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Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), oboe, English horn, clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, crotales, tambourine, marimba, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.



ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

B: September 13, 1874
Vienna, Austria

D: July 13, 1951
Los Angeles, California

*Erwartung, Monodrama
in One Act, Opus 17*

PREMIERED: June 6, 1924

— One hundred years ago, when audiences first encountered *Erwartung*—Arnold Schoenberg’s monumental one-act monodrama for soprano and orchestra—few could claim to fully understand the music and its influences. Gone were the sumptuous melodies and other late-Romantic ideals Schoenberg inherited as a young, mostly self-taught composer, perfectly captured in early works like *Verklärte Nacht* or *Gurre-Lieder*. Instead, those glorious long-spun lines and rich harmonies were replaced with music that screams, terrifies and haunts. Here Schoenberg did away entirely with traditional harmony and fully embraced the use of dissonance—the deliberate clash of notes—as a means of expression. Alongside other myriad works he wrote during the same creative period, *Erwartung* represented a complete break from the past in order to form a bold new style capable of expressing the anxieties of Schoenberg’s lifetime.

UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC

The first step in understanding this new sonic world is to observe that *Erwartung* is an outgrowth of the Expressionist art movement. In the arts, Expressionism was concerned not with objectivity or beauty; instead it aimed to express the innermost subjective state of the artist in relation to the world around them. Artists like Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch (most famous for *The Scream*) are early

examples of the style, which emphasized bold use of line and color to distort reality in unsettling ways. Schoenberg, himself a painter, made a number of self-portraits in the Expressionist tradition, all striking examples of the style—monochromatic with exaggerated features and rich with an atmosphere of melancholy.

On a more personal level, there were several key reasons for Schoenberg’s adoption of this aesthetic ideal in his music. Of primary concern, Schoenberg’s wife Mathilde left him in 1908 to have an affair with the painter Richard Gerstl, which ended in Gerstl’s horrific suicide by the end of that year. Though Mathilde would eventually return, scholar Alexander Carpenter writes that this deeply upsetting development was “exacerbated by Schoenberg’s depression over his lack of success and the concomitant financial stress.”

One of the last key influences on *Erwartung* was the groundbreaking work of Sigmund Freud, whose psychoanalytical writings were in vogue during this period. Both Schoenberg and Marie Pappenheim—the poet and medical student who wrote the libretto to *Erwartung*—were familiar with Freud’s work. In fact, Carpenter says that within Schoenberg’s atonal period there are five years from 1908 to 1913 that can be understood as the composer’s “psychoanalytic period...a time in which the composer was preoccupied with his own psychic unrest and exploring a compositional aesthetic predicated on the expression of the unconscious.” From this period onward, Schoenberg’s music takes on new meanings of autobiography, as his works “articulate his own preoccupation with his own neurosis—a kind of hysteria manifest in repressed memory—and reflect a compositional approach that echoes Freud’s contemporary writings on the nature of the unconscious.”

SOUNDS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

The demands Schoenberg placed on his music to become a vehicle for the expression of the unseen corners of the human mind, in combination with intense personal struggle he suffered in his married life, almost certainly paved the way for the creation of *Erwartung*. Schoenberg commissioned the libretto from Pappenheim in the summer of 1909. The work lasts about 30 minutes and contains four scenes that flow seamlessly from one to the next. There is only one character, “the Woman,” who wanders alone through a wood in an intense state of fluctuating emotions—despair, anxiety, confusion, horror, relief—as she searches for her lover in the night. Expressionism was not concerned with individual characters, but rather nameless figures who represent universal truths about humanity.

Erwartung is through-composed, meaning that no material is repeated; throughout its runtime the music unfolds as a stream of consciousness, aurally depicting the setting and the Woman’s heightened emotional state. Schoenberg makes great use of text-painting, where distinct musical ideas are employed to depict specific pieces of text; one such

example is Schoenberg’s use of the celesta every time the Woman references the moon. In the opening minutes of the work, Schoenberg adds a brief violin solo during one such reference, as the Woman laments how that celestial body has lost its once wondrous luster—a memory of a happier time that quickly fades into ghostly terror.

Erwartung was written in 1909 but not premiered until 1924 in Prague, when soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder was the soloist and Schoenberg’s brother-in-law Alexander Zemlinsky conducted. This week’s performances, a little less than 100 years after the premiere, are the Minnesota Orchestra’s first.

Instrumentation: solo soprano with orchestra comprising 3 flutes, piccolo (1 flute also doubling piccolo), 4 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 4 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, ratchet, tamtam, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.



PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

B: May 7, 1840
Votkinsk, Russia

D: November 6, 1893
St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Opus 64

PREMIERED: November 17, 1888

— Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony came from a moment of supreme personal tension for the composer—his disastrous and short-lived marriage to Antonina Miliukova—and in the process of completing it he collapsed. He suffered a nervous breakdown from which he recovered slowly, and this was followed by a creative dry spell that lasted nearly a decade.

CREATIVE ONCE AGAIN

Then, in the winter of 1887-88, Tchaikovsky made a tour of Western Europe, and with his confidence somewhat bolstered, he returned to Russia ready at last to attempt a new symphony. He led the premiere in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888. Despite some initial misgivings, he was finally convinced that he had regained his creative powers.

The Fifth Symphony—full of those wonderful Tchaikovsky themes, imaginative orchestral color, and excitement—has become one of his most popular works. He builds this symphony around a motto-theme, and in his notebooks he suggested that the motto represents “complete resignation

before fate.” But Tchaikovsky supplied no program for the symphony, nor does this music seem to be “about” anything. The motto-theme returns in each of the four movements, often in quite different guises, and it may be best to understand it as a unifying device rather than as anything so dramatic as the Fourth Symphony’s “sword of Damocles.” Despite the tantalizing hints about “resignation before fate,” Tchaikovsky apparently regarded his Fifth Symphony as abstract music.

MELODIES, EXCITEMENT AND SURPRISE

ANDANTE–ALLEGRO CON ANIMA. Clarinets present the somber motto-theme at the beginning of the slow introduction, and gradually this leads to the main body of the movement, marked *Allegro con anima*. Over the orchestra’s steady tread, solo clarinet and bassoon sing the movement’s surging main theme, and there follows a wealth of thematic material. This lengthy movement is built on three separate theme groups, full of those soaring and sumptuous Tchaikovsky melodies.

ANDANTE CANTABILE CON ALCUNA LICENZA. Deep string chords at the opening of the *Andante cantabile* introduce one of the great solos for horn, and a few moments later the oboe has the graceful second subject. For a movement that begins in such relaxed spirits, this music is twice shattered by the return of the motto-theme, which blazes out dramatically in the trumpets.

VALSE: ALLERGO MODERATO. Tchaikovsky springs a surprise in the third movement—instead of the expected scherzo, he writes a lovely waltz. He rounds the movement off beautifully with an extended coda based on the waltz tune, and in its closing moments the motto-theme makes a fleeting appearance, like a figure seen through the mists.

FINALE: ANDANTE MAESTOSO–ALLEGRO VIVACE–MODERATO ASSAI E MOLTO MAESTOSO. However misty that theme may have seemed at the end of the third movement, it comes into crystalline focus at the beginning of the finale. Tchaikovsky moves to E major here and sounds out the motto to open this movement. The main body of the finale, marked *Allegro vivace*, leaps to life, and the motto-theme breaks in more and more often as it proceeds. The movement drives to a great climax, then breaks off in silence. This is a trap, and it often tricks the unwary into premature applause, for the symphony is not yet over. Out of the ensuing silence begins the real coda, and the motto-theme now leads the way on constantly-accelerating tempos to the (true) conclusion in E major.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.