UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC PRESENTS

NATIONAL FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA
PIERSON CONDUCTS ADAMS

SATURDAY, JUNE 29, 2013 . 8PM

ELSIE & MARVIN DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland

PHOTO BY ALISON HARBAUGH
ALAN PIERSON, CONDUCTOR

SCHOENBERG  Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 9, arranged for full orchestra
             (In one movement)

RAVEL     Suite No. 2 from the Ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*
              Daybreak—
              Pantomime—
              General Dance

INTERMISSION

ADAMS     *Harmonielehre*
              Part I
              Part II: The Anfortas Wound
              Part III: Meister Eckhardt and Quackie
Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 9, arranged for full orchestra

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Born September 13, 1874, Vienna
Died July 13, 1951, Los Angeles

Schoenberg composed his Kammer symphonie No. 1 in 1906, for 15 instruments (flute, oboe, English horn, B-flat clarinet, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, 2 horns, string quartet and double bass), and introduced it in Vienna on February 8 of the following year. He created his full-orchestra version in 1935, and introduced it on December 27 of that year, in a concert of his works in which he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra at the University of Southern California.

Duration, 22 minutes.

The score, designated “Op. 9A” on that occasion but eventually published as “Op. 9B,” calls for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, B-flat clarinet, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, 2 horns, string quartet and double bass, and introduced it in Vienna on February 8 of the following year. He created his full-orchestra version in 1935, and introduced it on December 27 of that year, in a concert of his works in which he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra at the University of Southern California.

As the opus number indicates, the Chamber Symphony (Kammersymphonie) is one of Schoenberg’s early works. He was 31 when he composed it in the summer of 1906, and had to his credit a number of compositions quite different in style from his subsequent ones. Among these were the string sextet Transfigured Night (Op. 4), the sprawling symphonic poem Pelleas and Melisande (Op. 5), the First String Quartet (Op. 7) and several songs; he had substantially completed his massive choral work Gurre-Lieder as well, though that work would wait another half-dozen years for the final touches to be applied to its orchestration, and for its first performance.

Schoenberg regarded this Chamber Symphony as being of pivotal importance among his works. In a program note written in 1949, he identified it as “the last work of my first period,” noting that in its one-movement form it has certain features in common with his earlier instrumental works but differs conspicuously in terms of its duration: a little more than 20 minutes, in contrast to a playing time more than twice as long for Pelleas or the First Quartet. This was not a trivial consideration for Schoenberg, as he went on to explain in considerable detail:

The length of the earlier compositions was one of the features that linked me with the style of my predecessors Bruckner and Mahler, whose symphonies often exceed an hour, and Strauss, whose symphonic poems last a half-hour. I had become tired — not as a listener, but as a composer — of writing music of such length. The cause of this is probably to be ascribed to the fact that much of this extension in my own works was the result of a desire, common to all my predecessors and contemporaries, to express every character and mood in a broad manner. That meant that every idea had to be developed and elaborated by derivatives and repetitions which were mostly bare of variation — in order not to hide the connection.

Students of my works will recognize how in my career the tendency to condense has gradually changed my entire style of composition; how, by renouncing repetitions, sequences and elaboration, I finally arrived at a style of concision and brevity in which every technical or structural necessity was carried out without unnecessary extension, in which every single unit is functional.

In the Kammer symphonie I was only at the beginning of this slowly growing process. However, while there is still much elaboration, there is already less unvaried repetition, and a smaller amount of sequences. Besides, while in the First String Quartet there are two large sections of Durchführung, that is, of elaboration (or development), there is only one in the Kammer symphonie, and it is much shorter.

If this work is a turning point in my career in this respect, it is even more significant in that it presents a first attempt to create a chamber orchestra. The advent of radio was perhaps already to be foreseen, when a chamber orchestra would be capable of filling a living room with a sufficient amount of sound. There was perhaps the possibility in prospect, also, that one could rehearse a small group more thoroughly and at less cost, avoiding the forbidding expanses of our mammoth orchestras. History has disappointed me in this respect; the size of orchestras continued to grow, and in spite of a great number of compositions for small orchestra, I had also to write again for the large orchestra.

While the Chamber Symphony is in a single movement, it falls into five sections, which the composer identified in the same program note as: I. Sonata-Allegro; II. Scherzo; III. Durchführung (Elaboration); IV. Adagio; V. Recapitulation and Finale. His note continued with a brief analysis:

The main group of the first division contains the two themes, which are preceded by four elements. In this group the harmonic idea of the piece is exhibited at once: the fourth-tone row in melodic and harmonic relation to the whole-tone scale.

A transition follows which, consisting of three elements, leads to the group of subordinate themes, which also elaborates several
units and is succeeded by a closing section. A brief recapitulation of the main theme follows, which is immediately converted into a transition to the Scherzo division, which includes a Trio section, a brief Durchführung and a recapitulation.

A transition leads to the main Durchführung, which exhibits a great number of contrapuntal combinations of most of the preceding themes, one of which is a triple canon accompanied by features of the main theme. Besides, there are ways of resolving fourth chords with the whole-tone chords and vice versa. An episode serving as a transition to the Adagio shows many aspects of the fourth chords and adds resolutions into triads.

The Adagio’s first section consists of two phrases and a little motive. A subordinate theme follows.

The Recapitulation starts with the theme of the transition, followed by the subordinate theme, and only thereafter reappears the main theme in a varied and reduced form. Here, then, begins the Finale proper, with varied quotations of preceding themes. The final strett employs, in the main, forms of the main theme.*

It will be noted that Schoenberg made no reference here of having orchestrated the Chamber Symphony, or to his several famous orchestrations of earlier composers’ works — such as Bach’s “St. Anne” Prelude and Fugue, originally for organ, or Brahms’ Piano Quartet in G Minor — and there has been a good deal of confusion about just when he undertook this still rarely heard orchestral version of the Chamber Symphony. Several musical reference books indicate that he created, or drafted, an orchestral version in 1922 before completing and performing the present version 13 years later. In actual fact, however, he embarked on an orchestral arrangement still earlier, as explained in a note by Eike Fess, the archivist of the Schoenberg Center in Vienna:

Schoenberg was always aware of the difficulties with the special instrumentation of the Kammersymphonie, Op. 9; especially in big halls, he experienced problems with sound balance between winds and strings. As early as 1914, he worked on an enhanced version of the Kammersymphonie for big concert halls, mostly by enhancing the strings. This version was intended to be published by Universal Edition (it still exists in the form of a copy of the printed score [of the original Op. 9] with Schoenberg’s annotations), but this never happened.

The arrangement from 1935 is more like a re-orchestration of the whole work; it goes much farther than Schoenberg did in 1914, [representing, some 21 years later], the composer’s reaction to the requirements of American concert life.

What, then, was behind those references to a 1922 version of an orchestral version of this work? Possibly that could have been a misinterpretation of references to a version that was not undertaken by Schoenberg himself: in 1922 his disciple Alban Berg prepared a version, not for expanded instrumental forces, but for a reduced number of players, to be performed together with Schoenberg’s Pierrot lunaire. In any event, Schoenberg brought only one full-orchestra version of the Chamber Symphony to completion, and speculation on the references to 1922 serves no real purpose. More quizzical, indeed, is how or why Schoenberg himself introduced this version as Op. 9A but apparently approved its publication as Op. 9B — but that is another non-issue. The point is that, although many orchestras have performed, and continue to perform, this work in its original instrumentation, the composer judged that it would be more effective in large halls if presented by larger forces.

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Ravel accepted Diaghilev's commission for Daphnis and Chloe in 1909, the same year the great impresario commissioned the younger and virtually unknown Igor Stravinsky to compose The Firebird. By April 1912, when Ravel completed his score, Diaghilev had already produced both The Firebird and Petrushka, and Stravinsky was orchestrating The Rite of Spring. Actually, Ravel had his piano score ready in 1910, but the orchestration went slowly; the concluding General Dance was subjected to so many revisions that Ravel estimated having put a full year's work into scoring that brief section alone. (In the meantime, however, he managed to compose some songs and to orchestrate his piano suites Ma Mère l'Oye and Valses nobles et sentimentales for use in somewhat less ambitious ballets.)

The scenario for Daphnis, which Ravel insisted on revising after Fokine had prepared it, was adapted from a pastoral tale ascribed to an early Greek writer named Longus: Daphnis and Chloe, both abandoned in infancy on the island of Lesbos, have been brought up by benevolent shepherd folk; Daphnis teaches Chloe to play the Panpipes, which he fashions from reeds; the two fall in love; Chloe is abducted by pirates, rescued by the great god Pan himself and restored to Daphnis amid general rejoicing. (The tale was translated into both French and English as early as the 16th century, and inspired several musical and dance works before Ravel's; one of the earliest now surviving is a charming little opera-ballet composed by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier in 1747.)

Ravel described his music for Daphnis and Chloe as “a choreographic symphony in three parts,” in which his “intention was to compose a vast musical fresco, less scrupulous as to archaism than faithful to the Greece of my dreams, which have inclined readily enough to what French artists of the late 18th century have imagined and depicted.” His pupil Alexis Roland-Manuel wrote that the two concert suites, which correspond to the second and third parts of the “choreographic symphony,” contain “the essential and best-written parts of the work,” and by general consensus the Suite No. 2 represents the very peak of this perfectionist composer’s achievement in terms of both inspiration and sheer orchestral craftsmanship.

The wordless chorus that augments the orchestra in the original ballet score is customarily omitted in performances of this suite, whose three sections — Daybreak, Pantomime and General Dance — played without pause, accompany the action following the rescue of Chloe from the pirates. The score carries a detailed description of the stage action, which was translated some 90 years ago by the well remembered Boston critic and annotator Philip Hale:
No sound but the murmur of rivulets fed by the dew that trickles from the rocks. Daphnis lies stretched before the grotto of the nymphs. Little by little the day dawns. The songs of birds are heard. … Herdsmen enter. … They find Daphnis and awaken him. In anguish he looks about for Chloe. She at last appears, encircled by shepherdesses. The two rush into each other’s arms. Daphnis observes Chloe’s crown. His dream was a prophetic vision: the intervention of Pan is manifest. The old shepherd Lammon explains that Pan saved Chloe in remembrance of the nymph Syrinx, whom the god loved.

Daphnis and Chloe mime the story of Pan and Syrinx. Chloe impersonates the young nymph wandering over the meadow. Daphnis as Pan appears and declares his love for her. The nymph repulses him; the god becomes more insistent. She disappears among the reeds. In desperation he plucks some stalks, fashions a flute, and on it plays a melancholy tune. Chloe comes out and imitates by her dance the accents of the flute.

The dance grows more and more animated. In mad whirlings, Chloe falls into the arms of Daphnis. Before the altar of the nymphs he swears his fidelity. Young girls enter; they are dressed as bacchantes and shake their tambourines. Daphnis and Chloe embrace tenderly. A group of young men come on stage. Joyous tumult. A general dance.
Harmonielehre

JOHN ADAMS
Born February 15, 1947, Worcester, Massachusetts
Now living in Berkeley, California

Harmonielehre was composed between February 1984 and March of the following year, under a commission from Meet the Composer; the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra gave the premiere under Edo de Waart on March 21, 1985, less than three weeks after the score was completed, and recorded the work for Nonesuch a few days later.

The score specifies 4 flutes and 3 piccolos; 3 oboes and English horn; 4 clarinets and 2 bass clarinets; 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, bass drum, 2 marimbas, vibraphone, xylophone, high and low suspended cymbals, small crash cymbals, bell tree, crotale (played alternately with mallets or a bow), glockenspiel, 2 tam-tams, tubular bells, triangle, piano, celesta, 2 harps and string (violins divided into four sections, violas and cellos into two sections each). Duration, 40 minutes.

Early in his creative career John Adams was always identified as a minimalist, along with such senior colleagues as Steve Reich and Philip Glass. While that designation still applies, Adams now is more likely to be classified simply as one of the outstanding composers of his generation, as well as one of the most productive — and one whose music has earned him not only recognition but an enthusiastic following on the part of a broad international audience. Harmonielehre, his last big work before the opera Nixon in China, is still his most expansively proportioned work for orchestra alone; it is also a conspicuous landmark in his long and fruitful association with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

Adams was that orchestra’s composer-in-residence from 1979 to 1985, and that orchestra has continued to perform his works frequently; in 1991 the composer himself presided over the premiere of his El Dorado, another San Francisco Symphony Orchestra commission, and ten years later the orchestra introduced yet another Adams work it had commissioned: El Niño, with Ken Nagano conducting. Later that same year, 2001, the San Franciscans announced a “ten-year John Adams commissioning project,” which led to the composition of three works. The first of these, My Father Knew Charles Ives, commissioned for a European tour, was given its premiere in San Francisco on April 30, 2003, under Michael Tilson Thomas. The opera A Flowering Tree, commissioned jointly with Vienna’s “New Crowned Hope” Festival, New York’s Lincoln Center, London’s Barbican Centre and the Berlin Philharmonic, was introduced by the Vienna Philharmonic in November 2006, with Adams himself conducting. More recently, just 14 months ago, the brief orchestral piece An Absolute Jest had its premiere in San Francisco, in celebration of the orchestra’s centenary.

Harmonielehre was the last of Adams’s San Francisco commissions actually introduced there during his tenure as composer-in-residence, some 28 years ago. In the fall of 1986 the work brought the composer second prize in that year’s Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards. The title is taken from that of a book by Arnold Schoenberg, published in 1911. The work is laid out in three substantial sections, the first of which is headed simply Part I, while Parts II and III have descriptive titles indicating programmatic content.

Adams has explained some of that dream-derived imagery, and has also acknowledged — actually pointed out, in fact — references to the Fourth Symphonies of Mahler and Sibelius (the latter dating from the same year as Schoenberg’s book) in Parts II and III, respectively, as well as the Mahler Tenth at the end of Part II. Eight years ago Adams updated his own

JOHN ADAMS PHOTO BY MARGARETTA MITCHELL
remarks on Harmonielehre for the Nonesuch set in which all the recordings of his works for that label up to that time were collected on ten compact discs. This uniquely authoritative commentary is reprinted here with the kind permission of Nonesuch Records, a Warner Music Group company.

Harmonielehre is roughly translated as “the book of harmony” or “treatise on harmony.” It is the title of a huge study of tonal harmony, part textbook, part philosophical rumination, which Arnold Schoenberg published in 1911 just as he was embarking on a voyage into unknown waters, one in which he would more or less permanently renounce the laws of tonality.

My own relationship to Schoenberg needs some explanation. Leon Kirchner, with whom I studied at Harvard, had … been a [pupil] of Schoenberg in Los Angeles during the 1940s. Kirchner had no interest in the serial system that Schoenberg had invented, but he shared a sense of high seriousness and an intensely critical view of the legacy of the past. Through Kirchner I became sensitized to what Schoenberg and his art represented. He was a reminder, in my Chamber orchestra [1982] or Nixon in China [1987], it does so entirely without irony.

The first part is a seventeen-minute inverted arch form: high energy at the beginning and end, with a long, roaming Sehnsucht section in-between. The bounding E minor chords at the opening and close of the movement are the musical counterparts of a dream image I had shortly before starting the piece. In the dream I watched a gigantic supertanker take off from the surface of San Francisco Bay and thrust itself into the sky like a Saturn rocket. At the time I was still deeply involved in the study of C.G. Jung’s writings, particularly his examination of medieval mythology. I was strongly affected by Jung’s discussion of the character of Anfartas, the king whose wounds could never be healed. As a critical archetype, Anfartas [a different version of the name Amfortas, familiar to us from Wagner’s opera Parsifal] symbolized a condition of sickness of the soul that curses it with a feeling of impotence and depression. In the slow, moody movement entitled The Anfartas Wound a long, elegiac trumpet solo floats over a delicately shifting screen of minor triads which pass like spectral shapes from one family of instruments to the other. Two enormous climaxes rise up out of the otherwise melancholy landscape, the second one being an obvious homage to Mahler’s last, unfinished symphony.

The final part, Meister Eckhardt and Quackie, begins with a simple berceuse, or cradle song, that is as airy, serene and blissful as “The Anfartas Wound” is earthbound, shadowy and bleak. The Zappacoeque title refers to a dream I had shortly after the birth of our daughter Emily, who was briefly dubbed “Quackie” during her infancy. In the dream, she rode perched on the shoulder of the medieval Meister Eckhart, as they hovered among the heavenly bodies like figures painted on the high ceilings of old cathedrals. The tender berceuse gradually picks up speed and mass … and culminates in a tidal wave of brass and percussion over a pedal point on E-flat major.

John Adams

Eckhardt von Hochheim, a Dominican monk, ca. 1260-1327, known to posterity as Meister Eckhart — though usually without the “d” — and regarded as the father of German mysticism, was remembered in Patrick McDonnell’s comic strip Mutts in November 2006, in a series of pre-Thanksgiving drawings illustrating his maxim, “If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you, that would suffice.”

Notes by Richard Freed © 2013
Alan Pierson has been praised as “a dynamic conductor and musical visionary” by the New York Times, “a young conductor of monstrous skill” by Newsday, “gifted and electrifying” by the Boston Globe and “one of the most exciting figures in new music today” by Fanfare. He is the Artistic Director and conductor of the acclaimed ensemble Alarm Will Sound, which has been called “the future of classical music” by the New York Times and “a sensational force” with “powerful ideas about how to renovate the concert experience” by the New Yorker. Mr. Pierson recently finished his first season as the Artistic Director and conductor of the newly renovated Brooklyn Philharmonic.

Time Out New York praised Pierson’s inaugural season as “extraordinary,” and a “season of miraculous resurgence.” The New Yorker’s Alex Ross wrote that “The Brooklyn Philharmonic’s first season under Alan Pierson is remarkably innovative, perhaps even revolutionary,” and the New York Times called the season “truly inspiring,” and said that under Pierson’s leadership, “the Brooklyn Philharmonic has the potential to be not just a good orchestra but also an important one.”

This spring, Mr. Pierson makes his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has also appeared as a guest conductor with the London Sinfonietta, the Steve Reich Ensemble, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble ACJW, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the New World Symphony and The Silk Road Project, among other ensembles.

He is also Principal Conductor of the Dublin-based Crash Ensemble, and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and the Eastman School of Music. He regularly collaborates with major composers and performers, including Yo-Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, Donnacha Dennehy, La Monte Young and choreographers Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan and Elliot Feld.

Mr. Pierson has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical and Sweetspot DVD.