

Program Profile on myself

Krenek Feler 1960

8.31
rec. 5
Son. 4
Lam. 4
Tram 4
elect. 8
Str. 7 1/2
oper 8
40

Having been in the business of composing music for about forty years, I have accumulated so considerable a number of works of all kinds, sizes and shapes that a profile, that is to say an outline of this aggregation of material, would not only take much more space than I have at my disposal within the time span of this broadcast, but also, if inadequately condensed and farshortened in order to fit this frame, become oddly distorted and confusing. I therefore propose to limit

myself to a selection of a few specimens which will illustrate various aspects of my output. Six different media will be represented: piano, a cappella chorus, orchestra, electronic tape, chamber ensemble and opera.

My 3rd Piano Sonata, which is the first item to be discussed here, ~~was originally my 3rd Piano Sonata in the context of the works to be discussed here.~~ was written in 1942 and 43. ~~As in~~ all music on this program (with exception of the electronic tape) I employed in this work the twelve-tone technique.

The basic idea of the twelve-tone technique has become more or less commonly known at this time. The composer chooses a certain arrangement of our twelve tones, and this series, or row of tones, indicates in this succession the twelve tones will enter the musical process. ~~Let me play you such a tone row.~~

~~ex. (4 Trump.)~~

Other forms of this row are also available. It may be shifted on to different pitch levels.

it may ^{be} turned upside down - that is, what went up in the original, goes down in the inversion.

and a few more such derivative forms may be used. Since the tones of the row may appear in any octave region - high, low, middle, anywhere, - and no prearranged patterns are set for rhythm and harmony, that is, how long each tone should sound and how many tones should sound together, the composer is entirely free to shape his music according to his inspiration. He is only honorbound to observe the succession of the tones which he has predetermined in getting up his tone row.

(2) We shall now hear the first movement of my 3rd Sonata, as played by Glenn Gould. Since at that time I was still preoccupied with the search for a synthesis of the traditional and the new, the structure of the piece follows the classical pattern of the Sonata form, with two contrasting thematic ideas and a concluding element, which set of musical entities is run through four times, corresponding to the ~~classical~~ sequence of exposition, development, recapitulation and coda.

rec. Sonata [1] first movement, about 5 min.

(d) The next work from which we shall hear excerpts is a very excellent choral work, Lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetae.

(e) The work consists of those sections of the Lamentations of Jeremiah which are used in the Tenebrae services of the Roman Church during Holy Week. As a rule, the individual verses of the text are introduced by letters of the Hebrew alphabet, such as Aleph, Beth, Ghimel, Lamin, and so on. These letters are an integral part of the text and are which serve as a numbering of the verses also sung.

(f) The work is divided in nine ^(so-called) lessons; ~~the first lesson concludes with the invocation: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum - Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God. I seek the invocation at the end of the first lesson in unison, after the second in two, then in three, and at the very end in nine parts.~~

When I wrote the work in 1940 and 41, I was attracted by the ~~contrast~~ ^{strange} contrast between the ceremonious formality of the announcements of the Hebrew letters and the frequently unreserved emotional violence of the verses, in which the prophet bewails the desecration and destruction of the Holy City and cries out to the Lord for help and mercy. I imagine that the depressing ~~events~~ ^{events} of the war years influenced my ~~frame~~ ^{first} frame of mind.

3

I became very pessimistic in regard to the possibilities of art or anything intellectual in a world more and more engulfed by a bloody ordeal. The horror of this perspective at the same time had a liberating effect. Since it apparently did not make much sense to write any music at all, one could use the time still available for this kind of activity in writing music without any further taking account of technical difficulties and accepted standards of practicality.

In this mood that I wrote the Lamentatio, a work of 75 minutes duration, convinced that it never would be heard ~~in public~~ by anybody. In fact, I used to joke to my students about the last two pages of the score which contained the nine-voice Jerusalem, saying that this was music one could not hear, sing, or read, but only write. A small part of the Lamentatio was performed and eventually recorded by the

Choir of Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, where I was directing the department of music after 1942. It took 16 years ~~before~~ this impossible ~~work was done in its entirety~~ ^{work was done in its entirety} ~~substantial part~~ of it.

~~work was done in its entirety~~ ~~substantial part~~ of it was produced at the Heinrich Schütz Festival in Dinsldorf, Germany, in 1956 by the East German Choir of the State School for Church Music in Dresden, directed by Professor Martin Flämig, and of this performance we shall ^{now} present here an excerpt. ~~One review of the performance~~

~~said that here was a twelve-tone composer. No talk hisue from Gregorian chant, here was a Catholic composer featured as the main attraction of a Protestant music festival, and here was an American composer whose music was presented by an East German organization - in short, here was a promise of peace and the brotherhood of men. This certainty was an entirely un hoped for result of the great Lamentatio which afterwards was taken up by several choral organizations and presented in its entire awesome length of 75 minutes. Let us now hear one of the lessons as per-~~

~~formed by the Dresden ensemble just mentioned.~~
[Acc. 2] 3/4 ind. f. center ³ Sadebit 4 min.

4

~~As far as the twelve-tone technique is concerned, the~~
~~Lamentation for A. based on a special set of twelve notes.~~

observed In connection with the 3rd Piano Sonata I ~~mentioned~~
that I was interested in a kind of synthesis of old and new,
as far as structural problems were concerned. In later years
this interest subsided, and I became more engrossed
with the ~~idea~~ project of creating new formal contexts that were in-
dependent of the classical models. I was especially attracted
by the idea of ~~very~~ very short, compact pieces of music
in which a single musical idea would be presented as suc-
cinctly as possible. The first move in this direction was a set
of twenty Miniatures for Piano. (The term Miniature applies
As I see it now)

perhaps only to some of these pieces, as it seems to imply
the concept of a diminished version of something big, or at
least normal-sized. A Japanese garden is a miniature in
that its fir or peach trees are just dwarfish replicas
of what we call normal fir or peach trees. What I was
after was a short form that would not be just a condensed,
version of a large one, but something legitimate in its own
right. This is the idea behind the Eleven Transparencies,
a set of eleven short pieces which I wrote for the Louisville
(Kentucky) Orchestra in 1954. The title might as well refer
to the transparent texture of the music as to the notion
that something like ideas, emotions or sentiments shine
through the sounding surface - whatever it might be,
is left to the listener whose mind is inclined toward
associating music with extramusical things. We now
will hear the first three of the Eleven Transparencies -
played by the Louisville ~~State~~ Orchestra, conducted by
Robert Whitney.

8.30

8

Rec. #3

4 min.

5 The next work I should like to discuss is my oratorio
Spiritus intelligentiae, Sanctus for voices and electronic sounds.
This is a religious work concerning about the manifestation of
The Holy Ghost

6 The idea for this work came to me about 1947. I ^{visualized it as a piece for voices and orchestra and}
~~conceived the Latin text that was taken from the~~ began to sketch
the music. But after a while, I put ~~it~~ it aside because my musical
concepts were increasingly associated with sounds of which
I did not know how they could be produced. There was especially
an all-pervading, soaring sound as if ~~caused~~ caused by a big
storm reverberating under the sky, which attached itself to the
notion of the Holy Spirit. ~~When I was~~ ^{discouraged, I dismissed} the project ~~from~~
my mind. But when I a few years later became acquainted
with electronic sound production, it came immediately back
to life, for here were the sounds which I had dreamed about.

7 So far only the first section, about a fourth
of the whole, has been completed. The text is taken from
the Latin version of the Old Testament and comprises

8 three scenes: the creation of the world, where the Spirit is first
mentioned as floating over the waters; the fall of man, when the
eating from the forbidden tree is interpreted as a crude at-
tempt at reaching divine intelligence; and the Tower of Babel,
another such attempt. This section ends with the confusion of
languages. The last part, at this time ^{still} in the planning stage, should
of course bring as its climax the miracle of Pentecost, when
the Apostles speaking in their own tongue are understood by
every member of their polyglot audience in his own language.
This to me symbolizes the ~~undoing~~ ^{undoing} of the confusion of languages
and promise of spiritual understanding among men through
divine grace and intelligence. ~~There are a few times spoken~~
~~in German, a quotation from the Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard,~~
~~dealing with the significance of Original Sin. There are two~~
singers ^{are} engaged in rendering the vocal parts. If it at times
will sound like many more singers, this is due to superimposing
the tape recordings of the single voices onto each other and
manipulating these tapes. ~~by means of the~~ ^{not}
~~work~~ were not played on any existing instruments and re-
corded through a microphone, such as the singers were. These
sounds were generated electronically by devices known as
oscillators and directly recorded on tapes. These tapes
were then subjected to various treatments in order to
and modify the attacks, ~~and~~ the dynamics, the timbre,
echo, and other aspects of the sounds recorded.

6

The section of the work which will be program begins with a passage consisting of electronic sounds only, without voices. It is followed by the narrative of the Tower of Babel, the wrath of the Lord and the confusion of languages. The interlude without voices is of particular interest because here

we have indeed a specimen of music which could be only written, or mentally conceived, but not heard. The agglomeration of sounds ~~that~~ that you will hear is ~~the result of~~ produced by combining speeded up and slowed down versions of a single tone line with ~~its~~ its original recording. While the ratios of speed and pitch differences and the timing of the entrances of these diverse elements are precisely calculated and premeditated, the results, that is the sound combinations heard at any given moment are utterly unpredictable. You will now hear the ~~example~~ example from my oratorio, as ^{re-}corded at the Electronic Studio of the West German ^{realized and} Radio in Cologne.

-4

Rec. 4 3 1/2 in. f.c. Center, 8 min

2.34

When I spoke of premeditation and calculation in the layout of that strange interlude, it meant that the basic idea of the twelve tone technique, as I have explained ^{it} in the beginning, was extended to cover other aspects, ^{of the music} above all the dimension of time. While the twelve tone technique regulates only the ^{time} ~~time~~

(17) session of the tones as they enter the musical process, a premeditated ordering of speeds will also determine when they shall do so. It must be realized that we have really crossed a frontier beyond which nobody so far had expected music to exist.

~~Preparation, though the result of free, unprepared thought~~ in the next work to be heard I have ~~not~~ ventured beyond this boundary. It is called Sestina ^{and is} a piece for soprano and chamber ensemble, written in 1957 for the Fromm Foundation. The

and entered the province of what is called serial music, that is music, ~~in which~~ all aspects are regulated by prearranged ^(of which) series of magnitudes.

Sestina is a poetic form which originated in southern France in the 12th century. It is ^{clearly} based on the ^{serial} idea, ~~of a poem~~ which goes to show that this ^{principle} ~~has~~ a very long history indeed. The poem consists of six stanzas, six lines. The words which appear at the ends of the first six lines are repeated ^{in each of the} ~~at the ends of the~~ subsequent stanzas at the end of their lines, but in different order. If the order of the first stanza is 1 2 3 4 5 6, the words appear in the second stanza in the order of 6 1 5 2 4 3. Their positions were switched so that the last word becomes the first, the fifth the second, and the fourth the third. In other ^{terms} ~~words~~, the words equidistant from the center form pairs, ~~and~~ beginning from the outside, and ^(the two words) within each pair ~~the~~ change their places.

8 The text of this composition, which I wrote myself in German, deals with the very problem of serially organized composition, which consists in the fact that the more completely the design of the music is premeditated and predetermined by serial statements, the less predictable will be the results at any given point. This may be explained in a somewhat brutally simplified manner like this: if the composer works without serial predetermination, he is able to decide freely what he wishes to happen in, say, measure 62 of his work, and in that sense he may predict what is going to happen there since he will make it happen. If his work is predetermined by a network of rules, which he set up, to be sure, ^{himself has}

he will not be able to predict what will happen in measure 62. ^{what happens in measure 62 or anywhere else,} but what we can't predict ~~we don't have to~~ ^(will happen by necessity) we call ^a chance result. The contradiction ^{between premeditated order and unpredictable chance} is the subject matter of my poem.

Needless to say that the music is strictly and nearly totally organized according to the rotation principle of the Lestina.

Even at the very beginning of the example (I aim soon) to play, it will be evident that the experience of the electronic medium is reflected in the sound world of the Lestina. The percussive, metallic attacks, the retarded and accelerated tone repetitions that sound like slowly dispersing ripples over a pond, the vanishing rumble of avalanches or like rapidly growing whirlpools or the gathering thunderclaps of rock slides, - effects which in electronic music are provided by judicious application of feedback - the manifold manifestations of echo supplied by vibraphone and piano - all these elements are inspired by the peculiar attributes of the electronic medium.

You will now hear the second section of the Lestina, which includes an instrumental interlude and the three concluding lines of the poem, as performed by the soprano Bethany Beardslee and an instrumental ensemble under my direction.

because the serial conditions are too complicated for guessing at the outcome.

Rec 5

4 inch from center
7 1/2 min

The concluding scene on this program is a scene from my chamber opera The Bell Tower, written in 1956 again for the Fromm Foundation. The libretto is my own theatrical adaptation of Herman Melville's short story of the same title. We are on top of the ~~bell tower~~ bell tower erected by the bellcater and architect Bannadonna, as commissioned by an Italian city of the Renaissance period. The overbearing, redoubtable man has made many enemies, especially since in a shuffle he has killed the foreman of his workshop. The blood of the victim has spilled into the alloy ~~of~~ ^{of} the gigantic bell that Bannadonna was casting ^{molten} and left a flaw in ~~its~~ ^{its} texture. Two senators come up to the tower's platform to inquire when he will set ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~varnished~~ ^{varnished} clockwork ^(in motion) that is to strike the bell on the hour. The senators are much intrigued by a canvas bag that Bannadonna had hoisted up to the tower. While he pretends that it contains the secret, delicate mechanism of the clock, we know that it hides Una, the daughter of the ~~killed~~ ^{killed} man. She has fallen in love with the demon and wanted to ~~stay~~ ^{stay} with him on top of the tower the night before the work was finished. Under the needling questions of the senators Bannadonna ~~loses~~ ^{loses} ~~his temper~~ ^{loses} control of himself and makes progressively wilder statements. Obsessed about a metal object that looks like a snake he says that it is a snake, which he had charmed, treated with secret chemicals and blended with rare metals. Finally, forgetting Una's presence, he brags that he had killed the man intentionally to get rid of an inferior rival. After the senators have left in disgust, Una comes out of the canvas bag, determined to kill ~~her~~ ^{her} father; ~~murderer~~ ^{murderer} by pushing him over the edge of the platform. He saves himself and decides to punish her by transforming her, after the model of the snake, into the monstrous statue of brass that is going to strike the giant bell with an enormous hammer. We hear now this scene of the Bell Tower, as produced by the opera workshop of the University of Illinois.

the foreman's death was no accident, as the senators had called it to protect him, but that

rec. 6

8 min.

10

I don't think I can let you off without telling you what happens to Damadonna after we left him at his gory work. On the next day ^{just before} one o'clock, which is the hour promised for the start of the clockwork, Damadonna has finished everything in time. Suddenly, half crazed by his sinister experience, he feels impelled to carve Una's face into the surface of the bell at the point of the ~~hour~~ hour "one". Feverishly working on this image, he forgets that the mechanism he has set will start operating inexorably. The ^{brassy} monster into which he has ~~put~~ immersed Una moves out and strikes mechanically at the spot of hour "one", thus killing its own ~~creator~~ creator. When the aroused populace demands to hear the bell after all, it is struck by one of the workmen, and it bursts out the very place where the blood of the murdered man has spilled into the alley. End of Damadonna, end of opera - end of broadcast.