single melodic line without accompaniment."

There is a program to the *String Quartet*: as in his earlier work, *The Seasons* (1947), the four movements represent the Hindu conception of the four seasons as a cycle. The first movement, "Quietly Flowing Along," is Summer (preservation); the second, "Gently Rocking," is Fall (destruction); the third, "Nearly Stationary," is Winter (quiescence), and the final, "Quodlibet," represents Spring (creation). According to Cage: "The subject of the *String Quartet in Four Parts* is that of the seasons, but the first two movements are also concerned with place. Thus in the first movement the subject is Summer in France while that of the second is Fall in America. The third and fourth are also concerned with musical subjects, winter being expressed as a canon and spring as a quodlibet." He uses the terms "canon" and "quodlibet" in a manner that is creative to the point of redefini-



**DAVID FROOM (b. 1951)**

*Piano Trio*

David Froom was born in California in 1951. His music has been performed throughout the United States by numerous ensembles, including, among many others, the Louisville, Seattle, Utah, and Chesapeake Symphony Orchestras; The United States Marine and Navy Bands; Speculum Musicae; the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; the 21st Century Consort; and the New York New Music Ensemble. He also has had performances in England, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, China, and Australia. His music is available on CD on the Delos, Arabesque, Centaur, Sonora, Crystal, Opus 3, West Point Academy labels, and much of it is published by MMB Music, Inc.

Among the many honors he has received are a Guggenheim Fellowship; commissions from the Fromm, Koussevitzky, and Barlow Foundations; first prize in the Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards; a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts; four Individual Artist Awards from the state of Maryland; a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; a Fulbright grant for study at Cambridge University; and fellowships to the Tanglewood Music Festival, the Wellesley Composers Conference, and the MacDowell Colony. He has taught at the University of Utah, the Peabody Conservatory, and, since 1989, St. Mary's College of Maryland, where he is professor and chair of the music department. Mr. Froom was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Southern California, and Columbia University. His main composition teachers were Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, Alexander Goehr, and William Kraft.

About his *Piano Trio*, the composer writes:

I consider myself a traditionalist composer and the traditional aspects of this twelve-minute trio are clearly on the surface. It is in three movements. The first movement is aggressive and driving, the second is a gentle middle-movement minuet or scherzo, the last has a driving character and works towards a sense of resolution. Each movement also features prominent return of opening material. The language and details of construction are less traditional, and overall, there is a sense of time distortion, as musical materials return

in unexpected places and guises, and tensions have resolutions postponed across movements, giving rise to the feeling of looking at familiar things in unfamiliar ways.

The first movement couples an angular harmonic palette with an obsessive phrase structure, where snippets of ideas seem to get stuck. Even as these ideas gradually transform, they eventually find themselves back where they began. The overall effect is like the experience of one of those sleepless nights when the mind can't release itself from some unwelcome fixation. The opening section, itself full of repetition, has an elaborated repeat. At the onset of a third iteration, obsession takes over, driving the material to ground. Out of this emerges a new idea, closing the movement with a sense of quiet unease.

The second movement is an amiable and playful respite. As in a traditional minuet or scherzo, there is a clearly defined "trio," or middle section, followed by a slightly varied "da capo." The music of the "trio" returns at the end, transformed into a gentle coda.

The last movement takes up the first movement's unresolved business: its opening melody, played quietly in unison octaves, is the very material that ended the first movement. The unison texture breaks apart, and the music accumulates energy. A middle section interrupts, quiet and unsettled in a stuttering rhythmic unison. First the piano, then the cello breaks free, only to join together again as the hushed opening unison melody reemerges to begin a driving coda that culminates in a dramatic close.

**SCOTT WHEELER (b. 1952)**

*The Palace at 4 AM (2005) World Premiere*

A native of Washington, DC, Scott Wheeler has had works commissioned and performed by the orchestras of Minnesota, Houston, Toledo and Indianapolis, as well as by New York City Opera, soprano Renée Fleming, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, the John Oliver Chorale, the New England Composers Orchestra, the Chicago Contemporary Players, Parnassus, the Newport Music Festival and Dinosaur Annex. His opera *Democracy* was commissioned by Plácido Domingo for the Young Artist Program of the Washington Opera, and premiered in 2005.

Wheeler has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, Tanglewood, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Artist Foundation, Yaddo, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the MacDowell Colony, as well as the Stoeger Prize for excellence in chamber music from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. His work can be heard on GM Recordings, Northeastern Records, Palexa and Koch International. Scott Wheeler has taught at New England Conservatory, Brandeis University, and Emerson College in Boston, where he is Artistic Director of Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble. As a conductor, Wheeler has premiered hundreds of new works, as well as the Boston premieres of works by Poul Ruders, Scott Lindroth, Judith Weir, Peter Maxwell Davies, Philip Grange and many others.

Wheeler studied at Amherst College, New England Conservatory and Brandeis University. His teachers include Virgil Thomson, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Arthur Berger and Lewis Spratlan.

The composer has written the following about *The Palace at 4 AM*:

*The Palace at 4 AM* is a setting of excerpts from William Maxwell's 1980 novel *So Long, See You Tomorrow*. Maxwell, who died in 2000 and was best known as an editor at *The New Yorker*, is also highly regarded for his fiction, especially by his fellow writers. The novelist Michael Ondaatje called *So Long, See You Tomorrow* "one of the great books of our age."

I have never before set prose from a novel—like most composers, I have most often set poetry. But Maxwell's evocative prose invites music in its elegance and in its formal repetitions. The narrator has a certain reticence about his rich emotional life that strikes me as characteristic of American men; this reticence in the text leaves space for music to suggest further aspects of his emotional world.

I chose three excerpts from *So Long, See You Tomorrow* and gave them titles, also drawn from the novel, creating continuous movements, separated by brief interludes. "The Period of Mourning," from the beginning of the novel, depicts the bleak scene after the death of the narrator's mother. "The New House" in the novel is under construction

a year later, after the boy's father has remarried. "The Palace at 4 AM" is the name of a sculpture by Alberto Giacometti, in the Museum of Modern Art. The narrator at this late point in the novel uses the sculpture both as a memory of the house under construction and as a metaphor for the themes of time and loss that are a principal concern both of this novel and of my setting of these excerpts.

*The Palace at 4 AM* was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University and is dedicated to the performers for whom it was written, baritone William Sharp and conductor Christopher Kendall.

Program notes by Christopher Patton

The audience is invited to join the artists in the Plaza Lobby for an informal post-concert reception, sponsored by the Friends of the 21st Century Consort, catered by World Cuisine.

