

into a dreamy, chaotic state. The last group (12-20) consists of highly individualized variations of pronounced character. After an early return to C#, the final variations focus on Ab (G#), the dominant, and lead to a furious passage which dwindles eventually into nothingness. An extended coda emerges to reassert the theme and the centrality of C# with gravity
(David Kopp)

IANNIS XENAKIS: Rebonds A. for percussion (1987-89)

Rebonds represents a new definition of cadence, whose root in Greek, *cadare*, means to fall. In essence, Schoenberg said that a musical composition becomes a macrocosm of the cadence progression itself or a self analyzing and self germinating cadence, which perfectly describes *Rebonds*, although no pitched instruments are used. Expanding and fragmenting rhythmic cadences are used to form the whole cadence which makes up each movement, *Rebonds A and B*. In this performance, *Rebonds A* alone will be performed.

IGOR STRAVINSKY: Octet, for wind instruments (1923 - revised 1952)

According to Stravinsky, the *Octet* was inspired by a dream in which he found himself in a small room surrounded by musicians playing a piece he could not recognize. "I do remember my curiosity...to know how many the musicians were...after I had counted to the number eight, I looked again and saw that they were playing bassoons, trombones, trumpets, a flute and a clarinet. I awoke from this little concert in a state of great delight and anticipation, and the next morning I began to compose the *Octet*." This was in late 1922; Stravinsky conducted the first performance of the piece at the Paris Opéra in October 1923. The *Octet* is a work of lively wit and resourceful instrumentation, and a highly important product of his "neo-classical" period, with its revivification of traditional music forms and athletic contrapuntal writing. After a pastoral introduction the first movement launches into a concise sonata-form. The second movement is a set of variations on a fourteen-bar melody heard at the outset; but Stravinsky's first variation, which turns the theme into a portentous reminiscence of the *Dies Irae*, recurs twice as a kind of ritornello enclosing other variations. The final variation is a grave fugato, leading via a bridge-passage to the effervescent Finale.

(after Calum MacDonald)

University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

C67
1999
11-29



School

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A short walk back
through the 20th century

CONTEMPORARY GROUP

Joël François Durand, *director*

8:00 PM
November 29, 1999
Meany Theater

DAT 13,576

CD 13.577

13.578

PROGRAM

CD 13.577

1 Five Movements, op. 5, for string quartet (1909)..... Anton Webern (1883-1945)

I. *Heftig bewegt*

II. *Sehr langsam*

III. *Sehr bewegt*

IV. *Sehr langsam*

V. *In zarter Bewegung*

(11:57)

Eric Rynes, Hsuan Lee, *violins*

Lisa Killinger, *viola*

Danna Birdsall, *cello*

2 Le Merle noir, for flute and piano (1951) (5:50) Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Lucas Robatto, *flute*

Jensina Byington, *piano*

3 12 Notations, for piano (1945) (9:56) Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)

I. *Fantasque—Modéré*

II. *Très vif*

III. *Assez lent*

IV. *Rythmique*

V. *Doux et improvisé*

VI. *Rapide*

VII. *Hiératique*

VIII. *Modéré jusqu'à très vif*

IX. *Lointain—Calme*

X. *Mécanique et très sec*

XI. *Scintillant*

XII. *Lent—Puissant et âpre*

Ming Tsu, *piano*

4 Adieu, for wind quintet (1966) (11:54) Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928)

Lucas Robatto, *flute*

Beth Antonopulos, *oboe*

Jenny Ziefel, *clarinet*

Hsing-Hua Ho, *French horn*

Louie Fielding, *bassoon*

Joël Durand, *coordinator*

INTERMISSION

CD 13.578

1 Impromptu I, for flute and oboe (1966) Thea Musgrave (b. 1928)

Linda Antas, *flute*

Darlene Franz, *oboe*

2 Piano Variations (1930)..... Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

David Kopp, *piano*

3 Rebond A, for percussion Iannis Xenakis (b. 1922)

Miho Takekawa, *percussion*

4 Octet, for wind instruments (1923; revised 1952).... Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

I. *Sinfonia*

II. *Tema con variazioni*

III. *Finale*

Lucas Robatto, *flute*; Jenny Ziefel, *clarinet*,

Ryan Hare & Tracy Bergemann, *bassoons*,

David White & Brian Bensky, *trumpets*,

Aaron Riggio & Robert Hendrickson, *trombones*,

Eric Flesher, *conductor*

An attempt to cover in one concert all the musical directions that occurred in the 20th century is doomed to failure. The choices made for tonight's concert are only indicative of some tendencies, some directions which have affected and influenced the mind of many composers throughout our finishing epoque. It seemed appropriate to pay homage to our predecessors as we embark into the future, a future in which all these directions will soon become history, as they recede further in our past.

The first big musical shocks of the 20th century were felt in its very first years. In Vienna Arnold Schoenberg, then Alban Berg and Anton Webern initiated a most dramatic revolution in sound when they threw themselves in the world of atonality. The first works composed in this way are often of violent expression, juxtaposing strong contrasts of dynamics, densities of textures, and instrumental colors. Soon after the First World War, a reaction against these seemingly chaotic works occurred first in Paris, then in all Europe and the U.S.. The Russian Igor Stravinsky, already in France since 1910, was at the forefront of the neo-classical movement, and his *Octet*

is one of the emblematic works of this period. The American Aaron Copland, back from his studies in France with Nadia Boulanger, came into his own as a composer with his *Piano Variations*, in effect creating for the decades to come one of the most vital trends in American music.

The direction that modern music was to follow after the second World War was already prepared in the early 1940s by the French composer Olivier Messiaen. At first influenced by Debussy, Dukas and Stravinsky, Messiaen revealed his musical personality through a very unlikely mixture of musical and extra-musical ideas: Christian faith, bird songs, Greek and Indian rhythmic theories, self-made modes, later to be replaced for a moment by serial technique, are the most visible paths he followed during his career, bringing them sometimes all at the same time in a single work. Pierre Boulez' early works show a vitality and sense of risk quite akin to the early Schoenberg. His *Notations* is his earliest known work; a number of these pieces have been re-used in several other of his own works.

In the 1960s a number of composers reacted to the over-intellectualization of the previous decade, and embarked for the world of improvisation, writing works where some, or a lot, of the music was left to the decision of the performers. Among the most dedicated musicians to complete control in composition in the 1950s was the German Karlheinz Stockhausen who, starting in 1957, attempted to open aspects of his works by leaving certain decisions to the performers. *Adieu* is an example of these works in which the musicians are given at specific moments only a few pitches to elaborate upon, alternating with a number of completely written-out passages.

Standing somewhat beside these changes, although not entirely uninfluenced by them, is the Greek born—now French—composer Iannis Xenakis. Xenakis' music is characterized by a strong intellectual rigor, without however denying the possibility of spontaneity in the moment of composition. His music draws its rhythmic vitality from the superimposition of many layers of rhythmic patterns, each of them often very complex. The global results exhibits sometimes the sound qualities of primal rituals, of the raw power of nature.

ANTON WEBERN: Five Movements op. 5, for string quartet (1909)

"For the mostly unprepared listener the pieces of op. 5 present grave problems owing to their brevity; the length of the whole work is about eight minutes, as stated on the score; the third piece, the scherzo of the set lasts thirty-five seconds! The listener has hardly begun to find a way in a few motivic and formal relationships when the piece comes to an end. The generation of 1910, which was accustomed to the long symphonic periods of Wagner, Bruckner, Strauss, Reger and Mahler, must have been given a shock by Webern's op. 5."

(Anton Webern, *An Introduction to his Works*, Walter Kolneder)

So extreme in their search for a new musical language were these pieces by Webern that this analytical study in 1968 still needed to start with these words of warning! Yet the challenge they present to the audition has still today not completely disappeared. For many listeners they are emblematic of a certain idea of

"modern music," full of dissonances and difficult to follow. The problem, we are told, comes from this extreme concentration of expression and of formal construction, a unique feature of Webern's music. In fact, the model for short musical statements already existed in the Romantic period, and even earlier, in some pages by Beethoven. Beethoven's *Bagatelles* op. 119 offers a remarkable example of this, where the longest piece of the set lasts two-and-a-half minutes, while the shortest (no. 10) goes by in about ten seconds! Obviously, although not terribly frequent, the brevity is far from being unique to Webern's music. The fact that he wrote a larger number of short pieces than his predecessors only indicates that he felt more comfortable with this kind of timing than they were. No, the challenge that this music still presents is in fact the same that the music of Schoenberg and Berg presents at the same time. It is not easier to listen to Schoenberg's op. 16 than to Webern's op. 5, even though Schoenberg's piece has a more "normal" duration. The challenge of this music lies rather in the deliberate avoidance of clearly recognizable themes, a constant and apparently unshakable attribute of music until that time. Webern's music, as well as Schoenberg's and Berg's around 1910 revolved around the arrangement of very short and constantly transformed melodic cells. Their brevity should not necessarily be in itself a major difficulty—isn't Beethoven's main theme for his 5th symphony rather short, after all?—but the fact that they rarely appear again in the same guise, either because the pitches are changed, or the rhythms, or the timbral combinations, constitutes a real challenge to the audition. Yet even if one cannot follow the complex and intricate relations between the motives, one cannot help but being moved by the direct expressivity and tenderness of the melodies, indicative of a deep sensuality and lyricism.

Special thanks to Ron Patterson who coached the group.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN: Le Merle noir, for flute and piano (1951)

Le Merle Noir was written for the Concours du Conservatoire National de Musique, in Paris. This short virtuosic piece shows Messiaen's growing interest in birdsong as the principal musical element of a piece of music. It features prominently songs of the *Merle Noir* - the Blackbird. Throughout the 1950s, Messiaen used more and more often birdsongs to create entire pieces: *Réveil des Oiseaux*, and *Oiseaux Exotiques*, both for piano and orchestra, and *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*, for solo piano are extended works based almost exclusively on transcribed birdsongs.

PIERRE BOULEZ: 12 Notations, for piano (1945)

Long left "at the back of a drawer" and withdrawn from the list of the composer's works, the score of the twelve *Notations* recently returned to light to serve as the basis of a transcription for full orchestra. In its original form it was arranged as a cycle of variations, the musical material of each of which was observed from a different point of view to offer the widest possible range of interpretations. In *Notations* we see, briefly outlined in dense fragments (together forming a sort of sketchbook), certain features that Boulez would develop in later, more ambitious works: Cells of

independent rhythms and intervals, the feeling of space as an indication of structural layout, and the priority given to the keyboard's acoustic properties. What probably prompted the composer's withdrawal of them were considerations of a stylistic nature: Canons at the octave, relics of a thematic character, and accompanied melodies, all of which represented for Boulez contradictions he would strive to surmount from then on.

(Robert Piencikowski)

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN: Adieu, for wind quintet (1966)

Adieu was written to the memory of a young musician killed in a motor accident. Written for wind quintet it draws on the speaking and breathing associations of these instruments. Its form is based on musical images of interrupted movement: incomplete cadences, simulated breaks in transmission, and so on, as expressing the idea of bereavement. These images derive from the ambiguous nature of recorded events, which may be "past" or "present," "live" or "dead." *Adieu* imitates "live" the studio manipulation of a "dead" tape recording. The sound abruptly cuts out, is distorted, played back in slow motion, subjected to feedback. One often has the impression in *Adieu* that a tape recorder has jammed; the musical continuity seems suddenly to freeze, abruptly altering the listener's perception of time. These transitions, which Stockhausen compares to the right-angle intersections of Mondrian's paintings, may also have been intended to convey a sense of the suddenness of the young man's death.

Adieu oscillates between large units of rhythmically unstructured polyphony, requiring intense, in-depth listening by players and audience, and generating the pathetic sensibility associated with classical slow movement, and passages whose uniform rapidity of change project an aggressive, physical energy. Closing the gap between these two extremes is the tonal material, which is both the summit of rhythmic cohesion and the imaginary continuous background from which the main action is derived.

(after Robin Maconie)

THEA MUSGRAVE: Impromptu I, for flute and oboe (1966)

After studying at the University of Edinburgh, the Scottish composer Thea Musgrave, like Aaron Copland two decades earlier, worked with Nadia Boulanger in France. Her early style is as a consequence rather conservative and diatonic, but in the years following her return from France, it underwent a gradual change toward chromaticism. By the early 1960s she was using a fairly orthodox serial technique (which, as outlined above, was just turning out of fashion on the continent). At this time her position was thoroughly representative of the *via media* of British music: A tempering of strict orthodoxy with an instinctive moderation which also disposed her against experiment with any more *outré* forms of the avant garde. A more decisive change occurred in the mid-1960s with the composition of her opera *The Decision*. At that time, her music took a more extroverted and dramatic quality, and she started to incorporate elements of "controlled aleatoricism" not unlike the Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski.

(after Stephen Walsh)

AARON COPLAND: Piano Variations (1930)

Aaron Copland wrote the first of his three major piano works, the Piano Variations, in 1930. The piece carries the reputation of a seminal work, one of the first to define a truly American modernist compositional style. Although relatively brief, the Variations possess grandeur of scope, a broad range of expression, striking originality, and great seriousness of purpose.

Copland composed the work at Yaddo, the artists' colony in upstate New York. He used to claim that after finishing the theme, he wrote the individual variations, scattered them randomly around the floor of his cottage, and arranged them in his music in the order that he picked them up. This seems an unlikely story at face value given the tightly organized impression of the work, its dramatic sweep, and its clearly delineated formal structures. What makes the Piano Variations so remarkable is its ability to be understood equally as thoroughly tonal and thoroughly atonal. Competing doctoral dissertations have even been written defending each approach. But rather than being contradictory or mutually exclusive, these two qualities enjoy a constant interaction thanks to Copland's technique, yielding the piece's compelling signature.

This interaction is built into the four-note cell from which the variation theme is constructed. The notes of this cell are E, B#, D#, C#. Taken as a melodic line, they define a strong cadential motion, the end of a phrase defining C# minor, circling in to the tonic from the notes both above it and below it. Taken as a collection of pitches, however, Copland exploits their potential as two semitone pairs separated by a whole tone to form a variety of dissonant dyads sevenths, ninths, and seconds as well as the thirds which serve as the basis of triads. He often loads these with extra dissonant notes, such as both major and minor thirds, or roots a semitone apart, and harmonizes the melody in unexpected ways. In combination, these aspects of melody and harmony contribute to the perception of juxtaposed tonal and atonal language. The overall effect is highly dissonant, yet through it Copland gives us music, both rough and gentle, dramatic and lyric, stony and playful. There can be a hard edge to the sound at times, not least at the beginning. Arthur Berger, the composer and close friend of Copland's, proudly affirms that Copland wanted it that way, despite the wish of some ears to tame it.

The Variations' opening employs the cell in short gestures to create a unified theme: statement, heightened statement, development, extension, return, resolution. Each variation follows this pattern. From the atonal point of view, Copland generates the stuff of the variations by reordering the notes of the cell, combining them differently, and altering and expanding these materials. From the tonal perspective, he creates not only familiar harmonic associations, but also an overarching minor-key harmonic structure reminiscent of traditional ones. To summarize, the theme is followed by twenty variations, organized in loose groups, and a coda. In the first group (1-5), all on C#, each variation flows into the next as the texture thickens from single notes to harsh chords. In the next group (6-11), each variation takes on a more distinct character, as the focal pitch shifts from C# to other notes of the original theme, including E (the relative major), Eb (D#), and even D, the "missing" axis note of the cell. The section ends with slow, stately octaves followed by a descent