

ALEA III

Theodore Antoniou
Music Director

presents

Guest Artist

David Ripley

assisted by

John McDonald, piano

Michelle Sahn, flute

Thursday, Jan. 23, 1986 8 pm
Boston University Concert Hall
Boston, MA

PROGRAM

Three Poems

- I Vorfrühling (1899)
- II Nachtgebet der Braut (1903)
- III Fromm (1902)

Anton Webern
(1883-1945)

Two Songs

- A Flower
- The Wonderful Widow of 18 Springs

John Cage
(b. 1912)

Corsair Dances: A Suite for piano (in seven movements)

Yannis Papaioannou
(b. 1910)

INTERMISSION

Pwyll

Giacinto Scelsi
(b. 1905)

Suite of Esquisses, op. 23a

John McDonald
(b. 1959)

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Four Eliot Songs

1. New Hampshire
2. Eyes that Last I Saw in Tears
3. The Wind Sprang up at Four O' Clock
4. Virginia

Jani Cristou
(1926-70)

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Notes

ANTON WEBERN was born in Vienna in 1883. His earliest known compositions, which include Two Pieces for cello and piano and some songs, date from 1899. He entered the University of Vienna in 1902 where he studied musicology, harmony and counterpoint. In 1904 he began composition studies under Arnold Schoenberg, a man with whom he became associated for the remainder of his life. Along with Schoenberg's other noted student, Alban Berg, Webern and Schoenberg laid the foundation of what became known as the the "Second Viennese School." All three men composed in an intensely dissonant and chromatic idiom, widely regarded as atonal, yet Webern's music possessed characteristics that distinguished him from the others. His music is highly compact, the whole of his output not taking up over three hours on record discs. His musical ideas, however pregnant with meaning, encompass a minimum amount of space and gesture. What results are sparse, pointillistic textures and aphoristic phrases. These features stayed with Webern through the 1920's, when he adopted the 12-tone technique developed by Schoenberg.

After his death in 1945, the reputation of Webern and his music spread throughout Europe and the United States, as composers imitated his later tendency toward an all-embracing serialism, where the composer controls not only pitch, but other musical parameters, such as rhythm and dynamic.

Webern composed the three songs heard in tonight's concert early in his career, before he began to study with Schoenberg. They belong to no cycle or set.

Born in Los Angeles in 1912, JOHN CAGE stands as one of the most novel of American composers. In the 1930's, he studied composition under Henry Cowell in New York and Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles. Starting in 1936, he organized percussion ensembles and concerts for unusual mediums (such as percussion, prepared piano and dance). In the late 1940's and early 50's he attended lectures by Daisetz Suzuki on Zen, which influenced him profoundly. In 1952, he and dancer Merce Cunningham put on Cage's Theater Piece, probably the first mixed media event in the U.S.

In addition to his many unusual and imaginative creations for percussion and other instruments, Cage also contributed some striking works for voice and piano. He composed several hundred songs, all of which, to one degree or the other, broaden the accepted relationship between singer and pianist. Often times Cage's songs

consist of a given interaction on stage, not necessarily requiring singing or playing. In tonight's concert, you will hear the singer imitate the sounds of an animal and the performers tap on the piano, among many other novel effects.

YANNIS PAPAIOANNOU was born in Cavala, Greece in 1910. He attended the Hellenic Conservatory where he studied theory and piano. Other than his brief studies with Honegger in Paris in 1939, he is primarily self-taught in composition. Since 1954, he has taught composition at the Hellenic Conservatory. He began writing serially in 1953 in his Symphony no. 3, and adapted total serial procedures in his Symphonies nos. 4-5 (1963-4). Since then, he has explored other advanced techniques. His work has been influenced by an interest in American, African and Asian musics and Byzantine Chant.

Born in La Spezia, Italy in 1905, GIACINTO SCELSI has composed over one hundred works, ranging from solo instrumental and chamber to choral and orchestral. Programmed at major festivals of Europe and the U.S., such as Tanglewood and the Venice Festival and by many of the world's leading conductors (Monteux, Giulini and Rogers Desormieres among them). Many of Scelsi's titles are in and/or derived from Sanskrit, reflecting his profound interest in the mysticism of India and the Sufism of Islam.

Of the work for solo flute, the composer writes: "Pwyll is a Druid name. The piece is so understandable as not to require any technical explanations. Music speaks for itself, of course, but to give it an extra-musical interpretation, Pwyll might perhaps suggest the image of a priest calling the angels at sunset."

JOHN McDONALD studied piano and composition at Yale University and Yale School of Music, from which institution he received B.A. (1981), M.M. (1982), and M.M.A. (1983) degrees. As a Koussevitsky Fellow at Tanglewood in 1983, John worked with Hans Werner Henze and Gunther Schuller. Since September of 1983, he has lived in Boston where he works as a free-lance pianist. His compositions include three piano sonatas, "Four-Part Study" for solo piano, four songs, and a woodwind quintet. John was awarded a Fellowship to the Cummington Community of the Arts in September of 1984.

Of the composition on tonight's concert, the composer writes: "Suite of Esquisses is a series of sketches (esquisse: "means the first

slight sketch of a picture, the first thought of a design drawn loosely with a crayon." Compact O.E.D., Vol. I, p. 896) for other pieces which I may, or may never, find time to write.

"The first piece, "Prelude and Dirge," is a memorial for a grand ladt who lived an extraordinarily long life. It makes a seque into the "Etude," a study in thirds which portrays my daughter (11 months old) playing about the house. The two movements entitled "Pasticcio" are made up of divergent materials which slap up against each other, making brief pot-pourris. "Notturmo" is contemplative, slightly hypnotic, while the "Postlude" makes a reserved exit from the suite.

"Suite of Esquisses is currently being orchestrated.

Suite of Esquisses, Op. 23a (piano version) (1985-86)

- 1. Prelude and dirge: Adagio non troppo. (attacca)**
- 2. Etude: Meccanico.**
- 3. Pasticco I: Maestoso/Presto/Largo/Adagio (attacca)**
- 4. Notturmo: Moderato/Lento.**
- 5. Pasticcio II: Allegro con spirito/Largo/Maestoso quasi Fanfare/Presto/Grandioso/Largo/Allegro**
- 6. Postlude: Larghetto**

Born in Heliopolis, Egypt in 1926, YANNIS CHRISTOU attended Victoria College in Alexandria and King's College, Cambridge University where he studied philosophy under Bertrand Russell. He also studied psychology under Karl Jung in Zurich. Christou's compositional training began in 1945 when he studied with Hans Redlich at Letchworth. During 1949-50, he studied music at the summer courses of the Academia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. After working with serial techniques, he began in 1958 to investigate other methods, including the use of electronic sounds. He invented a musical notation in 1965 that incorporates stage action, which he felt should be part of a musical composition. Christou's outlook became gradually more metaphysical and mystical, as can be seen in the prefaces to his works. He died in an auto accident in 1970.

TEXT

THREE POEMS by Anton Webern

I. Earliest Spring (Ferdinand Avenarius)

Enter softly -
No longer in the deep sleep,
Only in light slumber
Lies the countryside:
And the early call of the blackbird
Already blends lovely
Morning images into his dream.
Enter softly...

II. Prayer of the Bride at Night (Richard Dehmel)

O my beloved, into the pillows
I pray to you, into the firmament!
Oh, could I say, could he know
How my solitude burns me!

O world, when may I embrace him!
Oh, in dream let him approach me,
Let me, like the earth, revolve about him
And receive the sun of his kiss.

And drink his flaming might,
Shower flames upon flames back at him,
O world, till we sink together
In transcendent fervor!

O world of light, world of rapture!
O night of longing, world of torment!
O dream of this earth: sun, sun!
O my beloved, my husband!

III. Piety (Gustav Falke)

The moon shines on my couch.
I do not sleep;
My folded hands
Rest in its light.

My soul is still;
It returned from God;
And my heart has but one thought:
You and my happiness.

FOUR ELIOT SONGS by Jani Christou

1. New Hampshire

Children's voices in the orchard
Between the blossom- and the fruit-time.
Golden head, crimson head,
Between the green tip and the root.
Black wing, brown wing, hover over;
Twenty years and the spring is over;
To-day grieves, to-morrow grieves,
Cover me over, light-in-leaves;
Golden head, black wing,
Cling, swing,
Spring, sing,
Swing up into the apple-tree.

2. Eyes that last I saw in tears

Eyes that last I saw in tears
Through division
Here in death's dream kingdom
The golden vision reappears
I see the eyes but not the tears
This is my affliction

This is my affliction
Eyes I shall not see again
Eyes of decision
Eyes I shall not see unless
At the door of death's other kingdom
Where, as in this,
The eyes outlast a little while
A little while outlast the tears
And hold us in derision.

3. The wind sprang up at four o'clock

The wind sprang up at four o'clock
The wind sprang up and broke the bells
Swinging between life and death
Here, in death's dream kingdom
The waking echo of confusing strife
Is it a dream or something else
When the surface of the blackened river
Is a face that sweats with tears?
I saw across the blacked river
The camp fire shake with alien spears.
Here, across death's other river

The Tartar horsemen shake their spears.

4. Virginia

Red river, red river,
Slow flow heat is silence
No will is still as a river
Still. Will heat move
Only through the mocking-bird
Heard once? Still hills
Wait. Gates wait. Purple trees,
White trees, wait, wait,
Delay, delay. Living, living,
Never moving. Ever moving
Iron thoughts came with me
And go with me:
Red river, river, river.

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