

# Orchestra of the 20th Century

Arthur Weisberg, conductor

Susan Davenny Wyner, soprano

## Schoenberg

*Erwartung* (1909) — Monodrama in One Act

## Wolpe

*Symphony* (1956)

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) composed *Erwartung* in seventeen days, between August 27 and September 12, 1909. It took another twenty-two days to complete the orchestration and another fifteen years before it was premiered.

The libretto, written by Marie von Pappenheim to Schoenberg's specifications, takes the form of an anguished and distracted soliloquy delivered by a woman as she searches in the dark night wood for her unfaithful lover. The solitary character speaks in discontinuous fragments; bits of descriptive narration, remnants of memory, and outbursts of emotion are strung together in associative chains; or, they suffer abrupt interruption, as if their continuation might reveal too much.

The monodrama divides into four scenes: the first three of these constitute only one-fourth of the total length of the work; the fourth scene contains its bulk and its dramatic core.

In the first three scenes, the woman repeatedly attempts to locate herself on a dimly moonlit path at the edge of a dark wood. As she names elements in her surroundings - trees, crickets, the moon, the path itself she uses them as means of escape to her own past, where she recalls brighter moonlit nights shared with her lover. She tries to hold on to these comforting memories; but as the first three scenes progress, the woman is increasingly overpowered by her own fearful imaginings. In Scene IV, she discovers her lover's body in a clearing. Once she acknowledges that it is, in fact, her lover upon whom she has stumbled, her persistent efforts to wake him up replace her relentless searching as a kind of focus for her mental activity. But one has the impression at the end of Scene IV, as at the end of Scene III when she yielded to her fears, that she has again lost her way, this time in a flood of hopelessness, panic, and longing, as she is finally persuaded that he will never awaken.

Orchestral interludes frame each of the four scenes as well as some of the more extended moments within scenes. As the servant of her imagination, the orchestra allows time to pass as the protagonist moves from present to past and back again; brief orchestral "solos" between strands of text anticipate the lover's responses when she appeals to him to protect her, to look at her, to explain to her his recent betrayal. The orchestra also functions as a kind of interior voice which can augment, interrupt, or belie the woman's utterances.

With its almost malignant proliferation of *leitmotifs*, Schoenberg's orchestra in *Erwartung* is unquestionably an heir to Tristan; but in *Erwartung*, thematic material has been reduced to its most cryptic motivic essence and has been so thickly overlaid as to create a deliberate tangle of independent inner voices.

The path through this thick motivic forest is full of sharp obstacles, detours, and distractions which create in the listener an anxiety akin to that of the protagonist, precisely because in such dense underbrush, one can never be certain that a clear path does exist.

The degree to which the path is clear or obscure becomes a central issue in the course of *Erwartung*. To be sure, the menacing dark creates tension for both protagonist and listener; yet the knowledge that the path is obscure provides some relief.

Clarity of any kind provokes enormous apprehension; the more translucent instrumental textures, the partial approaches to tonal clarification or chromatic completion, the rhythmically stabler *ostinato* passages, like the bloodless, vicious moonlight, are somehow terrifying. The moon has only to reveal the corpse to shatter the woman's fragile but urgently maintained illusion that her lover lives. Better a fluid and thickly woven fog, where a final chromatic saturation in all registers and a denial of any solid tonal gravity allows the listener to float his suspicions indefinitely as she searches on, in a dark and mysterious wood . . .

-from notes by Susan Blaustein

**Stefan Wolpe** (1902-1972) was one of the most gifted, versatile and radical composers of his generation. Born in Berlin, he was largely self-taught, but he acknowledged as mentors Ferruccio Busoni, Hermann Scherchen, and Anton Webern. Wolpe was not a regular member of Busoni's composition class, but he visited the master often between 1920 and 1924 and received helpful counsel and support. In the fall of 1933, after his escape from Berlin, Wolpe studied for four months with Webern in Vienna. He then left for Palestine, where he taught at the Conservatory in Jerusalem.

Finding Jerusalem's musical life limited and the political situation increasingly threatening, Wolpe emigrated to the United States in 1938. He settled in New York City, where, except for four years at Black Mountain College in North Carolina (1952-56), he made his home for the remainder of his life. He taught at various schools in Philadelphia and New York City and had many private students, including a number of noted jazz musicians. From 1957 until his retirement he was chairman of the music department of C. W. Post College of Long Island University. He died in 1972 after a ten-year struggle with parkinsonism.

Wolpe composed the *Symphony* on a commission from Rodgers and Hammerstein through the League of Composers-ISCM. Begun in the spring of 1955 and completed the following year, the *Symphony* belongs to a cycle of four major works written during the Black Mountain years that constitutes the principal achievement of his middle period.

These works hold in common a freely flowing, exuberant energy that assimilates to itself a wide range of modes of behavior, qualities of image and gesture, and levels of language from the refined to the vernacular. Successive moments are saturated cubistically by profusely varied and often highly contrasted aspects of an image.

The form is non-rhetorical, yet it maintains a charged flow through a highly synthetic and complex metric, so complex, in fact, that Mr. Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg collaborated with the composer to re-notate the metrical aspect of the score in the spring of 1962.

The "space" is no longer the familiar space stratified by a polyphony of voice parts, but is what Wolpe calls "constellatory," a space in which sinewy, elastic, finely molded shapes freely move, expand, contract, collide and separate, often at high speed. A multiplicity of shapes in motion creates an illusion of depth and dimension and vast forces of mass events. It is a vigorously gestic and speechy music of action in the same sense as the abstract expressionist painters of the early fifties (many of whom Wolpe knew well) were concerned with a painting of action. As Wolpe wrote of *Enactments for Three Pianos* (1953), it is "acting out, being in an act of, being the act itself." The first two movements of the *Symphony* were first performed by the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg on January 16, 1964, but the first complete performance was given in Boston by the New England Conservatory Orchestra with Frederik Prausnitz conducting in April of the following year. For the New York premiere the composer wrote the following notes:

"It is in three movements. All of these movements consist of a series of transformations of an initial two-bar melody that acts as root and source material. This is a structured field of pitches - the various tones stand in relation to one another as an analogue to physical bodies in a force field. The successive elaborations of the material resume when these relations of the tones are in some way disturbed and at times restored. The material is such as to admit of manifestations that vary widely in nature and in fact often contradict each other. Thus, there are treatments of complexity and of simplicity, of tension and of calm, of animation and of ebbing activity.

I. Not too slow. This movement has a high concentration of such oppositions.

II. Charged. In contrast to the first movement, the second represents a vast, arc-like expansion of the root materials. It begins with a unison passage that sets a tone of emotional intensity which is sustained up to the closing bar.

III. Alive. The third movement uses elements acquired and revealed in the first two and is meant to be an exuberant, joyful, athletic piece."

—Austin Clarkson, York University

**Susan Davenny Wyner** has earned special regard as a leading interpreter of contemporary music along with her worldwide reputation as recitalist and opera star. With a distinguished history of appearances with major orchestras, she also has recorded Elliott Carter's *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* (Columbia), and Yehudi Wyner's *Intermedo* and Irving Fine's *Childhood Fables for Grownups* on CRI.

**Arthur Weisberg**, founder and director of the pioneering Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, expanded this pioneering group to create The New Orchestra, which was later renamed Orchestra of the 20th Century. Under his keen musical mind and exacting direction, this orchestra has performed much of the century's most intricate and demanding music. Mr. Weisberg made his debut with the New York Philharmonic in June 1983.

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## Translation of Erwartung

### Scene I

*(At the edge of a wood. Moonlit roads and fields; the wood high and dark. Only the first tree trunks and the beginning of the wide roadway still lit. A woman comes; delicate, clothed in white. Upon her dress red roses, the petals partly gone. With jewelry.) (Hesitating):*

Into here? . . . The road can't be seen . . . How silver the tree trunks shimmer . . . like birches *(gazing upon the ground absorbed)* Oh, our garden . . . The flowers for him are surely withered . . . The night is so warm . . . *(In sudden anxiety):* I am afraid . . . *(listens into the wood, uneasy):* What a heavy air strikes from the wood . . . like a storm standing still . . . *(Wrings her hands, looks back):* So dreadfully quiet and empty . . . But here it is at least bright . . . *(Looks up):* The moon was so bright before . . . *(Crouches down, listens, looks blankly):* Oh! Always still the cricket with its love song . . . Don't speak . . . it is so sweet near you . . . The moon is in the dusk . . . *(Starting up. Turns towards the wood, hesitates again, then intensely):* Coward you are . . . don't you want to seek him? So then die here . . . *(Softly):* How menacing the stillness is . . . *(looks around her timidly):* The moon is full of horror . . . does it look inside? *(Fearfully):* I alone . . . into the gloomy shadow. *(Picking up courage, goes quickly into the wood):* I want to sing, then he will hear me . . .

### Scene II

*(Deepest darkness, wide roadway, high thick trees. She gropes forward.) (Still off stage):* Is this still the road? *(Stoops, grasps with her hands):* Here it is level . . . *(crying out):* What? . . . Let go! *(Trembling, tries to examine her hand):* Caught tight? . . . No, it was something that crawled . . . *(Wild, clutches her face):* And here also . . . Who is touching me? . . . Away . . . *(Strikes with her hands about her):* Away, just keep going . . . for God's sake . . . *(Goes further, with arms stretched before her):* Now, the road is wide . . . *(Quietly, thoughtfully):* It was so quiet behind the walls of the garden . . . *(very calm):* No scythes any more . . . no calling and going . . . And the city in luminous mist . . . so longingly I gazed across . . . And the sky so immeasurably deep above the road which you always take to me . . . still more transparent and more distant . . . the evening colors . . . *(Sadly):* But you have not come. *(Standing still):* Who is weeping there? *(Calling, very softly, anxiously):* Is someone here?

*(Waits. More loudly):* Is someone here? *(Again listening):* Nothing . . . But there was . . . *(listens again):* Now it is rustling overhead . . . It strikes from branch to branch . . . *(Fleeing sideways full of terror):* It is coming upon me . . . *(Cry of a night bird)* *(Having):* Not here! Let me go. . . Lord God, help me . . . *(Stillness. Hastily):* It was nothing . . . But fast, but fast . . . *(Starts running, falls down. Already off stage):* Oh, oh . . . what is that? . . . A body . . . No, only a tree trunk . . .

### Scene III

*(Road still in darkness. At the side of the road a wide, bright strip. The moonlight is falling upon a clearing. There tall grasses, ferns, large yellow mushrooms. The woman comes out of the darkness.)* There comes a light! *(Breathes with relief):* Ah! only the moon . . . How good . . . *(Again half anxiously):* There something black is dancing . . . hundred hands . . . *(Instantly takes hold of herself):* Don't be foolish . . . it is the shadow . . . *(Tenderly meditating):* Oh! how your shadow falls upon the white walls . . . But so soon you must go . . . *(Rustling. She stops, looks around her and listens a moment):* Are you calling? . . . *(again dreaming):* And it is so long till evening . . . *(Light gust of wind. Again she peers):* But the shadow does creep! . . . Yellow, wide eyes . . . *(sound of shuddering)* So outgushing . . . as if on stalks . . . How it glares . . . *(Creaking in the grass. Terrified):* No beast, dear God, no beast . . . I am so much afraid . . . Beloved, my beloved, help me . . . *(She runs further).*

### Scene IV

*(Moonlit, wide roadway coming out of the wood on the right. Meadows and fields (yellow and green strips alternating). Somewhat to the left the road loses itself again in the darkness of tall tree clumps. Only quite to the left we see the roadway lying in the open. There a road also runs in, leading down from a house. In this all the windows are closed with dark shutters. A balcony of white stone.)* *(The woman comes slowly, exhausted. Her garment is torn, her hair disheveled. Bloody lacerations on her face and hands. Looking around):* Neither is he here . . . Upon the whole, long roadway not a living thing . . . and no sound . . . *(Shuddering listening):* The broad pale fields are without breath, as if dead . . . no blade is moving . . . *(looks along the roadway):* Still the city . . . And this pale moon . . . No cloud, not the wing shadow of a night bird in the sky . . . this boundless death pallor . . . *(Totteringly she stops):* I can hardly go further . . . And there they do not let me in . . . The strange woman will chase me away . . . If he be ill . . . *(She has dragged herself to the vicinity of the tree clumps, below which it is completely dark):* A bench . . . I must rest . . . *(Tired, undecided, longingly):* But for so long I have not seen him . . . *(She comes under the trees, strikes with her foot against something):* No, this is not the shadow of the bench *(feeling with her foot, frightened):* Someone is there . . . *(Bends down, listens):* He does not breathe . . . *(She reaches downward feeling about):* Moist . . . Something is flowing here . . . *(She steps out of the shadow into the moonlight):* It shines red . . . Ah, my hands are torn with wounds . . . No, it is still wet, it is from there . . . *(Tries with terrible exertion to drag the object forward):* I cannot . . . *(Stoops. With frightful cry):* That is he . . . *(she sinks down.)* *(After a few moments she half raises herself, so that her face is turned towards the trees. Confused):* The moonlight . . . no, there . . . There is the dreadful head . . . the ghost . . . *(Gazes persistently):* If it would only disappear at last . . . like that in the wood . . . A tree shadow, a ridiculous branch . . . The moon is malicious . . . because it is bloodless, it paints red blood . . . *(Pointing to the spot with extended fingers, whispering):* But it will melt away at once . . . Don't look at it . . . Don't notice it . . . It will surely dissolve . . . like that in the wood . . . *(She turns away with forced calm, towards the roadway):* I want to get away . . . I must find him . . . It must be late already *(Silence. Motionlessness. She turns around suddenly, but not completely. Almost shouting with joy):* It is no longer there I knew . . . *(She has turned further, suddenly sees again the object):* It is still there . . . Lord God in Heaven . . . *(The upper part of her body falls forward, she seems to collapse. But with sunken head she crawls forward):* It is alive . . . *(feels about):* It has skin . . . eyes . . . hair . . . *(She bends entirely to one side, as if she wanted to look into his face):* His eyes . . . it has his mouth . . . You . . . you . . . are you it . . . I have looked for you so long . . . In the wood and . . . *(tugging at him):* Do you hear? Speak at last . . . Look at me . . . *(Frightened, bends entirely. Breathless):* Lord God, what is . . . *(shrieking, runs off a bit):* Help . . . *(from the distance upward to the house):* For God's sake . . . quick . . . but doesn't anyone hear me? . . . he lies there . . . *(looks around her in despair)*

*(Hurriedly back under the trees):* Wake up . . . Just wake up . . . *(imploring):* Do not be dead . . . my beloved . . . Only do not be dead . . . I love you so. *(Tenderly, urgently):* Our room is half lit . . . everything is waiting . . . the flowers give off a powerful fragrance . . . *(Folding her hands, despairing):* What should I do . . . what should I only do, that he awake? . . . *(She grasps into the darkness, seizes his hand):* Your dear hand . . . *(convulsively, questioning):* So cold? . . . *(She draws the hand to herself, kisses it.*

*Timidly caressing*: Does it not become warm at my breast? *(She opens her dress)*: . . My heart is so hot from waiting . . *(Imploring softly)*: The night is soon over . . Yet you wanted to be with me this night. *(Bursting out)*: Oh! it is broad day . . Are you staying by day with me? . . The sun glows upon us . . your hands lie upon me . . your kisses . . you are mine . . you . . Just look at me, beloved, I lie beside you . . So just look at me . . *(She rises, looks at him, awakening)*: Ah! how rigid . . How frightful your eyes are . . *(Bursting loudly into tears)*: Three days you have not been to me But today . . so sure . . The evening was so full of peace . . I kept looking and waiting . . *(wholly absorbed)*: Over the garden wall towards you . . It is so low . . And then we both wave . . *(Crying out)*: No, no . . it is not true . . How can you be dead? . . Everywhere you lived . . Just now in the wood . . your voice so near to my ear . . Always, always you were with me . . your breath upon my cheek . . your hand upon my hair . . *(Fearful)*: Not true . . it is not true? Yet your mouth just curved under my kisses . . *(waiting)*: Your blood even now is trickling with gentle beat . . Your blood is still alive . . *(She bends deeply over him)*: Oh! the broad red streak . . The heart they have hit . . *(Almost inaudible)*: I want to kiss it . . with my last breath . . to let you go no more *(half raises herself)*: To look into your eyes . . All light, indeed, came from your eyes . . I grew dizzy, when I looked upon you . . *(In reminiscence smiling, mysteriously, tenderly)*: Now kissing you I kiss myself to death.

*(Deep silence. She looks at him persistently. Suddenly after a pause)*: But so strange your eye is *(astomished)*: Where are you looking? *(More intensely)*: Then what are you seeking? *(looks around; towards the balcony)*: Is someone standing there? *(Back again, her hand on her forehead)*: But how was it the last time? . . *(More and more absorbed)*: Was not that also then in your look? *(Strenuously searching in her memory)*: No, only so distracted . . or . . and suddenly you took hold of yourself . . *(Becoming more and more clear)*: And for three days you were not with me . . no time . . So often you have not had time in these last months . . *(Wailing, as if warding off something)*: No, that really is not possible . . that really is . . *(in lightning recollection)*: Ah! now I remember . . the sigh in half sleep . . like a name . . you kissed the question away from my lips . . *(Pondering)*: But why did he promise me to come today? *(In mad anguish)*: I will not have it . . no, I will not . . *(Springing up, turning around)*: Why did they kill you? . . Here before the house . . Did someone discover you? *(Crying out, as if clinging)*: No, no . . my only sweetheart . . not that . . *(Trembling)*: Oh, the moon staggers . . I cannot see . . Just look at me . . *(rages suddenly)*: Again you are looking there? . . *(Towards the balcony)*: Where is she then .. the witch the hussy . . the woman with the white arms . . *(scornfully)*: Oh, you do love them the white arms . . how you kiss them red . . *(With clenched fists)*: Oh, you . . you . . you wretch, you liar . . you . . How your eyes evade me! Do you cringe for shame? *(Strikes with her foot against him)*: Have embraced her? . . Yes? . . *(Shaken with disgust)*: so tenderly and avidly . . and I waited . . Where did she run, when you lay in blood? . . I want to drag her here by her white arms . . so *(gesture; breaking down)*: There is no place here for me . . *(bursts into sobs)*: Oh! not even the grace that I may die with you . . *(Sinks down, weeping)*: How dearly, how dearly I have loved you . . Far from all things I lived . . strange to everything . . *(sinking into reverie)*: I knew nothing but you . . this whole year . . since you took my hand for the first time . . oh, so warm . . never before did I love anyone so . . Your smile and your talk . . I loved you so dearly . . *(Silence and sobbing. Then softly, getting up)*: My sweetheart . . my only darling . . have you kissed her often? . . while I was dying of longing. *(Whispering)*: Have you loved her very much? *(Imploring)*: Do not say: yes . . You smile painfully . . Perhaps you have also suffered . . perhaps your heart called after her . . *(More calmly, warmly)*: Was it your fault? . . Oh, I cursed you .. but your pity made me happy . . I believed . . was in bliss . .

*(Stillness. Dawn in the east on left. Low in the sky are clouds flooded by a faint light, shimmering yellowish like a candlelight. She stands up)*: Beloved, beloved, the morning comes . . what should I do here alone? . . In this endless life . . in this dream without limits and colors . . for my limit was the spot at which you were . . and all colors of the world burst forth from your eyes . . The light will come for all . . but I alone in my night? . . The morning parts us . . always the morning . . So hard you kiss at parting . . again an eternal day of waiting . . Oh but you will awake no more . . Thousand people march by . . I do not perceive you . . All are living . . their eyes flame . . Where are you? . . *(More softly)*: It is dark . . your kiss like a fiery sign in my night . . my lips burn and gleam . . towards you . . *(crying out in delight)*: Oh, are you here . . *(towards something)*: I was seeking . .

The players on this record are:

**Violin**

Kineko Barbini, Bruce Berg, Claudia Bloom, Diane Bruce, Ruth Buffington, Martha Caplin, Robert Chausow, Dorianne Cotter, Nancy Elan, Katsuko Esaki, James Gaskill, Sherman Goldscheid, Leon Goldstein, Joseph Goodman, Henry Hutchinson, Deborah Idol, Jean Ingraham, Joanna Jenner, Stanley Kurtis, Joel Lester, Nanette Levi, Ethel Luby, Curtis Macomber, Nicolette Magee, Louise Mood, Holly Ovendon, Evan Paris, Linda Guan, Alvin Rogers, Eugenie Seid, Kathy Seplow, Helen Strilec, Fred Vogelgesang, Janet Walter, George Wozniak, Masako Yanagita, Clara Tatar Zahler, Bernard Zeller

**Violas**

Lucille Corwin, Pauline Ellis, MaryHelen Ewing, Maureen Gallagher, Judy Geist, Judson Griffin, Jennie Hansen, Diane Kennedy, John Lad, Lois Martin, Aaron Picht, Dan Reed, Susan Schneider, Louise Schulman, Dorothy Strahl, Susan Winterbattom

**Cello**

Eric Bartlett, Carol Buck, Rosalyn Clarke, Chris Finckel, William Harry, Jeanne LeBlanc, Chung Yong Lee, Melissa Meell, Maxine Neuman, Peter Rosenfeld, Richard Sher, Mark Shuman, Marjorie Slapin

**Bass**

Jaime Austria, John Beal, Joseph Bongiorno, Andrea Briere, Donald Palma, Joe Tamosaitis, Michael Willens

**Flute/Piccolo**

Laura Conwesser, SueAnn Kahn, Sandra Miller, Karla Moe, Susan Palma, Michael Parloff, Patricia Spencer

**Oboe/English Horn**

Robert Atherholt, Randall Ellis, Jessica Morrow, Marc Schachman, Stephen Taylor, Joel Timm, Randall Wolfgang

**Clarinet/Bass Clarinet**

William Blount, Allen Blustine, Anand Devendra, David Hopkins, Jerry Kirkbride, Gerhardt Koch, Les Scott, Dennis Smylie

**Bassoon/Contrabassoon**

Lauren Goldstein, Donald MacCourt, Kukiko Mitani, Harry Searing, Ethan Silverman

**Horn**

Thomas Beck, Carl Chapin, Paul Ingraham, Julie Landsman, Michael Martin, William Purvis, Sandra Walker

**Trumpet**

Ronald Anderson, Allan Dean, Robert Haley, Ray Mase, Robert Nagel, Lee Soper

**Trombone**

Robert Biddlecome, Ronald Borrer, John Swallow, David Uher

**Tuba**

Thompson Hanks, Jr., John Stevens

**Percussion**

Raymond DesRoches, Richard Fitz, Gordon Gottlieb, Claire Heidrich, Ken Holsev, Louis Oddo, Joseph Passaro, Stephen Payser, James Pugliesi, Richard Sacks, Bruce Tatti

**Keyboard**

David Holzman, Aleck Karis

**Harp**

Alyssa Hess, Susan Jolles

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*