

NOT CURRENTLY OFFERED

The music of Anton Webern is the antithesis of much of what we experience in our lives in this day and age. It is music of extreme introspection, subtle, private, yet with great intensity. In order for us to enter Webern's world we must eschew the hustle and bustle of our outward-directed lives and develop the calm, focused concentration which is the hallmark of the contemplative life. For Webern is a contemplative. His penetrating insight has much to offer us in terms of understanding ourselves, revealing the truest essence of our emotions and thoughts. Somewhat akin to the subtlety of calligraphic brush strokes, individual sounds and gestures take on great expressive weight and capture the attention of the finely attuned listener. Webern manages to grab hold of the emotional quanta of our lives, fleeting moments of anticipation, of joy, of dread, of understanding, and hold on to them just long enough for us to examine them more closely. He allows us to peer with piercing vision into our own minds and hearts.

Of course, coming into the concert hall one is not always ready to be receptive to this level of intimacy and profundity. Our thoughts and the happenings of our lives have a way of tenaciously holding on to our minds, sending them swirling about just when we would most like to leave them behind to be open to the experience at hand. Much in the spirit of a meditative chapel which stills the mind and allows the mind and heart to become finely tuned to the essence of present experience, Mark Strand has written short poems which, in reacting to the Webern pieces, also serve to illuminate the pathway toward their revelations. Strand is, like Webern, an artist of spare textures and profound understanding. His poems introduce each short movement of Webern's quartet music and create a sense of specific place in which the music can unfold. This juxtaposition allows as well for a dialogue between word and music which creates reflections back and forth, clarifying the dimensions of both.

Another composer whose music lives most vividly in details is Mozart. Whereas the surface of his music is most often quite pleasing to the casual listener, careful attention brings manifold rewards. In Mozart's work as in that of almost no other composer a single note, a single change of harmony or direction can completely darken the landscape, or bring hope, or introduce or resolve a conflict. The details of the music move at lightning speed, engaging the whole of our inner world in individual moments which magically color our perceptions as the sweep of the work continues. The kind of listening which Webern's music demands also opens up new worlds within Mozart's universe.

In the early nineteenth century it was not unusual for a concert to consist of a symphony which

was played movement by movement through the course of the evening, with other pieces, arias or solo works, inserted between the movements. This is the inspiration for this program, with the Webern/Mark Strand composite works fitted between the movements of a Mozart quartet. Each composer's work is filled with truths about our inner life, each within his own sense of time. Mozart's time is that of our thoughts and motions, with the inflections of our feelings shading the experience of that time. Webern's time is an expansion of moments which almost elude our grasp, with individual instants held under the magnifying glass of our attention. In some sense, besides having resonance with the level of detail in the Webern, the Mozart serves as a foil to the density of Webern's music. It should make for a fruitful pairing, an evening of music and poetry which engages our hearts fully and gives voice to the full range of our common humanity.