

NAXOS

WEBERN

Vocal and Orchestral Works

Ricercata • Five Pieces • Five Sacred Songs • Variations

Tony Arnold, Soprano • Claire Booth, Soprano

David Wilson-Johnson, Bass • Simon Joly Chorale

Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble • Philharmonia Orchestra

Robert Craft



THE ROBERT CRAFT COLLECTION

THE MUSIC OF ANTON WEBERN Vol. 2

Robert Craft, Conductor

- ① **Ricercata from J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering*,
transcribed for orchestra by Anton Webern (1934-35)** **7:46**

Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Flute: Tara O'Connor • Oboe: Stephen Taylor • English Horn: Melanie Feld • Clarinet: Alan Kay
Bass Clarinet: Stephen Zielinski • Bassoon: Frank Morelli • Horn: William Purvis • Trumpet: Louis Hanzlik
Trombone: Michael Boschen • Timpani: Alex Lipowski • Harp: June Han
Violin I: Lily Francis, Laura Frautschi, Anna Lim, Asmira Woodward-Page
Violin II: Cal Wiersma, Hong-Ji Kim, David Fulmer, Aaron Boyd
Viola: Beth Guterma, Mark Holloway, Lisa Steltenpohl
Cello: Fred Sherry, Raman Ramakrishnan, Hamilton Berry • Bass: Timothy Cobb, Gregg August
Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters on October 28th, 2008
Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

- Two Songs for Mixed Choir, accompanied by celesta, guitar, violin,
clarinet and bass clarinet, Op. 19 (1926)** **2:34**

Text by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

- ② Weiß wie Lilien, reine Kerzen (White as lilies, pure candles) 1:26
③ Zieh'n die Schafe von der Wiese (When sheep move from the meadow) 1:08

Members of the Philharmonia Orchestra • Simon Joly Chorale

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on January 7th, 2007

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth • Editor: Raphael Mouterde

- Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op. 5 (1909-30)** **10:21**

- ④ Heftig bewegt 2:59
⑤ Sehr langsam 2:04
⑥ Sehr bewegt 0:48
⑦ Sehr langsam 1:13
⑧ In zarter Bewegung 3:17

Philharmonia Orchestra

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on January 9th, 2007

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth • Editor: Raphael Mouterde

Two Songs for Voice and Eight Instruments, Op. 8 (1910)

2:15

Text by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

- 9 Du, der ichs nicht sage (You Who I Do Not Tell)
10 Du machst mich allein (You Alone Make Me)

1:13
1:02

Tony Arnold, Soprano • Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet: Charles Neidich • Horn: Michael Atkinson • Trumpet: Chris Gekker
Celesta: Stephen Gosling • Harp: June Han • Violin: David Bowlin • Viola: Paul Neubauer • Cello: Fred Sherry

Recorded at SUNY, Purchase, NY, on May 23rd, 2008

Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 10 (1911-13)

5:12

- 11 Sehr ruhig und zart
12 Lebhaft und zart bewegt
13 Sehr langsam
14 Äußerst ruhig
15 Fließend, äußerst zart

0:53
0:40
1:55
0:28
1:16

Philharmonia Orchestra

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on January 7th, 2007

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth • Editor: Raphael Mouterde

Four Songs for Voice and Orchestra, Op. 13 (1914/18)

7:31

- 16 Wiese im Park (Lawn in the Park) *Text by Karl Kraus (1874-1936)*
17 Die Einsame (The Lonely Girl) *Text by Hans Bethge (1876-1946)*
18 In der Fremde (In a Strange Land) *Text by Hans Bethge*
19 Ein Winterabend (A Winter Evening) *Text by Georg Trakl (1887-1914)*

2:35
1:34
1:14
2:07

Tony Arnold, Soprano • Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Flute: Elizabeth Mann • Clarinet: Charles Neidich

Bass Clarinet: Stephen Zielinski • Horn: Michael Atkinson • Trumpet: Chris Gekker
Trombone: Michael Powell • Celesta: Stephen Gosling • Harp: June Han • Glockenspiel: Gordon Gottlieb
Violin: David Bowlin • Viola: Paul Neubauer • Cello: Fred Sherry • Bass: David Grossman

Recorded at SUNY, Purchase, NY, on May 23rd, 2008

Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

**Six Songs for Voice, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet,
Violin and Cello, Op. 14 (1917-21)**

8:46

Text by Georg Trakl (1887-1914)

- | | | |
|-----------|---|------|
| 20 | Die Sonne (The Sun) | 1:45 |
| 21 | Abendland I (Occident, No. 1) | 1:35 |
| 22 | Abendland II (Occident, No. 2) | 1:24 |
| 23 | Abendland III (Occident, No. 3) | 1:38 |
| 24 | Nachts (By Night) | 0:55 |
| 25 | Gesang einer gefangenen Amsel (Song of a Captive Blackbird) | 1:30 |

Tony Arnold, Soprano • Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Clarinet: Charles Neidich • Bass Clarinet: Stephen Zielinski

Violin: David Bowlin • Cello: Fred Sherry

Recorded at SUNY, Purchase, NY, on May 22nd, 2008

Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

**Five Sacred Songs for Voice, Flute, Clarinet and Bass Clarinet,
Trumpet, Harp, Violin and Viola, Op. 15 (1917-22)**

6:00

- | | | |
|-----------|---|------|
| 26 | Das Kreuz, das musst' er tragen (He Had Carried the Cross) | 1:06 |
| 27 | Morgenlied (Morning Song) | 1:01 |
| 28 | In Gottes Namen aufstehn (Arise in the Name of the Lord) | 1:01 |
| 29 | Mein Weg geht jetzt vorüber (My Road Is Now at an End) | 1:07 |
| 30 | Fahr hin, o Seel', zu deinem Gott (Pass On, My Soul, to Your God) | 1:46 |

Tony Arnold, Soprano • Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Flute: Elizabeth Mann • Clarinet/Bass Clarinet: Charles Neidich

Trumpet: Carl Albach • Harp: June Han • Violin/Viola: David Bowlin

Recorded at SUNY, Purchase, NY, on May 21st, 2008

Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

**31 Das Augenlicht, 'Through Our Open Eyes Light Flows into the Heart'
Op. 26, for mixed chorus and orchestra (1935)**

6:15

Text by Hildegard Jone (1891-1963)

Philharmonia Orchestra • Simon Joly Chorale

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on January 8th, 2007

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth • Editor: Raphael Mouterde

32 Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30 (1940-41)

7:30

Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Flute: Tara O'Connor • Oboe: Stephen Taylor • Clarinet: Moran Katz • Bass Clarinet: Stephen Zielinski
Horn: Stewart Rose • Trumpet: Carl Albach • Trombone: Michael Boschen • Tuba: Marcus Rojas
Timpani: Daniel Druckman • Celesta: Stephen Gosling • Harp: June Han
Violin I: Aaron Boyd, David Fulmer, Anna Lim, Erin Keefe
Violin II: Asmira Woodward-Page, Cornelius Dufallo, Harumi Rhodes, Katie Hyun
Viola: Dov Scheindlin, Mark Holloway, Kyle Armbrust
Cello: Fred Sherry, Sophie Shao, Hamilton Berry • Bass: Timothy Cobb, David Grossman
Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters on November 3rd, 2008
Producer: Philip Traugott • Recording, editing and mixing engineer: Tim Martyn, Phoenix Audio

**Second Cantata, Op. 31,
for soprano solo, bass solo, mixed chorus and orchestra (1941-43)**

15:36

Text by Hildegard Jone

- 33** Schweigt auch die Welt, aus Farben ist sie immer (The World, Though Silent, Is Always Full of Colours) 2:13
34 Sehr tief verhalten innerst Leben (Buried Deep, Innermost Life Sings) 3:41
35 Schöpfen aus Brunnen des Himmels nach Wassern des Worts (To Draw From Heaven's Springs) 2:30
36 Leichteste Bürden der Bäume trag ich durch die Räume: die Düfte
(Through Space I Carry the Tree's Lightest Burden) 1:11
37 Freundselig ist das Wort (Kindly Is the Word) 4:04
38 Gelockert aus dem Schoße (Delivered From the Womb) 1:56

**Claire Booth, Soprano • David Wilson-Johnson, Bass
Philharmonia Orchestra • Simon Joly Chorale**

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on July 27th, 28th and 30th, 2008
Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch, Floating Earth • Editor: Raphael Mouterde

Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Vocal and Orchestral Works

A prominent critic has recently asserted that “Nobody knew or cared about [Webern’s] music, but Robert Craft loved it and would make it known.” I first realized the truth of this in an incident that occurred in March 1959, in, of all places, Wake Island, a coral reef remote from everywhere. The Stravinskys and I had flown there from Honolulu, en route to Japan – our first fueling stop, since this was in the pre-jet era. After nine hours of empty ocean, we scuffed through pink coral dust to an air-conditioned canteen, where a moment later we were startled by the roar of another plane landing eastbound. The island, or atoll, is so small that the two vehicles parked side-by-side almost filled the runway area. As the Swiss Air passengers disembarked down a mobile stairway and we climbed back aboard our Pan American, a young man shouted at me from the other gangway: “Aren’t you Robert Craft?” – he had recognized Stravinsky, of course – “I want to thank you for your Webern records.” I was flabbergasted at this lifetime coincidence of meeting someone even having heard of the composer let alone knowing my recording.

I was first attracted to Webern’s music by its utter originality, its architecture, its generally *ppp*, *diminuendo* voice, its refined emotion, its requirements of extreme virtuosity, both instrumental and vocal. Though the stylistic features of Webern’s music change with each piece, every creation of his is different and distinctive. His music could not be mistaken at any point for anyone else’s. What are these features? Extreme compression and brevity, constant shiftings of tempo, dynamics, instrumental combinations, articulation (the *col legno battuto* and the slow-speed glissandos in the *String Trio*), the raising of the *appoggiatura* from ornament to element (the *Saxophone Quartet*), the incorporation of triplet rhythms on a par with other rhythmic figuration. The exploitation of the stratospheric range of the human voice, and the equalization of two-octave vocal intervals with thirds, fifths, sevenths, and ninths. Yet in every case he also

employs the opposites. Thus the first moment of the *Symphony* (Naxos 8.557530) changes neither meter nor tempo, and the *Variations, Op. 30*, avoid triplets throughout. Webern’s music is also the most thinly textured ever written (the second movement of the *Concerto, Op. 24*) and also some of the densest (the third song in *Opus 18*), the latter remaining transparent and crystalline.

Only a very few early works – the *Five Movements for Strings, Op. 5*, and the *Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6* (Naxos 8.557530) – have overcome barriers and entered the standard repertory. This will change with repeated listening, even though the obstacles remain considerable. First is in the programming of very short difficult pieces of extreme compactness of ideas. One solution already in the offing is the juxtaposition of “old music” of the highest quality that is often also intricate. We envisage the first half or third of a concert devoted to Webern balanced by the other half, or two-thirds, filled with music from Josquin to Bach. Second, a *variorum* edition is a necessity. Much of the music is strewn with errors, many of them traceable to the composer’s addiction to rewriting. For example, the printed score of the first song of *Opus 18* disagrees with the MS in eight places, while the metronomes are also at odds and the discrepancies in dynamics and phrasing numerous. In the most recent edition of the *Sacred Songs, Op. 15*, the non-existent low B in the flute has still not been corrected. Third, the heretofore recordings of Webern’s music are uncommendable, as in the Berlin Philharmonic brushed-through performance of the composer’s supreme orchestral work, the metronomes being largely ignored (the 160 is closer to 116), no attempt made to realize the expression markings, and even breaks and fermatas overlooked.

Now, 65 years after the composer’s death, a few listeners have discerned a programmatic dimension in his music. Thus the words *Himmel* and *Gott* are nearly always assigned to very high notes; in *Opus 17* the

agony of the crucifixion is evoked in the relentless grinding of the viola; and as Webern progresses in his song cycles the wider and most jagged intervals increasingly suggest alpine peaks. Credit Ernst Krenek, who knew Webern and his landscape as intimately as anyone, and was the first to bring this to our attention.

Gross errors in the Webern biography must be corrected before they become myths. A recent Stravinsky biography tells the reader the composer visited Webern's grave at Mittersill with me in 1955. He had wanted to do this but was committed to conduct in Lugano with the Swiss Italian Radio Orchestra. The same book calls it a question whether I or Stravinsky wrote a much-quoted "blurb" about Webern for the review *Die Reihe* on the tenth anniversary of his death. The facts are that Webern's publisher, Universal Edition, pleaded with Stravinsky to write it and, though he complied with much genuine emotion, Universal had been sending Webern's music to him in manuscript facsimile form, as well as a photocopy of Webern's transcription of Heinrich Isaac's *Choralis Constantinus* (together with the facsimile of the orchestra score of Berg's *Lulu* used at the 1937 Zurich première). Stravinsky gave the latter to me and I gave it to my late lamented friend George Perle. I knew nothing about the three-line testimonial, which the same Stravinsky biography describes as a "panegyric" (defined by Webster as a "lofty oration"), until I saw it in print.

Ricercata

Webern's orchestral transcription of the *Ricercata* from J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering* dates from 1934-1935.

A letter of 1st January, 1938, Webern to Hermann Scherchen, on his forthcoming performance of "my (I think I may call it that) Bach fugue on the BBC," is one of the most valuable documents of the kind in the history of music, as well as a glimpse at the depth of Webern's musical processes. The conductor had written to the composer asking exactly what he meant to indicate by the word "*Rubato*" in the fugue subject at the beginning of the piece. Webern replied, in part:

The subject should be played with movement every time, even with all the later additional counterpoints: accel, rit, finally merging into the "poco allargando" of the last notes of the subject. For myself, I feel this part of the subject, this chromatic progression, to be essentially different from the first five notes, which I think of as being very steady, almost stiff (i.e., in strict tempo; for the tempo is set by this phrase), and which, in my view, find an equivalent in character in the last five notes. More precisely, I intend rubato like this: From F via F sharp to F faster, then holding back a little on the E flat (accent provided by the harp) and again rubato on the trombone progression including the tied E flat of the horn, where the trombone has a quarter-note (crotchet) rest in bar 6. By the way, G to E flat is also five notes, and if you count the E flat as a link twice, to the inner ear this quarter-note in bar 5, the tied E flat on the horn plus the quarter-note rest on the trombone, is heavily stressed, a dividing point from the beginning and from the end. I have orchestrated it as such. Well now, if you count the E flat twice you again have five notes. The construction therefore appears to me as follows: Five notes, then 4 + 1 and 1 + 4, which is twice 5, and at the end another 5 notes! And these central twice-5 notes, the actual centre of the structure, I feel to be quite different in character from the beginning and from the end. The latter leads back with the poco allargando to the stiffness of the opening – not appearing in the answer. In dynamics this means that you must make a strong difference between the pp of the first five notes and the p of the central notes! And the last five notes return molto diminuendo to pp.

I hope I have made myself understood. I must add that of course the subject must not appear too disintegrated by all this. My

orchestration is intended (and I speak of the whole work) to reveal the motivic coherence. This was not always easy. Beyond that, of course, it is supposed to set the character of the piece as I feel it. What music it is! At last to make available, by trying through my orchestra to express my view of it, was the ultimate object of this bold undertaking. Is it not worthwhile to awaken this music from the seclusion of Bach's own abstract presentation and make this unknown, or unapproachable, music available to everyone? ... One more important point for the performance of my arrangement: nothing must be allowed to take second place. Even the softest notes of the muted trumpet must not be lost. ...

Two Songs for Mixed Choir, Op. 19

The texts of the *Two Songs for Mixed Choir, Op. 19*, accompanied by celesta, guitar, violin, clarinet and bass clarinet, are from Goethe's *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres- und Tageszeiten* (Chinese–German Diary). Webern composed the two pieces at Mödling (Vienna) in December 1925 and January 1926. His biographers report that nothing is known of any first public performance, but the present writer can verify that the first private performance took place in Igor Stravinsky's Hollywood home, in 1957, the day before its recorded première by Columbia Records. The chorus pitches are doubled by the instruments throughout and both pieces begin with five-bar instrumental introductions, which is curious in that the entire opus lasts only slightly more than two minutes.

Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op. 5

The original version of the *Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op. 5*, for string quartet, gave the composer international recognition when performed in 1910. The string orchestra transcription of it that he completed in the summer of 1929 entirely alters it, and, as he informs

Schoenberg in a letter of 19th February, 1929, the new arrangement was radically revised: "I have taken it back and am now making a new and entirely different reworking, using the original solely as a sketch for the full score. I expose here the motivic structure and in so doing often come to fourteen staves." On 4th March, 1929, Webern wrote to a friend: "What I have made makes me very proud." The first performance of the transcription took place on 26th March, 1930 in the ballroom of the Belleview-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia, conducted by Koussevitzky's nephew, Fabian Sevitzyky. Webern conducted it himself a year later in a BBC concert, but omitted the first movement because of insufficient rehearsal time. He wrote to a friend that "It has really turned into something entirely new! ... the constant subdivisions from tutti to half, to solo, stand out in a clearly audible way."

Two Songs for Voice and Eight Instruments, Op. 8

Webern's first songs with instruments were inspired by his secret love affair with his future wife, Wilhelmina, and by reading Rilke's notebook *Malta Laurids Brigge*. This needs to be said, since the music conveys little or no sense of romance. The settings of *Du, der ichs nicht sage* and *Du machst mich allein*, were completed on 10th August and 30th August, 1910 respectively. As an instance of Webern's perfectionism, it should be said that he prepared a third revision of the pieces in 1921 and the fourth revision in 1925. The facts of the first performance are vague, but it is thought to have taken place in Brussels.

Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 10

Webern composed many more short aphoristic pieces than the five grouped together here as a cycle that he eventually chose for publication as *Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 10*. The completion dates for each piece in this brief collection are: I. 28th June, 1911; II. 13th September, 1913; III. 8th September, 1913; IV. 19th

July, 1911; and V. 6th October, 1913. In 1965 a trove of Webern manuscripts surfaced in Perchtoldsdorf and was found to include scores of five more brief “orchestra” pieces. In a letter of 6th November, 1912, to Schoenberg, Webern mentions that he had composed eight orchestral miniatures and intended to extend the cycle to nine, but on 22nd December he wrote again that eleven more works of the same genre had been completed since the autumn. It is thought that one of these, dated 2nd December, 1913, on the eve of Webern’s thirtieth birthday, may have been the last of these creations.

The designation “for Orchestra” is misleading in that the instrumental ensemble consists entirely of solo players and, though small in numbers, do not fit the concept of a chamber orchestra. Each piece is formed with different combinations of solo instruments, some of them unknown as components of any kind of orchestra. Thus *Opus 10* employs a harmonium, a guitar, and a mandolin, together with seven wind instruments (no bassoon) and a string section limited to four solo instruments, violin, viola, cello, bass, in addition to a duo of celesta and harp, and eight percussion instruments, including cowbells. Bell-like sonorities from string and harp harmonics and the high notes of the celesta produce a mountain village atmosphere. Clearly Webern wished to add new colours to his palette and to avoid the classical orchestral ensemble, strings and pairs of wind instruments. The most radical aspect of *Opus 10*, however, is in the extreme brevity and succinctness of its five pieces, which altogether last only four and a half minutes. The shortest of them, number four, is only nineteen seconds long.

The first performance, in Zurich, 22nd June, 1926, conducted by Webern himself, kindled a sensation that was repeated wherever the work was played. Moreover it brought attention to the composer’s name. Conductors with no interest in avant-garde and experimental music, such as Koussevitzky in Boston, were quick to include the work on their programmes.

Webern left few clues as to his programmatic intentions, though his letter to Schoenberg of 10th

September, 1912, stating that he was composing a series of movements “belonging to each other”, is illuminating, as is his avowal that he did not wish “to give any programmatic explanation of the music”, but merely to indicate “the feelings that ruled him when composing”. He had devised titles for the *Five Pieces*, but then concealed them. The listener will follow Webern’s multifarious moods, kaleidoscopic colour changes, and feel the rural atmosphere of the whole, the pastoral qualities, and, above all, Webern’s love of bell- and bell-like sounds.

Four Songs for Voice and Orchestra, Op. 13

The instrumental accompaniment of *Four Songs for Voice and Orchestra, Op. 13*, resembles that of the *Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 10*, in that the string complement requires a solo quartet and the bassoon is excluded from the wind section. The principal difference is that the only percussion instrument required is a glockenspiel. The music is comparatively simple. The vocal part lies largely in the low register and is generally confined to small intervals. So, too, the rhythmic language is unconstricted by convolutions – the reason, no doubt, that the work remains the most popular of Webern’s song-cycles with instruments. Attention should be drawn to some of the work’s most striking instrumental effects. In the second song, for one, the accompaniment to the phrase “*Ich habe meine Lampe ausgelöscht*” (“I have extinguished my lamp”), four soft notes in the voice, is confined to an ethereal piccolo, creating a haunting empty space between the two. No less magical is the accompaniment in the third song to the words “I raised my head.” The violin in a very high register plays twelve very fast even-speed notes, *legato*, over an *ostinato* figure in celesta and harp, softly and in a slower tempo, a silken caress. The last song concludes with trumpet, trombone, and cello playing in hocket style, in colours and rhythms both magical and ancient. The dynamics range from “*p*” to “*pp*” to “*ppp*,” with only three notes rising to a mezzo-forte climax, which is marked “*diminuendo*.”

The first performance on 16th February, 1928, in Winterthur, was conducted by Hermann Scherchen.

Six Songs for Voice, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Violin and Cello, Op. 14

Webern was ahead of his time in perceiving the genius of the poet Georg Trakl, who died at the age of 27 in 1914. The music of the Trakl settings marks a great leap ahead in its musical language from the *Opus 13* songs. The instrumental and vocal parts are far more difficult and demanding than any Webern had written so far and in one place the contrapuntal density is nearly impenetrable. Curiously, four instruments are required but used together only in the final song. Further, the pieces are sectional. The first song, *The Sun*, for example, divides into three contrasting movements indicated by double bars, and the second song is in two contrasting parts, again shown by a double bar. The other songs are accompanied by trios of varying instrumentation. Another characteristic of the pieces is that the playing and singing are continual. In the third of the songs, entitled *Occident, No. 2*, the bass clarinet and the cello are given only a handful of very brief rests. In the same piece, bars 11 to 13 employ an *ostinato*, rare in Webern, and it evokes a storm in three measures in which the bass clarinet and the cello parts are dangerously near rhythmic and pitch collisions.

After Webern conducted the première at Donaueschingen on 20th July, 1924, he rejected other offers to present the work, recognizing that “My *Trakl Lieder* are pretty well the most difficult there are in this field. They would need countless rehearsals”. Indeed, the greatest increase in complexity in all of Webern’s music may be the one from the *Songs Op. 13* to the *Songs Op. 14*.

Five Sacred Songs for Voice, Flute, Clarinet and Bass Clarinet, Trumpet, Harp, Violin and Viola, Op. 15

Webern adds to the title of the last but first-composed of the *Five Sacred Songs for Voice, Flute, Clarinet and Bass Clarinet, Trumpet, Harp, Violin and Viola, Op. 15*, that the music is a double canon in contrary motion, *i.e.*, a first canon between the trumpet and clarinet, and another canon between the voice and the violin. Webern was especially proud of this fifth piece and made copies of it as gifts for his friends. The density of polyphonic structure and rhythmic complexity continues in the style of the *Trakl Songs, Op. 14*, and in places even surpasses it. Webern conducted the première in Vienna on 9th October, 1922.

The double canon was composed on 20th July, 1917. On 19th August, 1917, Webern wrote to Alban Berg, “Now I am mourning the end of summer, *i.e.*, the time I can work. I have gone along the right paths, as Schoenberg has confirmed. Now I am writing quite differently. I have composed four homogeneous sounds, in long themes, altogether something entirely different than before the war.” He wrote to Schoenberg on 12th September: “This year I have in truth tried to follow your *Pierrot* directly.”

Das Augenlicht, ‘Through Our Open Eyes Light Flows into the Heart’, Op. 26

The text of the cantata *Das Augenlicht, ‘Through Our Open Eyes Light Flows into the Heart’, Op. 26*, for mixed chorus and orchestra is from Hildegard Jone’s *Viae Inviae*. Webern began the composition on 19th February, 1935, after finishing his orchestration of the Bach *Ricercata* from the *Musical Offering*. The tonerow required three weeks of deliberation to establish, with another day to change a note, and was completed on 14th March. Webern devoted the entire summer of 1935 to the composition, completing it on 29th September. He thought the piece “so good that if people ever get to know it they will declare me ready for a

concentration camp or an insane asylum!” Here is his description of it to Hermann Scherchen, 12th April, 1938: “Everything is obbligato in a purely polyphonic presentation.” Listing the instrumentation, Webern says there are no string basses (like the *Cantata, Op. 31*) but does not mention the inclusion of a saxophone. In another letter he claims to have composed the piece under the influence of Brahms’s *Schicksalslied*, and refers to the “alternation” of homophonic and polyphonic styles in the choral sections, some of them *a cappella*, and observes that “each vocal line presents the 12 tone rows.” After Webern played it to his friend Polnauer he remarked that it seemed full of cadences, whereupon Webern embraced him. *Augenlicht* refers to the sparkle in the eyes of his daughter Amalie, to whom the piece is dedicated. The composer’s biographer remarks: “None of Webern’s children ever showed the slightest interest in, or understanding of, his music.” After a long teatime with Amalie at the Sacher Bar, Vienna, in November 1956, she concurred with the present writer’s conclusion: the Webern family did not believe that Webern’s music could ever appeal to even the most attuned and elite audience. Under Hermann Scherchen, however, the first performance in London was an immense success and one that changed Webern’s career. Its lyricism and new orchestral sound made a great impression on the young Schoenbergian-minded Luigi Dallapiccola, for one, who had heard the London performance and visited Webern in Vienna in 1943. He reported that Webern was most interested in his impressions of the “sound,” which is understandable since he had not composed an orchestral piece of his own in nearly three decades.

Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30

In mid-January 1940, Webern wrote to his librettist Hildegard Jone that he had finished his first *Cantata* to her text and had already begun a new work that would be purely instrumental. In February, he was in Winterthur and Basel to attend performances of his works, a journey that raised his hopes for future concerts

in Switzerland, since none would be forthcoming in any other continental European country because of the Nazi ban on his music. Returning to Austria, he began to draft the *Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30*, on 15th April. An entry in his hand on that date records: “Theme; periodically structured from material elements. Repetition in a new form.” He composed a tone row but on the next day changed its second half, turning the last six notes into the retrograde of the first six. The intervallic patterns, thus divided, restructure the series into three groups of four notes, each one both harmonic and motivic, *i.e.*, vertical as well as horizontal. The composer noted the four new forms in a different colour, black, red, blue, and green (pencils). He also used a green pencil to identify a new beginning on page five of the draft and to change the tempo marking from “very animated” to “lively”, the latter eventually becoming the definitive tempo of the piece.

Among the domestic and political events recorded in his sketchbook are the birth of a granddaughter and the triumphant German invasion of France, but Webern continued to compose. A condensed draft-score was completed on 25th November, but he quickly began work on a “thorough revision” and did not begin the full score until mid-December, completing it in mid-February 1941, when he wrote again to Frau Jone that the orchestration was very difficult but “the result, I believe, is of something extremely simple”. He wrote to another friend asking him to persuade Paul Sacher, conductor of the Basle Chamber Symphony, to commission the new piece, but no answer was forthcoming. Webern appealed again, through the same intermediary, giving compositional information about the work, which remains the most absorbing of all Webern’s revelations of his creative thought. The piece, he claims:

... lasts approximately a quarter of an hour, [seven and a half minutes in the present Naxos recording] and almost throughout is in a very quick tempo, despite a *sostenuto* effect I settled on a form that amounts to a kind of

overture based on variations ... the orchestra is small: flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, celesta, harp, timpani, strings ... there is a synthesis in formal respects, “horizontal” and “vertical”. Basically my overture is an adagio form, but the recapitulation of the principal subject is in the form of a development, so this element is also present. Beethoven’s *Prometheus* and Brahms’s *Tragic*, for example, are also overtures in adagio form, not in sonata form! But with me all of this evolves from the basis of a theme and certain number of variations [six].

Webern’s Vienna publishers, Universal Edition, made a photostat of the manuscript, which the publisher took to Switzerland together with a rhetorical and analytical outline of the piece so that he could effectively refute any objections Sacher might be inclined to make:

On first looking at this score the reaction will probably be, “Why, there really is nothing in it”. But because the person concerned will miss the many, many notes he is used to seeing in R. Strauss ... it would be vital to say that here in my score a difficult style is present ... it does not look like a score from the pre-Wagner period either – Beethoven, for instance, nor does it look like Bach. Is one to go back still further? Yes, but then orchestral scores did not yet exist!

It should still be possible to find certain similarities to the presentations associated with the Netherlands Renaissance composers. So, something archaisic? An orchestrated Josquin perhaps? The answer would have to be an energetic “No.” What, then? ... The theme of the variations extends to the first double bar; it is contrived as a “period” but is introductory in character. Six variations follow each one to the next double bar. The first brings the principal subject of the overture (andante form) which

unfolds in full; the second the bridge passage; the third the secondary subject, the fourth the recapitulation of the principal subject. It is an andante form after all! But in the manner of the development, the fifth, repeating the character of the introduction and bridge passage, leads to the coda, the sixth variation.

Everything that occurs in the piece is based on the two ideas given in the final and second bars (double bass and oboe), but reduced still more since the second figure (oboe) is already a retrograde in itself: the second two tones are then the retrograde of the first two, but rhythmically augmented. The second figure is followed immediately on the trombone by the first figure (double bass), but in diminution, and as to motives and intervals, retrograde. For that is how my row is constructed – it is made up of these thrice-four notes. The succession of motives takes part in this retrograde through the use of augmentation and diminution! These two modes of alteration now lead almost exclusively to the respective variation idea, that is, a motive variation happens, if only within this framework, but by means of all possible shifts of the centre of gravity within the two shapes, there is always something new in way of meter, etc. Compare the first repeat of the first figure with its first form (trombone and double bass respectively)! And so it continues throughout the entire piece, the whole content of which is already present in germinal form in the first 12 tones.... It is pre-formed! So are the two tempi of the piece in bars one and two. Pay attention to the metronome marks.

The first performance of the *Variations* was sponsored by Werner Reinhart of Winterthur, and conducted by his friend (and Webern’s) Hermann Scherchen, 5th March, 1943, in Zurich. Webern reported that the performance turned out “quite well” and that the reception was “gratifying beyond all expectations ... I would say:

against all expectations. I believe that they cannot easily ignore my cause anymore. I can say truly that from the first to last moment it was a completely new sound constellation (almost compared to my own earlier works)!"

Now, 65 years later, we can blame the failure to understand this piece on the ignoring of Webern's admonition to follow his metronomic markings. The present recording is the first attempt to play the work at metronomic speed. Thus, the DGG trudges along at about 116 for the fast pulsation, as against the required 160, and continues at nearly the same 116 for the slow beat. Important stylistic features not mentioned by the composer are the beginnings of most phrases or motives on the second beat, after the silent or inert first beats, and the four-pitch accompaniment chords repeated without changes in pitch, as nowhere else in Webern. (The seven chords in the brass at the beginning of the first variation, followed by the first seven chords in the woodwinds, by the first five chords in the strings, and in the first six chords in the celesta/harp.) Further, no other work of Webern changes metres so frequently, some 120 times in a work of only 180 bars. The dynamics, of course, change in every bar, as do the modes of articulation, and volumes alternate with great frequency, as do the instrumental combinations.

Second Cantata for soprano solo, bass solo, mixed chorus and orchestra, Op. 31

Webern's last two creations compound the sense of loss with his tragic death less than two years after his eviction from his home near Vienna with his wife and daughter to escape the occupation of the city by the advancing Red Army. The *Cantata, Op. 31*, was his greatest achievement, showing him to be at the peak of his powers. He opens new and unexplored possibilities,

particularly in the harmonic and rhythmic domains, especially in the *a cappella* four-part mixed chorus music of the penultimate and final movements. The instrumental parts are soloistic and less dense than ever before, and the last movement, a polyphonic masterpiece, adds an entirely new dimension in multi-metered rhythmic notation that reflects Webern's roots in early Renaissance style. Also new in this final movement is the instrumental doubling of the vocal parts, with clarity of intonation as a chief objective. Yet this last movement, not simply a demonstration of inventive and technical powers, is a dramatic structure, rising quickly to a climax, then returning with corresponding speed through a *diminuendo* to a single final note, a symmetry with the single note with which the movement begins. The solo-instrumental contrasts are among Webern's most remarkable conceptions, in, for example, the combination of solo violin (without mute), celesta, and harp, a new colour. What must also be remarked is the solo bass voice part, which is very largely unaccompanied in the first movement and only lightly accompanied in the second. The extreme rhythmic simplicity of the bass solo with successions of quarter-notes (crotchets), half-notes (minims), then whole notes (semibreves) and longer, are novelties without precedent in Webern, a reflection of Renaissance purity and simplicity. In contrast, the rhythmic structure and the linearity in the last movement is the most complex that Webern had ever written. One of the *Cantata's* most beautiful chords comprises all twelve pitches sounded by eleven different instruments. The last movement is both metrically and linearly polyphonic, every note of which is audible in the blend of colour. This is music stripped of all ornament.

Robert Craft

Tony Arnold



concert performance as well as a filmed master-class segment with the composer. She is Professor of Voice at SUNY Buffalo.

Soprano Tony Arnold was thrust into the international spotlight when she became the first vocalist ever to win First Prize in the Gaudeamus International Interpreters Competition Holland. On the heels of that triumph, she took First Prize at the Fifteenth McMahon International Music Competition. Her recent work has focused on some of the most innovative composers of our time, including György Ligeti, Thomas Adès, Luciano Berio, György Kurtág, George Crumb, Elliott Carter, and Oliver Knussen. Tony Arnold's recording of George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* was nominated for a Grammy award and was followed by a series of acclaimed recordings, including Carter's *Of Challenge and of Love*, Crumb's *Madrigals*, Berio's *Sequenza*, and Tania León's *Singin' Sepia*. Her DVD of György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* features a

Claire Booth



Claire Booth has established a reputation as one of the most talented and versatile singers of her generation in opera and concert. Her repertoire ranges from Handel and Mozart operas to complex twentieth- and twenty-first-century works. She sang the world premiere of Oliver Knussen's *Songs for Sue*, written for her and conducted by the composer with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed the work at the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh, Holland, Edinburgh and Lucerne Festivals. She performed the rôle of Pakriti in the world premiere of Jonathan Harvey's *Wagner Dream* for Netherlands Opera. She has sung Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) and Niece (*Peter Grimes*) for Opera North. Other important appearances have included Birtwistle's *The Io Passion* at the Aldeburgh, Almeida and Bregenz festivals and *The Second Mrs Kong* at the South Bank Centre with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. She has performed with the BBC Symphony, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Schoenberg Ensemble, The King's Consort, Early Opera Company, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the Nash Ensemble.

David Wilson-Johnson



David Wilson-Johnson read Modern Languages at Cambridge University and studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music. He sang many rôles at Covent Garden over 21 years, and in Amsterdam, Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, Turin, Paris, Rome and Salzburg. His happiest concerts have been with the world's finest orchestras and conductors, Atherton, Boulez, Bruggen, Davis, Dutoit, Giuliani, Jansons, Järvi, Mackerras, Masur, Montgomery, Previn, Rattle and Rozhdstvensky. His most notable stage rôles have included those of King Priam in Tippett's opera, Merlin in the opera by Albéniz, *The Nose* by Shostakovich and *Saint François d'Assise* by Messiaen. Recordings include *Winterreise* with David Owen Norris and over a hundred and fifty CDs of music of all periods and styles. His concerts and recitals continue with return visits to the orchestras of Amsterdam, Antwerp, Basel, Chicago, Dresden, Glasgow, Helsinki, Las Palmas, London, Madrid, Minneapolis St Paul, Monte Carlo, Munich, Philadelphia, Rome, Sydney, Tokyo and Zurich. He is Professor at the Conservatorium of Amsterdam. www.davidwilsonjohnson.com

Simon Joly Chorale

Handpicked by Simon Joly from the finest professional singers in London, the Simon Joly Chorale is one of three select choral groups formed by him for the specific purpose needed by each event. Simon Joly has used each group to provide the choral element in many of Robert Craft's recordings, from the chamber forces of Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand*, through Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, to the huge chorus for Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. He has also trained choruses for several other eminent musicians who have included Pierre Boulez, for his recordings of Webern's *Cantatas* and a *cappella music* of Schoenberg {the BBC Singers}, Leonard Bernstein's prize-winning recording of *Candide* and several recordings and concerts for Claudio Abbado with the London Symphony Chorus.

Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Robert Craft formed the Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble to perform and record the seminal works of the last century, in particular the music of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Webern. Since the late 1980s Fred Sherry has engaged musicians who, in addition to being virtuosos, have a deep commitment to this music. The close working relationship between the players and Robert Craft has produced finely tuned and deeply felt performances which are heightened by Craft's own stamp of authenticity. These recordings have been hailed by critics and fellow musicians alike.

Philharmonia Orchestra



Photo: Richard Haughton

Established in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. It boasts relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, notably its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen and remains at the heart of British musical life. Conductors associated with the Orchestra have included Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti and Giuseppe Sinopoli, Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life), Sir Charles Mackerras (Principal Guest Conductor), Kurt Sanderling (Conductor Emeritus) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate). Since 1995 the orchestra's work has been underpinned by its United Kingdom and International Residency Programme, which began with its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's South Bank Centre, and now also includes De Montfort Hall in Leicester, the Anvil in Basingstoke and a series of partnerships across Kent and the Thames Gateway, based in Canterbury. The Orchestra's international extensive touring schedule each season involves appearances at the finest concert halls across Europe, the United States and Asia.

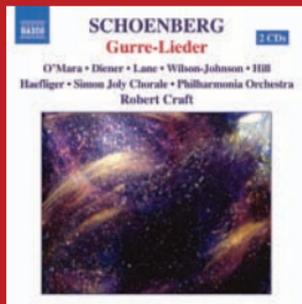
Robert Craft

Robert Craft, the noted conductor and widely respected writer and critic on music, literature, and culture, holds a unique place in world music of today. He is in the process of recording the complete works of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Webern for Naxos. He has twice won the Grand Prix du Disque as well as the Edison Prize for his landmark recordings of Schoenberg, Webern, and Varèse. He has also received a special award from the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters in recognition of his "creative work" in literature. In 2002 he was awarded the International Prix du Disque Lifetime Achievement Award, Cannes Music Festival.

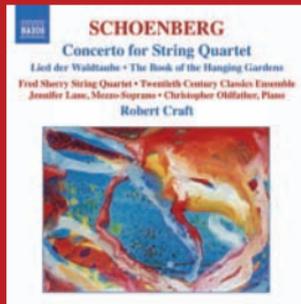
Robert Craft has conducted and recorded with most of the world's major orchestras in the United States, Europe, Russia, Japan, Korea, Mexico, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. He is the first American to have conducted Berg's *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, and his original Webern album enabled music lovers to become acquainted with this composer's then little-known music. He led the world premières of Stravinsky's later masterpieces: *In Memoriam: Dylan Thomas*, *Vom Himmel hoch*, *Agon*, *The Flood*, *Abraham and Isaac*, *Variations*, *Introitus*, and *Requiem Canticles*. Craft's historic association with Igor Stravinsky, as his constant companion, co-conductor, and musical confidant, over a period of more than twenty years, contributed to his understanding of the composer's intentions in the performance of his music. He remains the primary source for our perspectives on Stravinsky's life and work.

In addition to his special command of Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's music, Robert Craft is well known for his recordings of works by Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Schütz, Bach, and Mozart. He is also the author of more than two dozen books on music and the arts, including the highly acclaimed *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship; The Moment of Existence: Music, Literature and the Arts, 1990–1995; Places: A Travel Companion for Music and Art Lovers; An Improbable Life: Memoirs; Memories and Commentaries; and Down a Path of Wonder: Memoirs of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Other Cultural Figures (2006)*. He lives in Florida and New York.

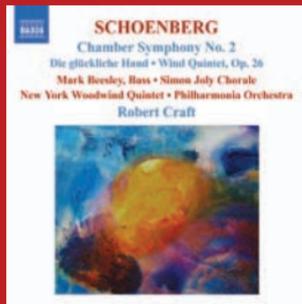
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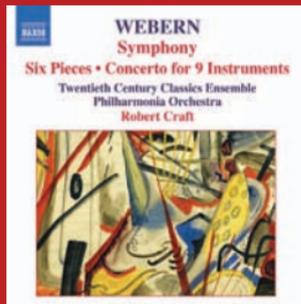
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Robert Craft's abiding love and understanding of Anton Webern's music have made him an internationally renowned champion of this elusive composer's oeuvre. Its utter originality, pristine architecture and refined emotionalism yield rich rewards indeed. Whether transforming the *Ricercata* from J.S. Bach's *A Musical Offering* into a kaleidoscope of orchestral sounds, creating vivid new colours through ever-changing vocal and instrumental groupings, revelling in multi-layered polyphony or cultivating the purest simplicity, Webern reveals new musical worlds which remain as fresh and fascinating today as when they were written.

philharmonia
orchestra

Anton
WEBERN
(1883-1945)

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| 1 | Ricercata from J.S. Bach's 'Musical Offering',
trans. for orchestra by Anton Webern (1934-35) ¹ | 7:46 |
| 2-3 | Two Songs, Op. 19 (1926) ² | 2:34 |
| 4-8 | Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op. 5 (1909-29) ³ | 10:21 |
| 9-10 | Two Songs, Op. 8 (1910) ⁴ | 2:15 |
| 11-15 | Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 10 (1911-13) ⁵ | 5:12 |
| 16-19 | Four Songs, Op. 13 (1914-18) ⁶ | 7:31 |
| 20-25 | Six Songs, Op. 14 (1917-21) ⁷ | 8:46 |
| 26-30 | Five Sacred Songs, Op. 15 (1917-22) ⁸ | 6:00 |
| 31 | Das Augenlicht, 'Through Our Open Eyes Light
Flows into the Heart' Op. 26 (1935) ⁹ | 6:15 |
| 32 | Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30 (1940) ¹⁰ | 7:30 |
| 33-38 | Second Cantata, Op. 31 (1941-43) ¹¹ | 15:36 |

Tony Arnold, Soprano ^{4, 6, 7, 8} • **Claire Booth, Soprano** ¹¹
David Wilson-Johnson, Bass ¹¹ • **Simon Joly Chorale** ^{2, 9, 11}
Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble ^{1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10}
Philharmonia Orchestra ^{2, 3, 5, 9, 11} • **Robert Craft**

A full track listing and recording details can be found on pages 2 to 5 of the booklet
 Available sung texts can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/557531.htm

Cover painting: *The Storm* by August Macke (1887-1914)
 (Saarland Museum, Saarbrücken, Germany / Giraudon / The Bridgeman Art Library)

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Playing Time
79:46



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