



THE FIRM 2014

THE WALTZ

CONCERT 5



The Firm's annual concert seasons
are conceived, programmed, curated and directed by
composers Quentin Grant and Raymond Chapman Smith.

The Firm was founded in 1996.

This is our 106th concert.

"Vienna . . . the research laboratory of world destruction"

Karl Krauss

"Every sensitive person carries in himself old cities enclosed by ancient
walls"

Robert Walser

Elder Hall provides wheelchair access via the side (eastern) doors.

Toilets can be accessed in the foyer.

Parking: can be accessed in the University car park to the east of Bonython hall.

The Firm

present

The Langbein String Quartet:

Michael Milton, violin

Emma Perkins, violin

Rosi McGowran, viola

David Sharp, cello

with

Marianna Grynchuk, piano

Gareth Chin, accordion

Johann Strauss II

Wine, Women & Song

Transcribed by Alban Berg

Luke Altmann

The Deeps

Raymond Chapman Smith *Divertimento no.5*

Interval

Quentin Grant

Waltzes from Gotenica

Johann Strauss II

Roses from the South

Transcribed by Arnold Schoenberg

The Society for Private Musical Performances

"Schönberg once again has a wonderful idea: ... to establish a society whose mission it is to present weekly performances of music from 'Mahler to the present' to its members." (Alban Berg to his wife Helene, 1 July 1918)

This innovative concept of performance was the result of the success of the ten open rehearsals of Arnold Schönberg's Chamber Symphony in Vienna. It was also a consequence of his teaching activities in his Seminar for Composition at the pedagogically advanced Schwarzwald School. The Board was established at the first general meeting of the "Society for Private Musical Performances" in December 1918. Its 19 members consisted of Schönberg's Viennese students and friends, with Arnold Schönberg as President.

The Society set new standards by fostering new ideas and by its unconventional structure in order to "provide artists and art lovers a true and exact knowledge of modern music."

The list of works to be presented was not disclosed beforehand (in order to "ensure regular attendance"). Works were repeated. The Society concerts were not open to the public. Displays of approval or disapproval were prohibited. Works were intended to speak for themselves – unpretentious, without vanity and carefully rehearsed by the concert committee. The primary goal was comprehensibility. Schönberg rejected the corrupting influence of the general public by not allowing advertising.

Originally the concerts took place in the festival hall of the Merchants Society (Kaufmännischer Verein) in Johannesgasse. The performances were held in the small Musikverein hall until May 1919 and in the Vienna Konzerthaus until mid 1920. After a brief residence in the Club of Austrian Railroad Workers (Club Österreichischer Eisenbahner) in Nibelungengasse, the concerts were then held from 1921 on in the Schwarzwald School (designed by Adolf Loos) in Wallnerstrasse. The mostly youthful performers were selected through auditions. The financial backing for the concerts came from varying levels of dues.

A repertoire list of 27 contemporary composers was published in the Society's November 1919 report after only one year of existence. Among those listed were Max Reger, Claude Debussy, Richard Strauss, and Igor Stravinsky. From the autumn of 1920, as a result of growing inflation following the war, public propaganda concerts took place (intended to

bolster the Society's treasury) along with the regular nonpublic Society evenings.

An "Exceptional Event" with four waltzes by Johann Strauß arranged by Anton Webern, Alban Berg, and Arnold Schönberg took place on 27 May 1921. This concert was a musically historic and legendary moment. After the concert, in which the composers also performed (Berg: harmonium, Schönberg: 1st violin, Webern: cello), the original manuscripts were to be auctioned in order to secure financial support for further Society evenings. The rehearsals were held in five sessions of five hours each. The admission tickets were sold by the performers in the form of program booklets. Both the curiosity of the stylistic opposites of Strauß vs. Viennese School and Schönberg's humorous hosting of the event were intended to contribute considerably to the success of the evening. Alban Berg reported on 2 June 1921 to his colleague Erwin Stein: "The waltzes sounded fabulously good without exception ...! Schönberg's instrumentation naturally towered far above mine. I, of course, would never have dared so much. For example, Steuermann,

who grinned at a comment by Schönberg that each performer was to peruse his score at home, received a wildly difficult piano part, which of course sounded magnificent." Berg's waltz arrangement was met with enthusiastic applause, which Schönberg, as an exception, permitted, in order to elevate the atmosphere and to increase the interest of potential purchasers for the manuscripts. In the requested encore of Webern's "Treasure Waltz" from the "Gypsy Baron" Schönberg and his student switched stands and also instruments. In the ensuing auction Berg's manuscript brought in 5,000 crowns, Schönberg's score of "Roses from the South" 17,000 (parts used in the concert were reproduced by Hanns Eisler) and the "Lagoon Waltz" 14,000. In an attempt to elevate the price of Webern's "Treasure Waltz" the president of the Society became the unintentional winner at 9,000 crowns.

The Society's practice of producing arrangements arose primarily from economic considerations. It could not afford orchestral performances due to both personnel and financial considerations. Alban Berg commented on the practice of reducing for smaller ensembles, piano for four hands or two pianos in the brochure of the Society for Private Musical Performances: "In this manner it is possible to hear and judge modern orchestral works stripped of all sound effects that an orchestra produces and all of its sensory aids. Thereby invalidating the common criticism, that this music owes its effect solely to its more or less rich and striking instrumentation and does not possess all of the features which formerly were characteristic of good

music: melodies, richness of harmony, polyphony, perfect form, architecture, etc."

The individual composer's voice in the Society's arrangements could vary from work to work. The Strauß instrumentations are characterized by a polished and flawless technique, which emphasized the Viennese *Espressivo*. The harmonium was used to supply color, here as a substitute for the winds. Plans to have a personal harmonium built for the Society foundered due to the high cost (200,000 crowns). Therefore Schönberg's own instrument (pitch tuned to 438 Hz) was used. It was transported from his home in Mödling to Vienna for rehearsals and concerts. The selection of the Strauß compositions was made by Schönberg and was based on an anthology of the most popular Strauß waltzes in a piano reduction published by Cahn in Leipzig.



Café Herrendorf, Vienna, which housed the Schwarzwald School – the venue for the Society's Strauss Concert in 1921.

Johann Strauss II *Wein, Weib und Gesang, Op.333* (Wine, Woman and Song)

Transcribed by Alban Berg

Andante – Allegro moderato – Maestoso – Tempo di Valse – Waltz
No.1 – Waltz No.2 – Waltz No.3 – Waltz No.4



Berg



In Vienna

*In Vienna there are ten little girls,
a shoulder for death to cry on,
and a forest of dried pigeons.
There is a fragment of tomorrow
in the museum of winter frost.
There is a thousand-windowed dance hall.*

*Ay, ay, ay, ay!
Take this close-mouthed waltz.*

*Little waltz, little waltz, little waltz,
of itself of death, and of brandy
that dips its tail in the sea.*

*I love you, I love you, I love you,
with the armchair and the book of death,
down the melancholy hallway,
in the iris's darkened garret,*

*Ay, ay, ay, ay!
Take this broken-waisted waltz.*

*In Vienna there are four mirrors
in which your mouth and the echoes play.
There is a death for piano
that paints little boys blue.
There are beggars on the roof.
There are fresh garlands of tears.*

*Ay, ay, ay, ay!
Take this waltz that dies in my arms.*

*Because I love you, I love you, my love,
in the attic where the children play,
dreaming ancient lights of Hungary
through the noise, the balmy afternoon,
seeing sheep and irises of snow
through the dark silence of your forehead*

*Ay, ay, ay, ay!
Take this "I will always love you" waltz*

*In Vienna I will dance with you
in a costume with
a river's head.
See how the hyacinths line my banks!
I will leave my mouth between your legs,
my soul in a photographs and lilies,
and in the dark wake of your footsteps,
my love, my love, I will have to leave
violin and grave, the waltzing ribbons
Federico García Lorca*



dedicated to Sam and Emily

"Houses, gardens, and people were transfigured into musical sounds, all that was solid seemed to be transfigured into soul and into gentleness. Sweet veils of silver and soul-haze swam through all things and lay over all things. The soul of the world had opened, and all grief, all human disappointment, all evil, all pain seemed to vanish, from now on never to appear again. Earlier walks came before my eyes; but the wonderful image of the humble present became a feeling which overpowered all others. The future paled, and the past dissolved. I glowed and flowered myself in the glowing, flowering present. From near and far, great things and small things emerged bright silver with marvelous gestures, joys, and enrichments, and in the midst of this beautiful place I dreamed of nothing but this place itself. All other fantasies sank and vanished in meaninglessness. I had the whole rich earth immediately before me, and I still looked only at what was most small and most humble. With gestures of love the heavens rose and fell. I had become an inward being, and walked as in an inward world; everything outside me became a dream; what I had understood till now became unintelligible. I fell away from the surface, down into the fabulous depths, which I recognized then to be all that was good. What we understand and love understands and loves us also. I was no longer myself, was another, and yet it was on this account that I became properly myself. In the sweet light of love I realized, or believe I realized, that perhaps the inward self is the only self which really exists."

Robert Walser, *Selected Stories*

1. Allegretto, molto cantabile e semplice
2. Molto vivace
3. Andantino
4. Presto
5. Allegro giocoso

There are moments when a little tender diversion is necessary and hopefully efficacious. Especially so at a time, and in a country, ruled over by bellicose, oafish, bullying, mendacious, mean-spirited, opportunistic, witless thugs.



Quentin Grant

Waltzes from Gotenica

1. Leggiero, dolce
2. Semplice
3. Drammatico
4. Vivace
5. Leggiero

This a set of imagined waltzes from Gotenica, a little village that thrived in what is now a part of Slovenia. Sadly the tides of time swept through Gotenica and the town, after over 600 years of settlement, was broken up by the Nazis and then the Soviets and is no more. But, in our sad, broken dreams, maybe we could imagine that the ghosts of this lost town might write waltzes something like these.



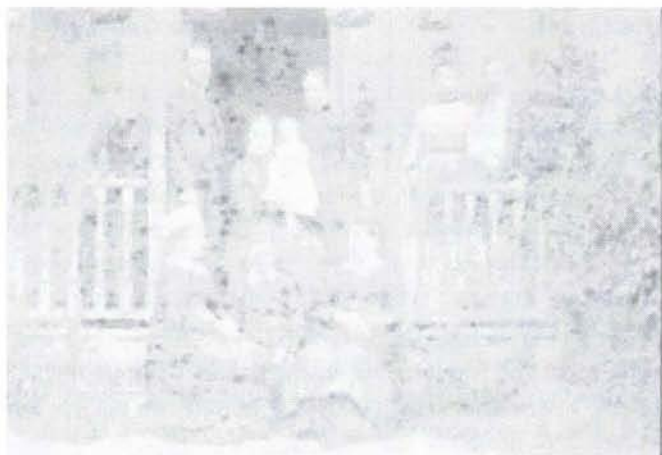
Gotenica c.1890s

"In itself that music festival was nothing special, these music festivals in our country are all alike, performing a most useful function especially for all those people who are chained to their labors, year in and year out, so naturally everybody comes flocking to the two or three music festivals per year, with their actual and their so-called amusements and distractions, these affairs are called music festivals because unlike the usual so-called country fairs they feature a band, an enormous attraction to the populace, that's all it is, but the organizers know that they can draw a much larger crowd by calling it a music festival rather than a country fair, so it has become the custom to call these events music festivals even if they are nothing more than country fairs, everybody attends these music festivals which usually begin early on Saturday night and end late on Sunday morning."

Thomas Bernhard, Correction

"Art altogether is nothing but a survival skill, we should never lose sight of this fact, it is, time and again, just an attempt -- an attempt that seems touching even to our intellect -- to cope with this world and its revolting aspects, which, as we know, is invariably possible only by resorting to lies and falsehoods, to hypocrisy and self-deception, Reger said. These pictures are full of lies and falsehoods and full of hypocrisy and self-deception, there is nothing else in them if we disregard their often inspired artistry. All these pictures, moreover, are an expression of man's absolute helplessness in coping with himself and with what surrounds him all his life. That is what all these pictures express, this helplessness which, on the one hand, embarrasses the intellect and, on the other hand, bewilders the same intellect and moves it to tears, Reger said."

Thomas Bernhard, Old Masters



Gotenicians

"But the fact is that writing is the only way in which I am able to cope with the memories which overwhelm me so frequently and unexpectedly. If they remained locked away, they would become heavier and heavier as time went on, so that in the end I would succumb under their mounting weight. Memories lie slumbering within us for months and years, quietly proliferating, until they are woken by some trifle and in some strange way blind us to life. How often this has caused me to feel that my memories, and the labours expended in writing them down are all part of the same humiliating and, at bottom, contemptible business. And yet, what would we be without memory? We would not be capable of ordering even the simplest thoughts, the most sensitive heart would lose the ability to show affection, our existence would be a mere never-ending chain of meaningless moments, and there would not be the faintest trace of the past. How wretched this life of ours is! – so full of false conceits, so futile, that it is little more than the shadow of the chimeras loosed by memory. My sense of estrangement is becoming more and more dreadful. ... And today I do not raise my eyes from my work. I have become almost invisible, to some extent like a dead man. Perhaps that is why it appears to me that this world which I have very nearly left behind is shrouded in some peculiar mystery . . ."

But the closer I came to these ruins, the more any notion of a mysterious isle of the dead receded, and the more I imagined myself amidst the remains of our own civilisation after its extinction in some future catastrophe."

W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

Johann Strauss II

Rosen aus den Süden, Op.388

(Roses from the South)

Transcribed by Arnold Schoenberg

Andantino – Allegro agitato – Waltz No.1 – Waltz No.2 – Waltz No.3 – Coda



Berg and Schönberg

"If it were possible to watch composing in the same way that one can watch painting, if composers could have ateliers as did painters, then it would be clear how superfluous the music theorist is and how he is just as harmful as the art academies."

Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*

"Market value is irrelevant to intrinsic value.... Unqualified judgment can at most claim to decide the market-value — a value that can be in inverse proportion to the intrinsic value."

Arnold Schoenberg

"Houses, gardens, and people were transfigured into musical sounds, all that was solid seemed to be transfigured into soul and into gentleness. Sweet veils of silver and soul-haze swam through all things and lay over all things. The soul of the world had opened, and all grief, all human disappointment, all evil, all pain seemed to vanish, from now on never to appear again. Earlier walks came before my eyes; but the wonderful image of the humble present became a feeling which overpowered all others. The future paled, and the past dissolved. I glowed and flowered myself in the glowing, flowering present. From near and far, great things and small things emerged bright silver with marvellous gestures, joys, and enrichments, and in the midst of this beautiful place I dreamed of nothing but this place itself. All other fantasies sank and vanished in meaninglessness. I had the whole rich earth immediately before me, and I still looked only at what was most small and most humble. With gestures of love the heavens rose and fell. I had become an inward being, and walked as in an inward world; everything outside me became a dream; what I had understood till now became unintelligible. I fell away from the surface, down into the fabulous depths, which I recognized then to be all that was good. What we understand and love understands and loves us also. I was no longer myself, was another, and yet it was on this account that I became properly myself. In the sweet light of love I realized, or believe I realized, that perhaps the inward self is the only self which really exists."

Robert Walser, *Selected Stories*

*"How small life is here
and how big nothingness.
The sky, tired of light,
has given everything to the snow.*

*The two trees bow
their heads to each other.
Clouds cross the world's
silence in a circle dance"*

Robert Walser

"Often I walked in the neighbouring forest of fir and pine, whose beauties, wonderful winter solitudes, seemed to protect me from the onset of despair. Ineffably kind voices spoke down to me from the trees: 'You must not come to the hard conclusion that everything in the world is hard, false, and wicked. But come often to us; the forest likes you. In its company you will find health and good spirits again, and entertain more lofty and beautiful thoughts.'"

Robert Walser

Nothing but disaster follows from applause.
Thomas Bernhard

Contributing authors

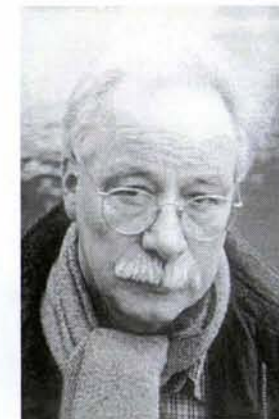
Robert Walser (1878 –1956), was a German-speaking Swiss writer.

W.G. Sebald (1944 – 2001) was a German writer who spent much of his creative life in England.

Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936) was a Spanish poet and playwright.



Walser

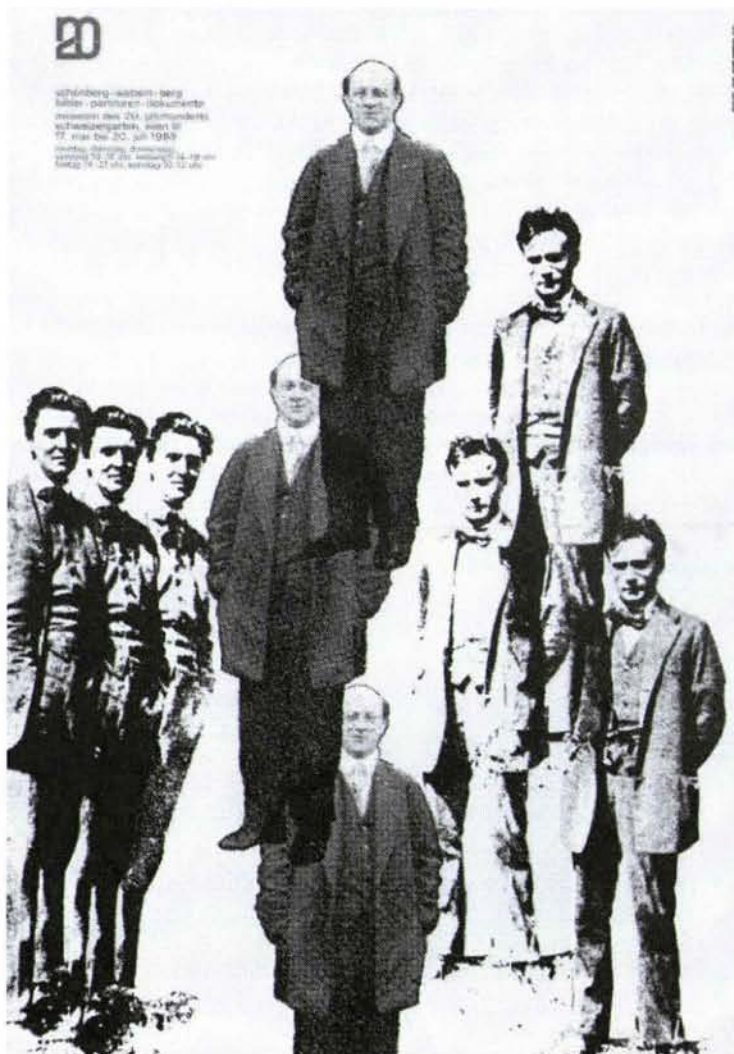


Sebald



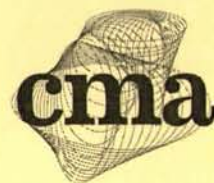
Lorca

You are warmly invited to join us after the
concert for complimentary drinks and a
selection of Tortes.



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