

ALEA III

Monday, December 1, 1986

John Tavener was born in London in 1944. Between 1962 and 1968 he studied composition with Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music. He also studied privately with David Lumsdaine. Since 1960 he has been organist at St. John's in Kensington, and has taught composition at Trinity College since 1969. His music is influenced by that of Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, Messiaen and Stockhausen, and the Roman Catholic liturgy.

Tavener's Lamentation, Last Prayer and Exultation was written around 1977 and uses three different texts: the first is an ancient lament of a queen for her dead husband, the second is the last prayer of Mary, Queen of Scots in Italian, and the third is entitled ZELITCHANIE (the falling asleep of The Most Holy Birth-giver, the Mother of God).

Born in Los Angeles in 1912, John Cage stands as one of the most experimental of American composers. In the 1930's he studied composition with 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.A.

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 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.

Norman Dinerstein was born in 1937 and died in 1982. He studied music at Boston University, the Hartt School of Music, Princeton, the Hochschule fur Musik at Berlin, the Darmstadt Summer School, and the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. His teachers include Witold Lutoslawski, Gunther Schuller, Aaron Copland, Lukas Foss, Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt, Boris Blacher, Edward Cone, Gardner Read, Joseph Rufer, and Arnold Franchetti. He taught at several colleges across the country, including New England Conservatory, Southeastern Massachusetts University, the Hartt School of Music, and the College-Conservatory of Music at the Cincinnati. He also lectured in Argentina under a Fulbright grant. He received many grants

and awards, including an ASCAP award, three National Endowment for the Arts grants, and the Koussevitsky Tanglewood Prize.

Of his Love Songs the composer wrote:

"Texts of four different writers are used and although there is no scenario as one can find in many song cycles, the poetry has been arranged so that a dramatic balance and flow is created. Furthermore, all of the texts are affirmative statements; these declarations of love appear not to go unrequited. The settings capture this wide variety of positive moods with correspondingly appropriate gestures and the musical means employed are frequently and explicitly tonal.

"'How do I love thee?' from Sonnets from the Portugese of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the first song of the cycle, is set in a number of moods...which range from delicate murmurings to passionate outbursts. The score indicates the song is 'after R.S.' The reference in this case is to Richard Strauss for his vocal setting of the lines 'Nothing on earth is as pure as your skin' is quoted frequently in this song. Excerpts from the Chapter II of The Song of Songs, attributed to King Solomon, are used in the second song. The famous line 'I am the rose of Sharon' is accompanied by gently repeating notes and the indication in the score 'after R.S.' refers to this delicate accompaniment, for the gesture is modeled after the one used by Robert Schumann in his song Mondnacht. Christina Rossetti's lyric A Birthday is set to robust music throughout in the next song. The 'after A.F.' found in the score refers to the vocal line composed by Arnold Franchetti to the text 'My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky' from his Wordsworth Songs for the opening line of A Birthday is based on this same melodic idea. The final song is marked as an Epilogue and it functions in this capacity in two ways. Initially, it recalls the music of the second song; hence, the indication 'after N.D.', the composer of this cycle. And on a textual level, the invitation to 'Grow old along with me' from the larger work Rabbi Ben Ezra, was undoubtedly extended by its author Robert Browning to his wife Elizabeth whose poetry was the basis for the initial song. What more fitting way to bring to closure a cycle of LOVE SONG."

Dimitri Terzakis was born in Athens in 1938, and attended the Athens Conservatory between 1960 and 1965, where he studied composition with Yannis Papaióannou. He went to the Cologne Musikhochschule in 1965-67, where he studied composition with Bernd Alois Zimmermann, and electronic music with Herbert Einert. Early in his career Terzakis was influenced by the Viennese School, and some of his compositions use atonal procedures combined with an untempered tuning system based on that found in Byzantine music.

"The piece Erotikon is composed using techniques which I have developed from byzantine music. I don't imitate this archetypal music but I take the technical elements which I've developed in the context of new music. Those elements are: the untempered intervals, the diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic tone classifications which byzantine music borrows from

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ancient Greek music, and at last tetrachords as elements which construct the melody and the form.

"As a text I have taken one verse from Plato and one from an anonymous poet. The content of both texts have lyric character."

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One of the great names in twentieth century music is Arnold Schoenberg. Born in 1874, Schoenberg is best known for his development and theory of dodecaphonic (12 tone) music. In 1933, after the Nazis took power, he came to the U.S. and taught at U.C.L.A. from 1936 to 1944. He died in Los Angeles in 1951.

Schoenberg's Kammersymphonie, Op. 9 was written during a period when he was moving chromatic harmony toward atonality. The work has been arranged several times for different combinations of instruments. Originally written for fifteen solo instruments, Schoenberg later arranged it for orchestra. His two most famous pupils, Anton von Webern and Alban Berg, also arranged it, Webern for five instruments, and Berg for piano four-hands, which is the version performed tonight.

Alban Berg, who was a big fan of four-hand piano playing (he wrote several pieces for four-hands and considered himself one of the last of the great piano four-hand playing composers) arranged the work in 1913-14. The manuscript was never published, and was kept in the Austrian National Library, until recently. The first public performance of the piece was given by Anthony and Joseph Paratore on February 9, 1985 at a concert of Berg premieres in Cologne, West Germany on the Anniversary of his birth. Tonight's performance is a U.S. premiere of the piece.

Charles Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut in 1874 and died in New York City in 1954. He was one of America's most extraordinary composers in that he used radical techniques before his younger contemporaries often were even aware of them. Ives made no money from his compositions—that was made by his insurance business—because he felt that music should belong to the public domain.

The Three Quarter-tone Pieces were originally conceived for two pianos, however, to be played by only one player. Ives also suggests that one of the two pianos be tuned a quarter-tone higher, but since this is bad for the piano, we tune the other piano a quarter-tone lower. The quarter-tone tuning creates not only twice as many notes in an octave but also creates many interesting new colors.

John Thow was born in Los Angeles in 1949 and was raised in Ventura, California, where he began early composition study with Adolf Weiss. He continued work in composition at the University of Southern California with Ingolf Dahl and Ramiro Cortes, at Harvard University with Leon Kirchner and in Italy with Luciano Berio

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and Luigi Dallapiccola. Before joining the music faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, he taught at Harvard and at Boston University. Among his awards are a Fulbright Fellowship to Italy, the Rome Prize Fellowship, the Goddard Lieberston Fellowship of the American Institute of Arts and Letters and a Guggenheim Fellowship. His works have been performed throughout the U.S. and in Europe.

Three Elements for Two Pianos was written as a commission from ALEA III for Joseph and Anthony Paratore. Tonight's concert will present the premiere of its first section, "Water Wheel". Of it the composer says:

"I composed Three Elements last June while on a fellowship to the Djerassi Foundation, a MacDowell colony of the West in the coastal mountains south of San Francisco. Each of the movements derives its title from a work of sculpture created from found objects by the California artist and teacher-turned-pro prospector, Mel Henderson, and designed by him as an installation on the Foundation's property. I was attracted to responding to his works musically for a number of reasons: their inherent beauty, of course; the similarity of the artists' and my own family histories (my great grandfather was an early prospector-settler in California) and my interest in creating a work based on the original elements of the pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece, in deference and thanks to Theodore Antoniou. The one of these elements I chose to leave out, naturally, was fire, an element no Californian would choose to eulogize.

"The "Water Wheel" of the title refers to a device common wherever water must move mechanically from one level to another, a kind of mill wheel without the mill. In the case of Henderson's wheel, the element of entropy is involved. Ingenious as it is, it will stop after a while. Musically, the piece is a series of four canons between the two pianos which gradually slow and stop, interrupted by a rising insistent figure and trill section which divide them. Each canon, while seemingly at the same speed, is actually written in a rhythmic figure which demands and increasingly slower and slower tempo."

Witold Lutoslawski is one of today's greatest composers from Poland. Born in Warsaw in 1913 he began compositional studies when he was 15. His many great works include Concerto for Orchestra (1950-54), two symphonies, Preludes and Fugue for thirteen strings (1972), and Livre Pour Orchestre (1968). Variations on a Theme of Paganini (1941) was written when restraints were imposed on music by official insistence, thus showing a fold-like style and conservatism of harmony.

TEXTS

The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs

Night by silent sailing light
Isobel-
Wildwoods eyes and primrose hair
Quietly -- all the woods so wild
In mauves of moss and daphne dews
How all so still she lay
'Neath of the white-thorn, child of tree
Like some lost happy leaf
Like blowing flower-stilled
As fain would she anon -- for soon again 'twill be
Win me woo me wed me
Ah! Weary me -- deeply now even calm lay sleeping
Night -- Isobel, sister Isobel, Saintette Isobel,
Madame Isa veuve la belle.

James Joyce, Finnegan's Wake

Erotikon

My love I want to be the heaven
with the stars to look at you
with a thousand eyes.

Lament, Last Prayer and Exaltation

Lament

Batar inmuini in tri toib
frishna fresciu aitherrech,
toiban Tearo, toib Taillfen,
toib Aedo maicc Ainmirech.

Beloved those three sides
I cannot hope to see again,
Side of Tara, side of Taillfiu,
Side of Aed mac Ainmirech.

Last Prayer

O Domine Deus! speravi in te;
O care mi Jesu nunc libera me;
In dura catena, in misera poena
Desidero te
Languendo querendo
et genuflectendo
adoro, imploro
ut libera me.

O Lord my God, I hope in thee;
My dear Lord Jesus, set me free;
In chains, in pains,
I long for thee.
On bended knee
I adore thee,
implore thee
To set me free.

Exaltation

Velichayem tsya, preneporochnaya
Matsi Khrista boga nasehevo,
i vsyeslavnoye slavim
uspeniye troye.

We magnify thee, O Mother all-
undefiled of Christ our God, and
we glorify thine all-glorious
Falling Asleep.

I.

Sonnet XLIII from
Sonnets from the Portuguese
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,
I love thee to the depth and breadth and
height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's
faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, -I love thee with the
breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my love! -and, if
God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

III.

A Birthday
Christina Rossetti

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whole boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love has come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it on doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

IV.

Grow Old Along With Me
from Rabbi Ben Ezra
Robert Browning

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!"

All four texts are in the public domain.

II.

Exerpts from Chapter II of
The Song of Songs
King Solomon (?)

I am the rose of Sharon and the
lily of the valleys.

As the lily among thorns, so is
my love among the daughters.

As the apple tree among the
trees of the wood, so is my beloved
among the sons. I sat down under
his shadow with great delight,
and his fruit was sweet to my
taste.

He brought me to the banquet-
ing house, and his banner over me
was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort
me with apples: for I am sick of
love.

I charge you, O ye daughters
of Jerusalem, by the roes, and
by the hinds of the field, that ye
stir not up, nor awake my love, till
he please.

The voice of my beloved! be-
hold, he cometh leaping upon the
mountains, skipping upon the hills.

My beloved spake, and said
unto me, Rise up, my love, my
fair one, and come away

For, lo, the winter is past, the
rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the
earth; the time of the singing of
birds is come, and the voice of the
turtle is heard in our land;

O my odve, thou art in the
clefts of the rock, in the secret
places of the stairs, let me see thy
countenance, let me hear thy
voice; for sweet is thy voice, and
thy countenance is comely.

My beloved is mine, and I
am his: he feedeth among the
lilies.

*Handbells courtesy of University
Lutheran Church, Cambridge.*

David Beier, music director.