



Friday Evening, May 29, 2015, at 8:00
Isaac Stern Auditorium/Ronald O. Perelman Stage
Conductor's Notes Q&A with Leon Botstein at 7:00



presents

American Variations: Perle at 100

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

GEORGE PERLE *Adagio*

WILLIAM SCHUMAN *New England Triptych*
Be Glad Then, America
When Jesus Wept
Chester

AARON COPLAND *Orchestral Variations*

Intermission

GEORGE PERLE *Transcendental Modulations*

LUKAS FOSS *Baroque Variations*

This evening's concert will run approximately two hours and five minutes including one 20-minute intermission.

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ASO'S 2015–16 SEASON AT CARNEGIE HALL

MARTIN CHERRY



Friday, October 16, 2015

Mimesis: Musical Representations

with Tracy Silverman, electric violin

Art, poetry, philosophy, and even the stars—as represented in music. Van Gogh, Nietzsche, Paul Klee, and others inspired these works.

Gunther Schuller – *7 Studies on Themes of Paul Klee*

Henri Dutilleux – *Correspondances*

Nico Muhly – *Seeing is Believing*

Richard Strauss – *Also sprach Zarathustra*

PILVAX STUDIO



Thursday, December 17, 2015

Russia's Jewish Composers

with István Várdai, cello

These Russian Jews exploded ethnic stereotypes by refusing to be known only as Jewish composers. These works identified them more with their homeland than their ethnicity.

Aleksandr Krein – *The Rose and the Cross* (N.Y. Premiere)

Anton Rubinstein – Cello Concerto No. 2

Mikhail Gnesin – *From Shelley* (U.S. Premiere)

Maximilian Steinberg – Symphony No. 1 (U.S. Premiere)

KATHY CHAPMAN



Thursday, March 17, 2016

Giant in the Shadows

with Peter Serkin, piano

The reputation of Max Reger today belies his dominant presence in music during his lifetime and the legacy he left. Here we celebrate two of his works, and one by his friend and contemporary, Adolf Busch.

Adolf Busch – Three Études for Orchestra

Max Reger – Piano Concerto

Max Reger – *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J.A. Hiller*



Tuesday, April 5, 2016

A Mass of Life

with the Bard Festival Chorale

Delius was a fervid follower of Nietzsche, and here he set passages from the philosopher's book *Also sprach Zarathustra* to music, creating a grand and compelling work celebrating life at its highest.

Frederick Delius – *A Mass of Life*

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FROM THE Music Director

George Perle at 100
by Leon Botstein

George Perle was a unique figure within the world of 20th-century American classical music. He was part of a “second” generation that followed the pioneers of the 1920s, which included Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Carl Ruggles, Roy Harris, Edgard Varèse, and Henry Cowell. With the exception of Cowell and Ruggles, the others were all linked closely to European influences; they either trained in Europe or studied in America under the tutelage of European masters. But one of the ambitions of this first generation of post-World War I American composers was to create a distinctly American voice. On today’s program the work by William Schuman powerfully represents that goal.

At the same time, these American composers and their successors sought to take their rightful place within a modernist movement whose aesthetics were free of clear markers of the national. Copland’s 1930 *Orchestral Variations*, originally for piano and presented here in its orchestral version, is a case in point. The *Orchestral Variations* may be Copland’s most abstract and angular work. It was the piece that young college student Leonard Bernstein played for Copland at a memorable encounter that was the starting point of a lasting close friendship. Not surprisingly, George Perle greatly admired this work.

Although influenced by the work of the Second Viennese School of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton von Webern (Perle studied with Ernst Krenek), Perle charted his own path. He did not attempt to express a musical

nationalism. But he also did not imitate or adopt Schoenberg’s technique of “serial” composition. He was not a twelve-tone serial composer. He developed his own version of how to use a 12-note series, primarily as a basis of harmony and counterpoint, and not as a source for musical motives. Using “cycle sets” he crafted a modern musical language that was translucent, expressive, and lyrical. There is an elegance and eloquence in his music that never fails to reach the listener on first hearing. Perle also kept his distance from a more abstract, dense, and often brutal anti-expressive characteristic of mid-20th-century avant-garde modern music. As a result his music has a warmth, intensity, and beauty evocative of Classical and Romantic practice, without any hint of a sentimental nostalgia.

Perle was, in addition, a scholar whose pioneering work on Alban Berg will remain as the foundation of all subsequent writing on Berg. Indeed Berg’s own adaptation of Schoenberg’s 12-tone strategy was Perle’s inspiration. Like Berg, Perle found the means to write music that communicated emotion and meaning in a manner that was adequate to modernity, yet within a tradition that went back to Bach and the masters of the first Viennese “school” of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. And like Berg (as opposed to Schoenberg), the legacy of late romanticism, particularly of Mahler, left its mark.

Perle’s writings are, like his music, a model of economy, clarity, and insight. It was he who unraveled the “secret” program of the *Lytic Suite*. His two-volume analysis of *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* are without peer in terms of clarity, detail, and deep original insight. Likewise, his 1962 book on the Viennese

school *Serial Composition and Atonality*, his 1977 *Twelve Tone Tonality*, and his 1990 volume *The Listening Composer* are classics. They will long remain among the most essential readings for musicians, particularly composers. Perle's writings reflect the significance of his career as a teacher. For more than 20 years he taught at Queens College of the City University of New York.

Perle represents, therefore, the best of American musical modernism. I had the honor and pleasure of getting to know him towards the end of his career. Walter Trampler, the distinguished violist, repeatedly urged me to program Perle's *Serenade* for viola and chamber orchestra from 1962. He and his wife, Shirley, a terrific pianist (and lifelong close friend of Leonard Bernstein's), introduced themselves after a Bard Music Festival performance of Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, a work they had known about but never heard live. The Perles and I became friends. They were unfailingly curious and generous. In subsequent years I had the honor of recording *Transcendental Modulations* with the ASO, and performing the 1990 First Piano Concerto with the Bard Conservatory Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall (with Melvin Chen as soloist).

The pianist Arthur Rubinstein once quipped about Bernstein (who admired Perle as a musician and a man) that he was the "greatest pianist among conductors, the greatest conductor among composers, [and] the greatest composer among pianists." The same could be said about Perle using his trio of accomplishments as composer, scholar, and

theorist. If that weren't enough, Perle was himself a fine pianist. Perle was among the first composers to be awarded a MacArthur "genius" Award.

In this concert Perle's place in music history is framed not only by Copland—the dominant and consistently gracious "dean" of 20th-century American music—but also by the contrasting and parallel careers of two contemporaries, both of whom shared with Perle achievements apart from composition. Lukas Foss, the startlingly gifted pianist, was distinguished as well as a composer and conductor. William Schuman was not only a major figure as a composer, but an eminent administrator. Schuman served as president of Julliard and subsequently as the first president of Lincoln Center. The music of Foss and Schuman is quite distinct and different from Perle's and offers the listener a glimpse of the rich, vital, and varied musical culture of the American 20th century.

More than in the other arts, in music we have developed the bad habit of neglecting the achievements of the past. Too much of great 20th-century music, particularly American music, has fallen away from the repertory. Some composers were strikingly prolific (one thinks of Martinů and Milhaud, for example). Perle's output may have been restrained in quantity, but it is rigorously consistent in refinement and quality. His music—the orchestral music, the music for piano, for the voice, for solo instruments, and the chamber music—deserves to prevail in the 21st century alongside his remarkable contributions to music history and music theory.

THE Program

by Richard Wilson

George Perle

Born May 6, 1915, in Bayonne, New Jersey
Died January 23, 2009, in New York City

Adagio

Composed in 1992, commissioned by Carnegie Hall
Premiered April 13, 1993, in New York City by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
conducted by David Zinman
Performance Time: Approximately 9 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon, 4 French horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, 1 celesta, 1 harp, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

George Perle's *Adagio* is wistful in tone, direct in expression, and free of rhythmic complexity. As the title suggests, its pace is slow, with an eighth-note pulsation prevailing. The loudest dynamic marking is mezzo-forte—and that only fleetingly. Formally the work is a transparent ternary, or A-B-A, in which the middle section is only slightly faster than its surroundings. When the opening material returns, its pitch level is raised a minor third. Rather than presenting an exact reprise, the composer artfully modifies both scoring and continuity. The harmonic language is chromatic without being serial; it

especially favors the interval of the minor third as well as chords constructed from it. These descriptive details, however, fall short of conveying the beauty and power of this jewel of restraint.

On the subject of his compositional approach, George Perle had this to say:

I have a language that permits progressions, and cadences, and keys. I can think in a systematic way about music. That's what you can do when you have a language—as with Mozart, Brahms, Palestrina, and Schubert.

William Schuman

Born August 4, 1910, in New York City
Died February 15, 1992, in New York City

New England Triptych

Composed in 1956, commissioned by André Kostelanetz
Premiered October 26, 1956, in Miami by the Miami University Symphony Orchestra
conducted by André Kostelanetz
Performance Time: Approximately 15 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 1 E-flat clarinet, 1 bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns,

3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tenor drum), 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

William Billings (1746–1800), friend of Sam Adams and Paul Revere, may be deemed America's first composer. Despite a missing eye, a withered arm, a short leg, and an addiction to snuff, he wrote more than 300 anthems, fuguig tunes, rounds, and hymns, many of which became popular during the Revolutionary era. It is from Billings that William Schuman derived the melodic materials for his *New England Triptych*. The beginning movement, *Be Glad Then, America*, understandably popular with players of the timpani, draws its themes from Billings' anthem of that title and much of its texture from the block-chord style of church hymns. The exuberant, celebratory tone turns mournful in *When Jesus Wept*, an expressive arch framed by dirge-like oboe,

drum, and bassoon. The symmetrical shape mirrors Billings' original round, but Schuman employs triadic harmonies in relationships that would have puzzled the 18th century. Billings' patriotic anthem, "Chester," the text of which is "Let tyrants shake their iron rod/And Slav'ry clank her galling chains/We fear them not, we trust in God/New England's God for ever reigns," became a marching song for Patriot soldiers during the war, a fact not lost on William Schuman as he elevates the level of exuberance to make a triumphant ending.

Following its premiere, André Kostelanetz led the New York Philharmonic in the work on November 8, 1956.

Aaron Copland

Born November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn

Died December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

Orchestral Variations

Composed as Piano Variations from January to October 1930; arranged for orchestra in 1957 on commission from the Louisville Symphony Orchestra
Premiered March 5, 1958, in Louisville, Kentucky, by the Louisville Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Whitney
Performance Time: Approximately 12 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 1 oboe, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (cowbell, tenor drum, bass drum, glockenspiel, B-flat antique cymbal, snare drum, cymbals, bongos, conga, xylophone, cymbals, woodblock, chimes), 1 harp, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

In conversation with Edward T. Cone, Aaron Copland reflected on his Piano Variations and works such as Organ Symphony and Symphonic Ode written about the same time: "I had also a—shall we say Hebraic—idea of the grandiose, of the dramatic, and the tragic...." That conception is surely enhanced by the orchestration the composer made in 1957

of his landmark piano work from 1930. A large ensemble, including 13 percussion instruments in addition to timpani, gives voice to the stentorian opening, to be followed by contrasting sections that are hymn-like, pointillistic, fearsome, balletic, or majestic. The theme consists of four adjacent pitches upon which 20 connected variations and a coda are crafted. These

notes are employed horizontally, vertically, widely-spaced over several octaves, crunched together within one octave, in many different tempos and styles of articulation. Rather than being “12-tone,” Piano Variations—and its reincarnation on the present program—might be considered a “four-tone” work. Schoenberg’s influence is palpable as Copland manipulates the notes of the motto. The resulting *multum in parvo* aspect has been a source of fascination to music theorists and fellow composers for more than 80 years. Even Pierre Boulez, distant from Copland in style and outlook, praised Piano Variations—though for its “violence” rather than its structure—and chose to conduct

the orchestrated version during his time with the New York Philharmonic.

Copland’s approach to orchestration, honed during a long association with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony, consisted of first making a complete piano version, with as many details of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and articulation as possible in place. Only then would he imagine the orchestral coloration. Thus this transformation of Piano Variations fit closely with his customary procedure. The secret of his scoring method was, he liked to say, “keeping the instruments out of each other’s way.”

George Perle

Transcendental Modulations

Composed in 1993

Premiered November 21, 1996, in New York City by the New York Philharmonic
conducted by Jahja Ling

Performance Time: Approximately 25 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 3 flutes, 1 alto flute, 2 piccolos, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 E-flat clarinet, 1 bass clarinet, 4 French horns, 4 trumpets, 2 tenor trombones, 2 bass trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, tamtam, bass drum, temple blocks, cymbal), 1 piano, 1 celesta, 1 harp, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

To modulate one’s voice means to vary the tone, to avoid monotone. To modulate in music has traditionally meant to change the key. In recent composition another usage has emerged: tempo modulation, which involves changing the speed of the beat by keeping some fraction of that beat common in the shift to another beat. Thus the triplet in one tempo might become the eighth-note in a faster tempo.

George Perle’s *Transcendental Modulations*, the title of which evidently arose from a slip of the tongue intending “Transcendental Meditations,” may be

said to reflect all three meanings—and more. This work presents a succession of character images, contrasting in mood, and including even a trace of jazz in the bass pizzicatos toward the end. Musical ideas (such as the bubbling up of clarinets at the opening) reappear at different pitch levels to effect changes in tonality as well as timbre. Twelve distinct tempos are carefully linked by common pulses. After completing the work, the composer chanced upon a paragraph from, appropriately enough, Ralph Waldo Emerson, that he felt might serve as a motto for the piece:

Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth, that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on midnoon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.

It has been suggested that Perle's music in general meets a description of a new classicism envisioned by Thomas Mann:

Something conspicuously logical, well formed and clear, something at once austere and cheerful, no less imbued with strength of purpose, but more restrained, refined, more healthy even in its spirituality.

The recording of this work by the American Symphony Orchestra, Leon Botstein conducting, appeared in 2005 on a New World Records CD.

Lukas Foss

Born August 15, 1922, in Berlin
Died February 1, 2009, in New York City

Baroque Variations

Composed in 1967

Premiered July 7, 1967, in Chicago by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Seiji Ozawa

Performance Time: Approximately 25 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 1 recorder, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 1 E-flat clarinet, 1 soprano saxophone, 1 bassoon, 3 French horns, 2 trumpets, 1 trombone, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (vibraphone, cymbals, chimes, gong, xylophone, triangle, bass drum), 1 celesta, 1 electric piano, 1 electric organ, 1 harpsichord, 1 electric guitar, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

A decade before John Cage hit on subtraction as a compositional device, Lukas Foss was busy erasing notes from a Handel piece to create the first movement of *Baroque Variations*. The unsuspecting listener might think he or she is confronted by an orchestral malfunction. Perhaps players have ingested Ambien and are dozing off only to wake up suddenly, having lost their place. An atmosphere of gentle confusion prevails.

The second movement, based on a harpsichord sonata by Domenico Scarlatti, appears to have difficulty getting into motion. Once it does, the music fades in and out, sometimes alarmingly, coming at different and conflicting speeds.

J.S. Bach provides material for the final movement of this phantasmagoria. His

E-major solo violin Partita is subjected to a series of interruptions, often comic, that suggest zoo animals on the loose, right-hand-only piano practice, stuck vinyl records, chaos suddenly broken off then turned back on. Finally: an organ appearing out of nowhere battling out-of-control percussion.

In his long and varied compositional career, Lukas Foss moved in and out of tonality, of neo-classicism, of improvisation, and of electronics. He was constantly exploring and experimenting. In *Baroque Variations* he created an endearing icon of Dreamstate Modernism.

Richard Wilson is ASO's composer in residence and the Mary Conover Mellon Professor of Music at Vassar College.

Remembrances

Remembering George Perle

by Shirley Gabis Perle

I first met George in 1946 when he was just out of the army and getting his Ph.D. at NYU. Already an experienced composer, and wanting to take advantage of the G.I. bill, he majored in musicology and found himself carried away by the Renaissance composers. All he could talk about was Machaut, Busnois, and Josquin...and Bartók...and left-wing politics, which had been a crucial part of his experience in Chicago before the war. By 1982, when we married, he had given up politics and discovered Berg's music along with the writings of Proust and Henry James—whose entire work he had read. The classics



were a given. He told the woman who was to be his first wife that he loved her but loved Beethoven more. He was crazy about Louis Armstrong and the great jazz artists. Central to George's composing was his enormous enthusiasm for dance; the ballet especially attracted him. The intricacy and wit of Balanchine's choreography somehow influenced the "steps" his notes took: he wanted to make them dance. He worked round the clock, stopping every so often for a few hours of sleep. This enabled him to produce the prodigious amount of work for which he has become known.

Remembering Lukas Foss

by Cornelia Foss

A man of contradictions, Lukas Foss was fun-loving as well as enormously serious ("...but *never* earnest," to quote him). Everything about music came impressively easily to him, yet he worked incessantly.

Born in Germany, he studied in Paris from ages seven to 15. In New York at 16, he rented a very small room, slept under his piano, and composed the oratorio *The Prairie*, which was performed by the Robert Shaw Chorale and later the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky. In 1949 the Rome Prize brought him to the American Academy in Rome, where we met and married two years later.

In 1951 Foss accepted a professorship at UCLA. When the Bel Air fire of 1961 destroyed our house, we stayed a year at Elliott Carter's apartment in New York. Subsequently, Foss became the conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic, and founded the Center for Creative and Performing Arts.

In 1971 Foss became the director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, where he started the New Wave Festival. A composer of more than 350 works, he never tired of new ideas.

Sadly, Foss contracted Parkinson's disease when he was 78. He would sit at the piano for hours and meticulously change fingering so he could still play.

THE Artists

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

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Leon Botstein is now in his 23rd year as music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. He has been hailed for his visionary zeal, often creating concert programs that give audiences a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hear live performances of works that are ignored in the standard repertory, and inviting music lovers to listen in their own way to create a personal experience. At the same time he brings his distinctive style to core repertory works. He is also co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate of the Jerusalem

Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11.

Mr. Botstein leads an active schedule as a guest conductor all over the world, and can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including their Grammy-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are available online, where they have cumulatively sold more than a quarter of a million downloads. Upcoming engagements include the Royal Philharmonic, Wiesbaden, UNAM Mexico, and the Simon Bolivar Orchestra. Recently he conducted the Russian National Orchestra, the Taipei Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and the Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela and Japan, the first non-Venezuelan conductor invited by El Sistema to conduct on a tour.

Highly regarded as a music historian, Mr. Botstein's most recent book is *Von Beethoven zu Berg: Das Gedächtnis der Moderne* (2013). He is the editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and the author of numerous articles and books. He is currently working on a sequel to *Jefferson's*

Children, about the American education system. Collections of his writings and other resources may be found online at LeonBotsteinMusicRoom.com. For his contributions to music he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Caroline P. and Charles W. Ireland Prize, the highest

award given by the University of Alabama; the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music; the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society; and Carnegie Foundation's Academic Leadership Award. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

Mr. Botstein is represented by Columbia Artists Management, LLC.

THE AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Now in its 53rd season, the American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski, with a mission of making orchestral music accessible and affordable for everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely-performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The orchestra's Vanguard Series consists of multiple concerts annually at Carnegie Hall. ASO also performs at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College in Bard's

SummerScape Festival and the Bard Music Festival. The orchestra has made several tours of Asia and Europe, and has performed in countless benefits for organizations including the Jerusalem Foundation and PBS.

Many of the world's most accomplished soloists have performed with the ASO, including Yo-Yo Ma, Deborah Voigt, and Sarah Chang. The orchestra has released several recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and many live performances are also available for digital download. In many cases these are the only existing recordings of some of the rare works that have been rediscovered in ASO performances.

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