

WILLIAM KRAFT

KENNEDY PORTRAIT



SETTINGS FROM
PIERROT LUNAIRE
Jane Manning, soprano

VINTAGE RENAISSANCE

SYMPHONY OF SORROWS

KENNEDY PORTRAIT
John Shea, narrator

Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra

Czech Philharmonic
Chamber Orchestra
Paul Polivnick, conductor

Albany
CLASSICAL

WILLIAM KRAFT

William Kraft was appointed to the Dorothy and Sherrill C. Corwin Chair in Music Composition at the University of California at Santa Barbara in September, 1991, in recognition of his long and distinguished career as a composer, conductor and teacher. He served as percussionist (1955-1962) and timpanist (1962-1981) with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and was the orchestra's first composer-in-residence (1981-1985) during which time he founded and directed the Philharmonic New Music Group. He also served as regular guest conductor and was assistant conductor for three seasons.

A musician of international acclaim, Professor Kraft has received dozens of awards, commissions, and nominations including two Guggenheim Fellowships, two Ford Foundation commissions, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation, two Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards, the Norlin/MacDowell Fellowship, and the American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters Award. His works have been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Library of Congress, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Boston Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players/Contemporary Music Forum (Washington, DC)/Speculum Musicae (New York), San Francisco Symphony, and many others. In 1991 Professor Kraft's composition, *Settings from Pierrot Lunaire*, a piece for soprano and chamber ensemble, was premiered in its entirety in Boston. In addition to composing several film and television scores, he conducted the orchestra for the recent films *Dead Again*, *Carlito's Way*, and *Indo China*. Professor Kraft has served on the Board of

the Monday Evening Concerts, the Music Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts, as musical director and chief advisor for the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra of Los Angeles, the board of the American Music Center, and was Chairman of the ASCAP Board of Review. Currently Mr. Kraft is president of the board of directors of the American Composers Forum/Los Angeles and professor emeritus.

Settings from Pierrot Lunaire (1987-90)

Settings from Pierrot Lunaire was commissioned by the Arnold Schoenberg Institute in honor of the 75th anniversary of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912).

In connection with a conference at the Arnold Schoenberg Institute to celebrate the 75th anniversary of *Pierrot Lunaire*, Leonard Stein the director of the Institute conceived a project that would provide a more lasting commemoration: "The commissioning of musical settings of the other 29 poems of the *Pierrot* cycle not included in the original 21 of Schoenberg's work." The performing ensemble would be, of course, that of Schoenberg's *Pierrot* — vocalist, flute, clarinet piano, violin and cello.

I thought at first of using the original French but Leonard convinced me of the superiority of the German translation. He was quite right, but I did look at verses rich in color and imagery that would be compatible with my Impressionistic tendencies.

That being done, it was decided to pay homage to Schoenberg and, at the same time, to allude to *Pierrot's* strange and exotic mentality. Therefore, the settings are an odd mix of a 12 tone row; double-mode hexachords formed into another row, an octatonic scale and the overtone mode (raised 4th and lowered

1. A 12-tone row (E G F# F A A# G# B C G# D# D) interweaving between the original and two transpositions.
2. An octatonic scale (E F# G A B# C# D#) and a seven-tone modification (E F# G A B# C D)
3. Free; i.e., arbitrarily chosen.

The cello opens with the seven-tone mode, playing the role of a side show drummer. When I was 15 years old, in San Diego, I went to see a carnival. Upon entering the grounds I could hear an archetypical circus drum pattern alternating between the bass drum's head and shell. One will find it also in Stravinsky's *Petrushka* wherein the alternation is between the bass drum and a pair of mounted cymbals. In the first section (first verse) the cello/drummer part hovers, for the most part, quietly behind the scene. The voice and the violin dominate the texture, weaving in and out of the row and its first transposition, just as Pierrot weaves through the crowd. This section is written for only the soprano, violin, and cello.

The second section is introduced by the piano striking a chord containing all seven pitches of the mode. Now the entire ensemble, voice and instruments, weaves through the mode (the octatonic scale and the row).

When Pierrot, in the third section (verse), struts and makes fanciful claims, the pitches become free of control — i.e., they are improvisatory, and this mixes with the scale, mode, and row to conclude the piece.

Selbstmord (first performance September 27, 1991, Currier Gallery, Boston, by Musical Viva, Richard Pittman, conductor, Christine Shadeburg, vocalist)

How fascinating it was to come across *Selbstmord*. To one literally minded, Pierrot's suicide indicates his death. But to another mind, the poem represents

another marvelous thrust into the transcendental realm of the imagination. From Giraud's disorganized collection of poems. Schoenberg, as expounded by Susan Youens, carved "...the tripartite cri de coeur of a modern artist's rootless rebellion and frenzied *édéréglé* des sens, the surreal psychic dissolution that follows, and finally, the journey home..." As in *Feerie* and *Harlequinade*, there is an interplay of mode and scale extended to form a 12-tone row.

The orchestration of *Settings from Pierrot Lunaire* took place over a period of five years, 1990-94. As of this date, October, 2002, there have been no performances. The work was recorded October 12, 2001 by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Paul Polivnick conductor, Jane Manning, soprano. Solos in the orchestra were played by Thelma Handy, violin, Jonathan Hasgaard, cello, Alison Hayhurst, flute/alto flute, Myra Bennett, piccolo, Colin Pownall, bass clarinet, Ian Wright, timpani, Donna Maria Landowski, percussion, and Ian Buckle, piano.

Harlequinade

Einen seidnen Regenbogen
Trägt er auf dem Maskenkleide
Rasch, gleich einer bunten Schlange,
Schlüpft er gleissend durchs Gewühl.

Wie Diogenes nach Menschen
Sucht er — um sie anzulügen,
Einen seidnen Regenbogen
Trägt er auf dem Maskenkleide.

Vor dem niedischen Cassander
Brüftet sich der Strolch: er wär ein
Spanischer Marquis und trägt als
Wappen im azurnen Felde
Einen seidnen Regenbogen!

Slebstmord

In des Mondes weisser Robe
Lacht Pierrot sein blutges Lachen.
Wirrer werden seine Mienen,
Glas auf glas stürzt er hinab!

Droben in die kreidige Mauer
Schlägt er bobend einen Nagel —
In des mondes weisser Robe
Lacht Pierrot sein blutges Lachen!

Und er schürzt den Henkersknoten,
Schmückt den Hals sich mit der Schlinge —
Und mit ausgestreckter Zunge
[Erinnerung mordend]*

Hängt er, zappend wie ein Karpfen,
In des Mondes weisser Robe.

Masked Harlequin

An embroidered silken rainbow
He wars on his fancy dress
Quickly, like a motley serpent
He slips glistening through the crowd.

Like Diogenes he looks
For honest men — to tell them lies,
An embroidered silken rainbow he wears
On his fancy dress.

Before envious Cassander
He brags, the rascal: claims that he
Is a Spaniard, a Marquis,
His coat of arms, an azure field,
An embroidered silken rainbow!

Suicide

In the moon's pristine white robe
Pierrot laughs his blood-stained laughter.
More confused grows his demeanor;
He downs glass after rash glass.

High into the chalky plaster
With trembling hand he drives a nail —
In the moon's pristine white robe
Pierrot laughs his blood-stained laughter.

And he ties the hangman's slipknot,
Drapes his gullet with the noose
And, his tongue stuck out, extended,
(to the murder mem'ry)
hangs there thrashing like a flounder
in the moon's pristine white robe.

*from Nacht (Pierrot Lunaire No. 8)

conception was to have them conclude *Vintage Renaissance* by walking off stage while playing but the small stage of Boston's Symphony Hall didn't allow it. Add to this, the constant activity — the continual serving of food and beverage — and the frequent intrusions of conversations precluded this "tender" conclusion so a new and celebrative ending was added — introduced by the opening of another bottle — this time a dessert wine.

Symphony of Sorrows (1995) (first performance, 1995, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Gerard Schwartz, conductor)

The Age of Anxiety has evolved into the Age of Sadness. The anxious desires for peace and happiness — both personal and universal — have been defeated by the mixed forces of, on the one hand, political, economic and personal greed, and on the other hand by the desperation of poverty and suppression. Concern for others has been replaced by self-aggrandizement, self-interest and the glorification of power accompanied by submission to demagogory and escape into drug induced ephemeral and dead-ended feelings of tension free happiness.

For intelligent and thinking people, the dream of a unified world has evaporated into the nightmare war, of indiscriminate, as well as discriminate, killing, plus racial, political and religious strife.

The result is resignation to the helplessness of those with a knowledge of history who know and may have experienced the effects and results of war. But this, of course, applies to anyone who feels the pain and misery of the tragedies of our — or any generation, thus the *Symphony of Sorrows*.

A Kennedy Portrait (Contextures III) (commissioned by the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and Charles J. Kelley)

In May of 1986 I received a telephone call from Christopher Wilkins, Associate Conductor of the Utah Symphony Orchestra and a mutual friend of Ben Zander and me. He told me that Mr. Zander was coming to Los Angeles, and while there would contact me to discuss the possibility of my composing a musical portrait of John F. Kennedy to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the assassination. He had warned Mr. Zander that I would, most likely, not have the time. However, I was immediately very excited by the idea, since Kennedy had such a profound effect on me, as he did on so many others. Furthermore, I was ahead of schedule on the large French Horn Concerto I was then composing, and, if the muses continued to cooperate, there would be a good chance I could do the Kennedy portrait.

Mr. Zander and I discussed various approaches to the work, keeping in mind my own musical style. I played for him a recording of my *Timpani Concerto*, the style of which comes closest to what I thought would fit the Kennedy portrait. He was pleased; we had an aesthetic rapport and a philosophic kinship. So, challenging the odds, a commitment was made.

I was surprised that so many books on Kennedy were unavailable — many being out of print — but I was extremely fortunate to find a relatively rich collection at the Salt Lake City Public Library which greatly amplified the quotations generously given to me by the Kennedy Library. The quotations fall into four loosely defined areas, each separated by an orchestral interlude.

And then:

"Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

"Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right . . .

. . . not peace at the expense of freedom but both peace and freedom here in this hemisphere and, we hope, around the world."

"God willing that goal will be achieved."

Orchestral Interlude

II.

Must we forever live in a nation whose soul is never fully touched nor identified because we do not invite the gifts of our artists to penetrate our hearts and minds throughout our lifetime?

It was over 2000 years ago that Confucius observed: "When music leads people to the right ideals and aspirations, they may become a great nation."

It was in 1963 that John F. Kennedy observed: "... The life of the arts, are from being an interruption, a distraction, in the life of a nation, is very close to the center of a nation's purpose — and is a test of the quality of a nation's civilization."

"I think politicians and poets share at least one thing, and that is their greatness depends upon the courage with which they face the challenges of life."

"There are many kinds of courage — bravery under fire, courage to risk reputation and friendship and career for convictions which are deeply held. Perhaps the rarest courage of all — for the skill to pursue it is given to very few men — is the courage to wage a silent battle to illuminate the nature of man and the world in which he lives."

"If sometimes our artists have been the most critical of our society it is because their sensitivity and their concern for justice, which must motivate any true artist, make them aware that our nation falls far short of its highest potential."

"I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the artist. If art is to flourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it take him."

"[I n] a democracy . . . the highest duty of the writer, the composer, the artist is to remain true to himself and let the chips fall where they may."

"In serving his vision of the truth, the artist best serves his nation. And the nation which disdains the mission of art invites the fate of having nothing to look backward to with pride and nothing to look forward to with hope."

Orchestral Interlude

III.

Must we forever live in a nation where the fruits of liberty and democracy are blemished by bigotry, self-interests and petty grievances?

One hundred years had passed since Abraham Lincoln had said, "As I would not be a slave, I would not be a master. This expresses my view of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

Yes, one hundred years had passed since Abraham Lincoln when John F. Kennedy said, "We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated."

"If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place?"

"Civil rights are not merely of importance to minority groups. If the full rights of our Constitution, the full values of human

for Most Promising Actor. A native of Massachusetts, Shea received his B.A. from Bates College and a Masters of Fine Arts in Directing from the Yale School of Drama.

Settings from Pierrot Lunaire was recorded for Albany Records by RLPO Live, the recording company of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (www.rlpo-live.com).

Producer: Michael Ogonovsky; Sound Engineer: David A. Pigott; Executive Producer: Jonathan A.C. Small

Vintage Renaissance, Symphony of Sorrows and Kennedy Portrait were performed by the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, recorded by Czech Radio Prague.

Producer: Pavel Prantl; Recording Director: J. Gemrot; Recording Engineer: J. Kotzmann
John Shea's narration was recorded by Darcey Kite, Tattersall/Casablanca Studios, Toronto, Ontario.
Mastering: Kevin Kelly, University of California Santa Barbara Recording Studio.

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