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Producer-engineers: Ewa Lasocka and Antoni Grzymala
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Booklet essay: Lloyd Moore
Design and layout: Paul Brooks, paulmbrooks@virginmedia.com

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

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BERG by Arrangement

Music for Strings

Lyric Suite
arr. Berg/Verbey

Piano Sonata
arr. van Klaveren

Kanon
arr. Schnittke

Early Pieces
arr. Kovacic

NFM Leopoldinum
Chamber Orchestra
Ernst Kovacic

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

BERG BY ARRANGEMENT: MUSIC FOR STRING ORCHESTRA

by Lloyd Moore

Of the three composers who make up the so-called 'Second Viennese School', it is Alban Berg whose music enjoys the widest appeal. Although it is unlikely that any one factor is responsible for this popularity, Berg's music – in contrast to that of his friend and colleague Anton Webern and much of that of his teacher, Arnold Schoenberg – exhibits a non-doctrinaire stylistic plurality, coupled with a lyrical, Romantic sensibility that recalls one of his chief influences, Gustav Mahler. These qualities, combined with a harmonic language that frequently makes use of tonal or quasi-tonal elements and a distinctly Viennese, *fin-de-siècle* preoccupation with sensuous surfaces (which connects Berg to his elder contemporaries Zemlinsky and Schreker, whose latter-day revival has highlighted the links Berg's music shares with theirs) has ensured that most of his works are now firmly established in the international repertoire. But that is not to say that his music is not as rigorously organised as Schoenberg's or Webern's. Indeed, analysis of Berg's scores and working methods undertaken by scholars such as George Perle and Douglas Jarman¹ has revealed a composer with a fastidious need to control every component of his work to an almost obsessive degree. This meticulous, painstaking approach to his craft, coupled with his early death at the age of only 50, means that his official published output amounts to little over a dozen pieces in all.

Yet, as with Webern, Berg's officially accredited 'opus 1', far from being his first attempt at composition, signifies, symbolically, the apex of a long period of study and apprenticeship and an attainment of artistic maturity. Schoenberg was entirely conventional in his teaching methods, insisting that his students undergo a thorough grounding in traditional harmony and counterpoint before moving on to anything more advanced. He also expected them to master classical forms, starting with short, clearly structured movements such as minuets and scherzos before graduating to sonata form and variations. Berg studied with Schoenberg from 1904 to 1911 and the collection of early pieces recorded on this disc date from the first two to three years of Berg's instruction. There can be little doubt that they were set as composition exercises by Schoenberg himself: not only do they conform to

¹ In, for example, Perle's *The Operas of Alban Berg* (two vols., University of California Press, Oakland, 1980 and 1985), his *Style and Idea in the Lyric Suite of Alban Berg* (Pendragon Press, Hillsdale, NY, 1995), and Jarman's *The Music of Alban Berg* (University of California Press, Oakland, 1979) and *The Berg Companion* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1990).

Universität der Künste in Berlin who also teaches at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He is a founding member of the Mozart Piano Quartet.

The Orchestra has earned plaudits from critics and public alike after its appearance at such venues as the Philharmonie and Schauspielhaus in Berlin and at events like the Flanders Festival and Europalia in Belgium, Muziekfestival West-Brabant in Holland, the Bodensee-Festival and Weilburger Schlosskonzerte in Germany, Echternach Festival in Luxembourg, Du Périgord Noir in France, Estoril in Portugal and, in Poland, Warsaw Autumn, Ludvig van Beethoven Easter Festival, Wroclaw Cantans, Musica Polonica and Musica Electronica Nova. The Orchestra has given many premiere performances, including works composed for it by, among others, Heitor Parra and Roxanna Panufnik.

The Orchestra has recorded several albums, including a *Rossini Gala* with the contralto Ewa Podleś (Dux) which received the Polish Phonographic Academy Award Fryderyk 1999. This is the seventh CD the Orchestra recorded under Ernst Kovacic's direction. Its earlier album for Toccata Classics, of music by Ernst Krenek (TOCC 0199), was received with universal enthusiasm, the reviewer for *Fanfare* writing: 'This Toccata Classics CD is a model of fine production values. Magisterial performances and honest, well-balanced sound aid Krenek's eloquent music. [...] It is an absolute must for Krenek fanciers.'



First violins

Christian Danowicz, leader
Agata Jeleńska
Anna Szuffat
Arkadiusz Pawluś
Aleksandra Pawłowska
Jacek Greń

Second violins

Tymoteusz Rapak
Dorota Pindur
Aleksandra Bugaj
Justyna Pawłowska
Anna Pozdziejewa
Mirosław Dzieścielski

Violas

Michał Micker
Zuzanna Tobis
Konstanty Poźniak
Tomasz Pstrokoński-Nawratil

Cellos

Marcin Misiak
Jakub Kruk
Monika Łapka
Bożena Papala

Double-Basses

Mirosław Mały
Paweł Jabłczyński

He performs often as a soloist with prominent orchestras under conductors such as Franz Wesler-Möst, Roger Norrington, Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Gielen in Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and the Americas. As both a violinist and a chamber musician, he has been invited to play at Festivals in Vienna, Berlin, Salzburg, Edinburgh, and the London Proms. He also regularly conducts chamber orchestras, both with and without his violin. From 1996 until 1998 he was the artistic director of the Vienna Chamber Orchestra.

Ensembles with which he regularly works include the Scottish, Irish and English Chamber Orchestras, the Northern Sinfonia, Britten Sinfonia, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Camerata Roman, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Stuttgarter Chamber Orchestra, as well as Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Modern, BIT20 Ensemble, Camerata Salzburg, the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie and, of course, the Leopoldinum Chamber Orchestra in Wrocław, Poland. He plays a Guarneri violin from 1754.

His most recent recording for Toccata Classics, of violin music by Friedrich Cerha (TOCC 0199), was warmly welcomed, the review in *Fanfare* being typical: 'For those who wish to explore a cross-section of the violin music of what appears to be one of the most commanding voices among recent composers, not to mention violinist-composers, Toccata's collection, with its brilliant and, seemingly, authoritative performances and lively recorded sound, should be a natural choice. In every way, it's another winner from Toccata that can be very warmly recommended'.

The **NFM Leopoldinum Chamber Orchestra** – its name refers to one of the most precious monuments of central European Baroque architecture, the Aula Leopoldina of the Wrocław University – was founded in 1978. Its website can be found at www.leopoldinum.art.pl. Its new venue, the National Forum of Music, to be opened in autumn 2015, one of the most prestigious concert complexes, with a concert hall of around 1800 seats, three chamber halls, rehearsal rooms, among others, will be a home not only for the Leopoldinum Orchestra but also other ensembles like NFM Symphony Orchestra, NFM Choir, the Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonic Choir and many festivals like Wratislavia Cantans, Leo Festival and Musica Polonica/Electronica Nova (www.nfm.wroclaw.pl)

The artistic identity of the Orchestra was shaped by several music personalities but the most influential was the violinist Karol Teutsch, who was able to bring together the individual skills of the Orchestra's musicians and created a tradition of the artistic director who was both a virtuoso performer and had conducting talent. After seven fruitful years under the direction of violinist Ernst Kovacic, the Orchestra is now artistically headed by the violist Hartmut Rohde, a professor at the

the precepts of Schoenberg's tutelage as outlined above but the manuscripts also bear numerous comments and corrections in his hand. All the pieces were originally scored for string quartet, a medium in which Schoenberg liked to make his pupils work since it encouraged attention to part-writing and an awareness of instrumental questions as an integral part of the composition process. They are generally straightforward formally and harmonically and do not call for detailed comment. Most of them employ a primarily polyphonic texture (the *Menuet* in D minor [2] and the *Sarabande* [4] are written in four independent parts throughout), testifying to the emphasis on melodic counterpoint that Schoenberg placed in his teaching. The *Adagio* entitled *Über ein Dehmelgedicht* ('On a poem by Dehmel') [6] is noteworthy as it indicates a literary inspiration from the German poet whose verse had previously been set to music by Zemlinsky and Webern and on whose poem *Verklärte Nacht* Schoenberg had written his string sextet of the same name in 1899. It is the most advanced of the early pieces recorded here, both in its harmony and in its scoring, which uses muting and *sul ponticello* effects. The adaptations for string orchestra prepared by Ernst Kovacic for this disc add nothing extra to the original scores save for the addition of a double-bass part used, sparingly and intermittently, to double the cello line.

These youthful efforts clearly bear few of the stylistic hallmarks of Berg's maturity, but it is worth noting that his engagement with traditional forms (particularly dance-forms) was to be a life-long preoccupation, from the *echt*-Viennese waltz-rhythms that permeate the *Reigen* (Round-Dance) of the *Three Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 6 (1913–15), and the Theme and Variations of the *Chamber Concerto* (1923–25),² to the tango episodes in the concert aria *Der Wein* (1929) and the *Ländler* of the *Violin Concerto* (1935) – not to mention the tavern- and dance-band music found in the operas *Wozzeck* (1914–22) and *Lulu* (1929–35).

Excavating Berg's early music sheds fascinating light on his compositional schooling. But unlike Webern, many of whose pre-opus 1 works are already fully realised in terms of technique and musical personality, little in Berg's juvenilia prepares the listener for the achievement of the Piano Sonata, Op. 1 [1], completed in 1908 and the most ambitious project he had yet attempted under Schoenberg's supervision. There is no clearer evidence of Schoenberg's pedagogical genius than that he enabled Berg to break out of an inability to write anything bigger than songs and other miniatures and equipped him with the necessary technique to compose on a larger scale. The Sonata was originally planned as a three-movement work, but when Berg found difficulty in moving beyond the first movement, Schoenberg must have recognised the sheer expressive intensity that the then 23-year-old composer had packed into the twelve-or-so minutes of the work and advised him that it was essentially complete as it stood. But this piece is much more than simply the culmination of an apprenticeship: as with Schoenberg's contemporary Second String Quartet, it

² Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, Op. 7, is his last work to bear an opus number.

is indicative of the crisis of tonality that music had reached at that time. The Sonata is cast in conventional sonata form (Berg even requests the time-honoured repeat of the exposition) and is given a nominal key-signature of B minor. Yet the often roving chromaticism and the use of tonally disruptive devices such as the whole-tone scale frequently undermine any sense of a given key. From here, it was a small step to the free atonality of such works as the String Quartet, Op. 3, composed some three years later. The sensitive and idiomatic transcription for string orchestra of the Sonata recorded on this disc was originally made in 2011 for the Amsterdam Sinfonietta by the Dutch pianist and composer Wijnand van Klaveren (b. 1975), who has a reputation as a skilful and prolific arranger of all kinds of music.

To move forward to the works of Berg's full maturity, the *Lyric Suite* for string quartet (1925–26) [9]–[14] reflects the early stages of Berg's romantic liaison with Hanna Fuchs-Robettin (1896–1964), wife of the wealthy industrialist Herbert Fuchs-Robettin and sister of the novelist Franz Werfel (who was then in a relationship with Mahler's widow, Alma). The Fuchs-Robettins had offered Berg accommodation at their home in Prague whence Berg had travelled in May 1925 to attend a performance of his *Three Fragments from 'Wozzeck'* at that year's Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Ostensibly, Berg was happily married and his feelings for Hanna threw him into an emotional crisis. The moving and often despondent letters he wrote to her over the period 1926–34 clearly reveal a man in torment over what was to him a hopeless (and almost certainly unconsummated) passion.³ The *Lyric Suite* meticulously recounts the flowering of Berg's love, from the apparently innocuous first meeting and the first stirrings of ardour, through the racing pulses and sleepless nights to a finale which, in Berg's words, 'attains the utmost wretchedness and despair'. It was only in 1977 – when a score of the work, annotated in detail by Berg for Hanna's benefit, came to light – that this secret programme came to be known. Of course, none of this background was, or could have been, divulged at the time, and it was the immediacy of the purely musical qualities of the work that ensured the notable success of the first performance, given by the Kolisch Quartet in January 1927. Later that year, Berg was asked by Emil Hertzka, of his publisher Universal Edition, to arrange some of the movements for string orchestra. Webern (who transcribed his own 1909 *Five Movements* for string quartet, Op. 5, at Hertzka's request) suggested movements 1, 2, 4 and 6, but, in the event, Berg opted for movements 2, 3 and 4, published in 1928 as *Drei Stücke aus der 'Lyrischen Suite'*. In making the transcription, he made no textual or structural changes to the music but with resourceful deployment of *divisi*, alternation between 'solo' and 'tutti' scoring and with the double-bass part often pursuing its own independent course, he effectively re-imagined the musical substance in string-orchestral terms. The *Drei Stücke* were first performed in Berlin in January 1929 conducted by Jascha Horenstein.

³ Cf. Constantin Floros, *Alban Berg and Hanna Fuchs: The Story of a Love in Letters*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001.

In 2005, the Dutch composer Theo Verbey (b. 1959) – whose own music possesses a colour and harmonic richness redolent of Berg and who made a highly successful transcription of the Op. 1 Sonata for full orchestra in 1984 – transcribed the three remaining movements (closely following Berg's example), thus rendering the complete *Lyric Suite* available for performance in string-orchestral guise, in which form it is recorded here.

The brief *Kanon* [8] was written in 1930 to mark two occasions: the 50th anniversary of the Frankfurt Opera House and the premiere of Schoenberg's one-act opera *Von heute auf morgen* which took place there on 1 February.⁴ Berg's *Kanon* is in four parts and based on the same twelve-note row as is used in Schoenberg's opera – though, intriguingly, the harmonic idiom shows a marked similarity with Berg's own opera *Lulu*, on which he was then working. Berg's original score did not specify any particular instrumentation; the arrangement recorded here – for string orchestra with solo violin *ad lib.* – was made by the Russian composer Alfred Schnittke in 1987, one of many works reflecting Schnittke's creative interest in the music of earlier composers.

Lloyd Moore is a London-based composer who has a particular interest in the music of the early twentieth century. His works have been performed by the London Sinfonietta and the BBC Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestras, among others. His website can be found at www.lloydmooremusic.co.uk.

Vienna, with its fruitful tension between tradition and innovation, informs the musical language of the Austrian violinist Ernst Kovacic. His interpretations of Bach's solo works and Mozart's violin concerti, as well as his dedication to contemporary music, secured him a place as one of his the leading soloists of his generation early in his career. Over the years many composers have written works for him, including Krenek, Holloway, Osborne, Gruber, Schwertsik, Eröd, Bischof, Haas and Essl. He performed the world premiere of violin concerti by Beat Furrer and Django Bates with the Vienna Philharmonic and London Sinfonietta, and Friedrich Cerha's Violin Concerto with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.



Photo: Lukasz Rajchert

⁴ The original opera house was almost completely destroyed in a bombing raid in 1944. Rebuilt in the 1970s, it is now known as the Alte Oper, a new opera house having been built in the meantime.