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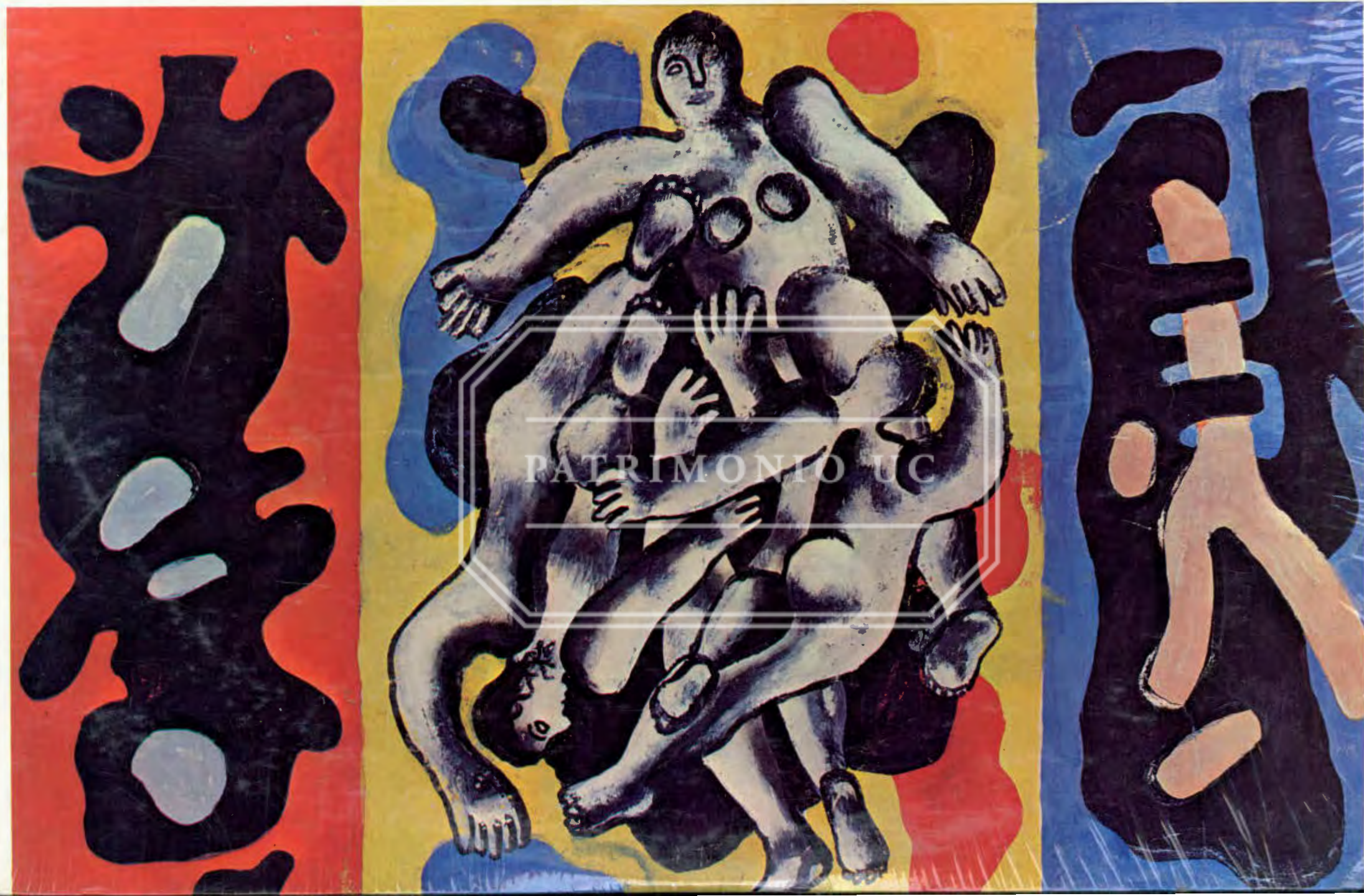
the avant-garde music of

**WEBERN** and **AMY**

the pierre boulez  
domaine musical ensemble  
directed by gilbert amy

The Divers – 1941 by Fernand Leger

From the Everest Fine Arts Collection





the avant-garde music of

# WEBERN and AMY

## the pierre boulez domaine musical ensemble directed by gilbert amy

PATRIMONIO UC

SIDE A

FOUR LIEDER, OP. 14

Wiese im Park	2:08
Die Einsame	1:15
In der Fremde	1:03
Ein Winterabend	2:41

Liliana Poli, Soprano

FIVE PIECES, OP. 10

No. 1	0:33
No. 2	0:28
No. 3	1:31
No. 4	0:22
No. 5	0:53

CONCERT, OP. 24

1st movement	3:14
2nd movement	2:29
3rd movement	1:23

Conducted by Gilbert Amy

SIDE B

DIAPHONIES	(7:42)
INVENTIONS	
Invention I	7:22
Interludes pour Harpe	1:52
Inventions II	6:00

R. Guiot, flute—C. Helffer,  
piano and celesta

F. Pierre, harp—J. P. Drouet  
vibraphone and marimba  
Conducted by Gilbert Amy

COMPOSERS

Pianissimo Prophet

Some composers challenge posterity with a roar. Others woo it with seductive languor or graceful wit. Austrian Composer Anton Webern conjured it with a whisper. A shy, intense man who physically shrank from noise, he wrote spare, slight pieces filled with directions like "scarcely audible" and "dying away." Such was the understated economy of his scores that his life's work amounts to a bare three hours of playing time. Nearly all of his compositions take less than ten minutes to perform. He turned out works containing as much silence as music, and that was how an indifferent world received them—with silence.

Yet, today, the man whom the Viennese called "the master of pianissimo"

has a resounding worldwide reputation. "Probably," says Conductor Robert Craft, "there isn't a composer writing now, or hardly a composition written—even electronic—in which his influence can't be traced."

This year, Dartmouth College's Congregation of the Arts, a summer program whose concerts normally concentrate on works of living composers, took the unusual step of devoting seven days to Webern. The performances demonstrated how much of Webern's vocabulary has passed into the everyday musical language. As such, they sometimes sounded like a lexicon of contemporary clichés: jagged leaps of melody, pointillistic instrumental textures, dryly intellectual twelve-tone patterns. At other times they underlined qualities in Webern's music that have remained fresh and inimitable to this day: delicacy, astringent lyricism, nearly inhuman purity of craftsmanship.

Logical Extremes. Born of a solid landowner family in 1883, Webern was trained as a musicologist at the University of Vienna. In 1904, while still a student, he met Arnold Schoenberg and became his lifelong friend and disciple in the cause of overthrowing tonal music. In many areas Webern took Schoenberg's innovations and carried them to logical extremes. When Schoenberg dissolved traditional tonality but continued to work with late Romantic forms, Webern dissolved those too. He obliterated vertical harmonies, broke up melodies into one- or two-note fragments for each instrument and swept away all sense of development and climax. "Once stated," he said, "a theme has expressed all it has to say." In *Five Pieces* for orchestra and *Six Bagatelles* for string quartet (both 1913), his notes are scattered like stars in the night sky: tiny fire points in an icy black void.

When Schoenberg discovered how to organize atonal music by creating a new "scale" for each composition—an arbitrarily arranged series of the twelve chromatic tones—Webern extended the serial principle to such areas as rhythm

and dynamics. Here he approached a state of total abstraction in which a piece would unfold entirely in accordance with the rules invented for it in advance by the composer, much as a computer responds to its mathematical programming.

After the Nazis took over Austria in 1938, Webern's works were banned as "cultural bolshevism" and his activities were severely restricted. He withdrew more and more completely into mystical seclusion, poring over volumes of poetry and developing a passionate interest in that plant life around his suburban Vienna home. His calm perseverance as a composer in the face of ridicule and neglect gave him a saintly aura. To see him touch a single note on the piano, said Swiss Conductor Ernest Ansermet, was to see a man in an act of devotion.

His life ended in an explosion of violence. One night in 1945, while visiting his son-in-law at the Austrian resort of Mittersill, he stepped outdoors for a cigar, unaware that U.S. occupation forces were at that moment closing in on the house to arrest his son-in-law for black-market activities. Somehow he encountered a U.S. soldier in the dark. He was shot, staggered inside and died. He was 61.\*

Atonality for Children. Within a decade of his death, Webern's music was enthusiastically taken up not only by established masters like Igor Stravinsky but also by a whole generation of post-war avant-gardists, particularly in Europe. Now the question that remains for the future is how well it will stand up in its own right. "His influence," suggests U.S. Composer Aaron Copland, "may turn out to be far greater than the intrinsic value of his music, which may some day seem too mannered in style and too limited in scope." Webern himself did not think so. "In fifty years at the most," he told a friend shortly before his death, "everyone will experience this music as *their* innate music. Yes, even for children it will be accessible. People will sing it."

In composing the *Four Lieder*, op. 14, Webern employed a device quite new for the time: that of voice closely linked to a small chamber ensemble. This is the path that Schoenberg pointed in 1912 with his *Pierrot Lunaire*. Written between 1914 and 1918, these *Lieder* are scored for flute, 2 clarinets, horn, trumpet, trombone, celesta, glockenspiel, harp, violin, viola, 'cello and bass. The *Four Lieder*, op. 14 are dedicated to Dr. Norbert Schwarzmann, and mark the beginning of a long period devoted to the composition of exclusively vocal music, during which time Webern adopted without recourse the dodecaphonic system.

Conciseness, subtlety and intense poetry, all the elements that comprise Webernian art, are already to be found in the *Five Pieces*, op. 10, written in 1910, thus antedating the works of the dodecaphonic period. Melodic dispersion, discreet variations in meter, a play of registers where the low and somber are almost totally excluded, making way for scintillating timbres approaching the power of pure sound, transparency, these seem to be the secrets of Webern's thought, who opposed useless eloquence, tending towards an ever-increasing luminosity and simplicity. The *Five Pieces* are scored for Flute, oboe, 2 clarinets, horn, trumpet, trombone, harmonium, celesta, mandolin, guitar, harp, percussion, violin, viola, 'cello and bass.

Like the *Trio*, op. 20 and the *Symphony*, op. 21, the *Concert*, op. 24 belongs to the most ascetic of Webernian periods (1934). This work represents a stage of Webern when, having returned to instrumental music after an absence of some twelve years, he attempts to speak a musical language that is the ultimate in brevity, in an extremely rarefied atmosphere. The simplicity of the row, comprising four cells of identical relationship, and the novelty of the resulting functional structures make the *Concert*, op. 24 the prototype of composition that must be understood if one wishes to grasp the origins of serial thought and follow Webern's successors.

Jean-Pierre Guezec

*Diaphonie* stems from the description of an electro-acoustical phenomenon: two independent voices interfere with each other and intermix, creating an aleatory superimposition. Here, the two acoustical voices are two symmetrical instrumental ensembles: flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, harp, 3 percussions (including xylophone, vibraphone, etc.). The work calls for a correlation of the two groups, these never being quite independent of each other, but having a uniting meter. The total symmetry of timbres permits the creation of the space of a sound—especially in the "harmonic" passages—across the durations, intensities, and forms of varying relationship. One of the ensembles is often used—a derivative of this formula—as a "resonator" of the other ensemble, somewhat like the image of a person reflected on water informing us both of the person and of heterogeneous matter (water) that modifies him. Sometimes the dialogue—passing from one group to the other—reveals each instrument clearly. Finally, real polyphony may be born, from one group over the other, the ensemble becoming an heteromorphous mass of 24 parts.

In the term "Invention" I have retained the aspect of structural aphorism that it can musically re-establish. We think of those famous Inventions of J. S. Bach. Here, microstructure is most often an agregate (chord), having as an equivalent a group of durations, a nucleus of intensities. Neo-serialism, one might say, at least as far as the use of strict equivalences is concerned. But the work strongly attempts to alternate and alternately mix strict meter with suspended rhythm. The "cadential" element plays an important role, corroborating a certain "virtuosic" writing: first part, flute cadence, 1st piano cadence—harp cadence at the center (interludes)—second part, 2nd piano cadence.

Gilbert Amy

Adapted from the French by Givéon Cornfield

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