

Slee Sinfonietta
April 9, 2003 · 8pm
Slee Concert Hall



There will be an intermission after *Solo Observed*.
The movements for Mozart's
Symphony No. 21 in A Major are:

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Andante*
- III. *Menuetto*
- IV. *Allegro*

PROGRAM NOTES

Annotated by Edward Yadzinski

Time Cycle ... Lukas Foss

Commissioned by the Humanities and Arts Program of the Ford Foundation, *Time Cycle* was completed in 1960. The work is dedicated to soprano Adel Addison. During the premiere of the piece by the New York Philharmonic, conductor Leonard Bernstein turned and addressed the audience: "My colleagues on the stage and I think so highly of *Time Cycle* that, if you wish, we will repeat the whole piece for you. And if there are only twelve people who want to hear it again, we will play it just for them."

About the genesis of the work, Foss relates his inspiration derived from one of Kafka's cryptic lines:

"Die Uhren stimmen nicht berein die innere jagt in einer teufüschen oder dæmonischen oder jedenfalls unmenschlichen Art, die æussere geht stockend ihren gewœhnlichen Gang." (The clocks do not synchronize; the inner one chases in a devilish or

demonic, or at any rate inhumane manner; the outer one goes haltingly at its usual pace.)

The composer notes – "It was when I read this sentence that the idea of a song-cycle came to me." Foss then assembled four literary episodes, each in turn having to do with time, bells, clocks and the symbolic stroke of midnight. The only unifying musical element common to each setting is a chord, C#-A-B-D#, intoned subtly along the way in various permutations and fragments.

Knowing this score dates from 1960, a listener begins to understand why it was so appropriate that Foss had been selected to succeed Arnold Schonberg on the composition faculty at UCLA. But this is not to say *Time Cycle* derives directly from the Schonberg gestalt. Rather, it glides on the atonal and 12-tone inertia straight to the leading edge of what was known in the 60s as the musical avant-garde, with Foss as escort.

To the point, Foss' musical language is even more adventurous, more chance-taking than the atonal masters would have anticipated. Some might say that *Time Cycle* has an improvised feel – a kind of "we'll know where we're going when we get there" reality. In fact, *Time Cycle* was first performed with improvised interludes between each movement – played by Foss and his California-based Improvisation Ensemble (piano, cello, clarinet and percussion). In any case, we may be certain that Foss' very serious work with the improvised avant-garde had a lot to do with how *Time Cycle* was conceived and crafted. Moreover, another of the composer's remarks made three decades later rings doubly true here: "Surprise is what I'm looking for when I compose, not arbitrary surprises that make sense."

In performance, *Time Cycle* requires keen virtuosity from the soprano soloist, set off by an eloquent mix of subtle orchestral timbres, including elegant pointing from the percussion. Finally, for all of modernity of the setting of text and timbres, the work conveys a poignant musical allure that is altogether lyrical at the core.

Solo Observed ... Lukas Foss

Solo Observed is a work of reflection as much as observation. The piece saw first light as an issue for piano alone, titled *Solo* and scored in 1981 for Yvar Mikhashoff, who premiered the work in Paris in early 1982. Then, via a commission from the New World Festival of the Arts in Miami, Foss added an extended coda for additional chamber players, i.e. for a trio or larger ensemble, variously including woodwinds, brass, strings, electronic organ, and vibraphone. The newly added players “observe” the full extended piano solo before making a sound. The upscaled version was premiered by the composer and the Lincoln Center Chamber Players in Miami in the late spring of 1982.

Using a germinal 12-tone fragment, the music of *Solo Observed* begins a continuous, ever-more-intricate development that soon becomes ever-more-relentless. The feel is light and deflecting with a spright rhythmic sparkle in every bar. But an intriguing curiosity seems to prevail: to be sure, the 12-tone evolutions are, but they are somehow never quite atonal – listeners might readily suspect that a lyrical souvenir is trying to escape from the changing 12-tone mosaic. And when the additional players enter it seems as though to escort the piano line to the close via a coda in the neighborhood of D Major something.

About the genesis of the formative work composer Foss has noted:

“It was the summer of 1981 that I composed *Solo*, my first piano piece in 28 years. An initial 12-tone motive reigns. Yet this is not 12-tone music. The motive is like a theme that undergoes constant development. Nor is this minimal music, in spite of an insistent, repetitive element, because each repetition is also a change implying development, growth and forward movement. *Solo* is a long development section ‘senza sonata’ – lumbering, struggling eighth-notes, circling, spiraling, forging ahead, always on the way, never pausing, never giving up, forever closing in upon...”

Symphony No. 21 in A Major, K. 134 ... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (born 1756 in Salzburg, died 1791, Vienna)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was all of just 16 years old when he scored his twenty-first symphony in August of 1772. In fact, K. 134 was the last of at least twelve the wunderkind had written since the spring of 1771. We don't wonder why his father, Leopold, once wrote that “Wolfgang is a miracle.” And by then the young composer had already developed a work style of composing music without sketchbooks or worksheets – the notes went straight from the mind to paper. And by the way – in ink, no corrections.

But at least most of Mozart's symphonies from that time were relatively short, on average from about 12 to 15 minutes. In general the mode and manner of the works had a decidedly lighter feel, very much like the various divertimentos and serenades which poured from his pen through most of his life.

In the customary four movements, *Symphony No. 21* begins in sprightly $\frac{3}{4}$ time, with an *Allegro* crafted in modified sonata form based on a single, primary theme. In D Major, the *Andante* is also marked *cantabile*. Featuring lyrical phrases in a remarkably poetic setting, with coy modulations adding touches of serenity along the way.

For contrast, the *Menuetto*, in E Major, has a bright, almost regal or heralding demeanor, very much in the manner of Haydn. In turn follows the blithe, A Major *Allegro* of the last movement, beginning with a classic *bourée*. But while Mozart was fond to use a rondo format in this context, here the dance-like themes are set off in a fleet and svelte sonata form, with developments on the fly. Delightful.



PROGRAM TEXT

I

We're Late

W. H. Auden

Clocks cannot tell our time of day
For what event to pray
Because we have no time, because
We have no time until
We know what time to fill,
Why time is other than time was.
Nor can our question satisfy
The answer in the statue's eye:
Only the living ask whose brow
May wear the Roman laurel now;
The dead say only how.
What happens to the living when we die?
Death is not understood by death; nor you, nor I.

II

When the Bells Justle

A.E. Houseman

When the bells justle in the tower
The hollow night amid
Then on the tongue the taste is sour
of all I ever did.

III

Sechzehnter Januar

From Franz Kafka's *Diaries*

(Translation from the German by the composer)

January 16. This last week was like a total breakdown --
Impossible to sleep, impossible to wake. Impossible to bear life, or
more accurately, to bear the continuity of life. The clocks do not

synchronize; the inner one chases in a devilish or demoniac, or at any rate inhuman manner; the outer one goes haltingly at its usual pace. What else can happen than that the two different worlds separate, and they separate, or at least tear at one another in a terrifying manner. The solitude, forced upon me to the greater extent, sought by me to some extent (but what else is this than being forced?) is taking an unmistakable course toward the extreme limit. Where will it lead? It can (this seems most plausible) lead toward madness. Nothing further can be said about this, the chase goes through me and tears me apart. -- But then again I may, I may, be it only the smallest degree, hold myself up, let the chase "carry" me. Then where does this bring me? "Chase" is but an image -- one might say instead: onslaught against the last frontier...

IV

O Mensch, gib Acht

From Frederick Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*
(Translation from the German by the composer)

One!	--O Man! Take heed!
Two!	--What speaks the deep midnight?
Three!	--"I slept, I slept--
Four!	--"From deep dream I awoke:
Five!	--"The world is deep,
Six!	--"And deeper than the day.
Seven!	--"Deep is its woe--
Eight!	--"Joy* deeper than heartache.
Nine!	--"Woe speaks: begone!
Ten!	--"But joy* desires eternity.
Eleven!	--"Desires deep, deep, eternity."
Twelve!	--

*The German word *Lust* is a composite of lust, pleasure, joy, ecstasy.

Slee Sinfonietta
Magnus Mårtensson, conductor
David Felder, Artistic Director

Violin I

Moses Pogossian,
Concert Master
Amy Glidden
Richard Kay
Jenny Zhen
Yuki Numata

Violin II

Donald McCrorey,
Principal
Nadejda Nigrin
Sally Martin
William Knuth
Paul Goodman

Viola

Adrienne Elisha, *Principal*
Kate Holzemer
Leslie Bahler

Cello

Mary Artmann, *Principal*
Jonathan Golove
Amelie Fradette

Bass

Edmond Gnekow, *Principal*
Peter Bahler

Flute

Cheryl Gobbetti Hoffman,
Principal
Sabatino Scirri

Clarinet

John Fullam, *Principal*
Robert DiLutis

Bassoon

Glenn Einschlag

Trumpet

Wade Weast, *Principal*
Akemi Oda

French Horn

Heidi Lucas, *Principal*
Julie Fagan

Trombone

Scott Parkinson

Harp

Mario Falcao

Piano/Celeste

Evan Johnson

Timpani

Anthony Miranda

Percussion

Matthew Felski
Jeremiah Fox
Keith Szczepanski
Satoshi Takag