

## **Franz Schubert: *excertos de quartetos de cordas e obras para piano***

*Quartet Mvt. D103, Quartet D703 (2<sup>nd</sup> Movt), Allegretto (for piano)*

b.1797-d.1828 The appreciation of depth and beauty in Schubert's music is a relatively recent one, as an unworthy reputation for writing pretty tunes without the muscle or interest of Beethoven's development for example, preceded him well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. That musicians should even search for unfinished scraps of manuscript would have amazed the modest composer in whose own lifetime success and reputation were always out of reach, to the extent that for subsistence and lodgings he often depended on friends. The absence of real interest from publishers meant that he wrote music for a close circle of mainly amateur musicians, and yet by any standards his output was extraordinarily rich. The speed and continuity with which he wrote verges on the statistically impossible: in 1815 for example writing over 20,000 bars of music, including orchestral and large-scale choral works; in his haste to complete pieces, parts were even jotted down in abbreviated shorthand, as is clear from surviving manuscripts of the Lieder. Yet, even though he experienced the devoted support of a few friends, musicians consistently under-valued his worth: when towards the end of his life, the Schuppanzigh Quartet were rehearsing his D minor Quartet he was told by the leader "My dear fellow, this is no good, leave it alone; you stick to your songs!"

## **Arnold Schoenberg: *Três Peças para Orquestra de Câmara (1910)***

b.Vienna 1874- d. Los Angeles 1951. Arnold Schoenberg, the most infamous, enigmatical and influential figure of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century music, persistently remains a solitary and misunderstood character. Even as a young man in Vienna, (apart from the influence and support of the composer and conductor Alexander von Zemlinsky) practically the only work received without dispute by the musical public was an early quartet in D major, premiered in 1898. The following year his string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* was refused, protests were made when his songs were performed in 1900, and the young composer, musically idealistic was left for the remainder of his life to follow his own, uncompromising path of enquiry.

In essence, Schoenberg's crime was that, as his style developed, his music retained all the contrapuntal complexity and chromatic expression of the German Classical tradition, while releasing at the same time, the gravitational pull of tonal or triadic harmony. Though usually villified for his later systemisation of atonality as 'serialism' or dodecaphony, the difficulty of hearing Schoenberg's music began much earlier (from 1904 onwards) with the freely atonal or 'expressionist' pieces. Even today the early Op.11 piano works or the Five Orchestra pieces Op.16 in 1909, with their oddly dissonant harmonies, luxurious and decadent melodies, are uncomfortable works, 'enjoyed' through the skillful beauty with which they lift the veil from a new and terrifying psychological landscape. Schoenberg himself, who doubted every step and questioned with the utmost scrutiny his own development, suffered acutely, particularly in that much of his own sympathy lay with the reactionary love of tonal music. Accustomed to compositional inhibition, he experienced a short period of uninhibited creativity around the years 1909-1911 (the opera *Erwartung* was written in only seventeen days, followed closely by another, *Die glückliche Hand*). However, as creativity waned and intensive work began instead on a pedagogical work, the *Harmonielehre*, no further pieces were completed until the Six Little Piano Pieces Op.19 which showed a further transition into a more consciously brief and aphoristic style.

It is from this transitional period of 1910 then, that the Three Pieces for Chamber Orchestra were written. From the manuscript it appears they were thrown down as a 'stream of consciousness', straight into full score; certainly Schoenberg was experimenting with 'pure' expression at this stage, adopting tight motivic ideas and clearly avoiding the problems of constructed forms in his search for

extremes in expression and his stretching of the harmonic language. Though the first two movements are complete, the set as a whole has a through-composed and unfinished quality with the music totaling less than three minutes. The mystical, harmonic air of the third disperses after just seven bars and though there is evidence of plans for a fourth movement, no more was ever completed of this work.

### **Anton Webern/Friedrich Cerha: *Oito Fragmentos***

b. Vienna 1883- d.1945 For Anton Webern, once he had encountered Arnold Schoenberg in 1904 and adopted his teachings, his path was set. His adoration had no boundaries: "You are set up in my heart as my highest ideal whom I love more and more". Webern devoted himself to living near the older composer, ministering to his needs, securing his exemption from military service in the 1914-18 war, and along with Anton Berg (the third member of the '2<sup>nd</sup> Viennese School' as they are now identified), arranging scores and raising money. In contrast to Schoenberg, who's musical knowledge was largely a result of his own intellect, Webern was the product of a rigorous musical education at the University of Vienna. One of Schoenberg's first private pupils, he began experimenting with the use of 12-tone technique for some time previous to 1920 - the year in which the formal announcement was made by Schoenberg to his circle of students. However once this technique was given authority from his mentor, and had become clear to him as a method of organising and justifying his musical language then he became the most fanatical purist in its use, able to adapt his instinctive skill with rhythm and motif, in constructing miniatures in which all elements of the composition are served by the 'tone-row'. While Schoenberg and Berg themselves employed serialism in conjunction with other compositional techniques, Webern was the pioneering figure who accepted serialism as the only valid path of future composition. This uncompromising purity was eagerly taken up and dogmatically imposed by later serialists such as Boulez and Stockhausen of the Darmstadt School.

Friedrich Cerha b.1926, has been closely associated with Austrian (Viennese) music throughout a long and celebrated professional life as teacher, conductor and composer. This association also led to him completing the score of Alban Berg's *Lulu*, premiered in 1979.

### **György Kurtág: ... *quasi una fantasia...*, Op. 27**

Born 1926 into an Hungarian-Jewish family in Roumania, György Kurtág took Hungarian citizenship in 1948. The following years (1950s) in which Stalin's regime banned the works of Bartok, Schönberg, even middle and late-period Stravinsky, produced an impossible artistic environment for many independent-minded musicians. Kurtág's initial sympathy with Stalin's victory over Nazism was dashed through witnessing the brutal crushing of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. He escaped by moving to Paris 1957 where he studied with Messiaen, Milhaud and Max Deutsch, though at this time he suffered a mental crisis in which he sought counsel through psychological therapy with Marianne Stein.

It was through this intensive therapy with Stein that he found a new independence as a musician, no longer seeking to write large-scale music in imitation of others such as Bartok, but to study afresh the most basic elements and fundamentals in music. Soon after this he was able to compose an Opus 1, symbolic of his new direction, a string quartet whose six movements total around 15 minutes, a miniaturism characteristic of his future compositions. On his return to Budapest in 1958 he travelled via Cologne, where he heard Stockhausen's *Gruppen* and also the latest

developments in electronic music. The spatial distribution used by Stockhausen enters a number of Kurtàg's works, including *Quasi una Fantasia*, in which the musicians are seated as far away from each other as possible, and placed surrounding the audience. His music explores an exotic though delicate world of colour, often using slightly altered tunings (inherent in instruments such as the cimbalom!), while the motifs and textures focus on great concentration and economy of utterance. Like Webern, whose sparse scores were copied out by Kurtàg and provided much of his inspiration, he seeks to encapsulate within a phrase or few lines that which is usually spun out over a whole movement. This intensity also characterises his reading of the Classical repertoire: for many years he was Professor of Piano and Chamber-Music at the Franz Liszt Academy, Budapest, also in demand as a freelance tutor during which time he built a reputation for terrifyingly demanding teaching!