

PostClassical Ensemble and Washington National Cathedral present:

MUSIC IN WARTIME: A Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration

Dec. 7, 2017

William Sharp, baritone
Alexander Shtarkman, piano

Netanel Draiblate and Regi Papa, violins
Chiara Dieguez, viola
Benjamin Capps, cello

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, conductor

The Washington National Cathedral Choir conducted by Michael
McCarthy

Commentary by Joseph Horowitz and James Loeffler

HANNS EISLER

Chöre (Political Songs):

Bauernrevolution (Op. 14, No. 1) (1928)

Kürfürstendamm (Op. 13, No. 4) (1928-29)

The Hollywood Songbook (excerpts) (1943)

Five Hollywood Elegies:

Unter den grünen Pfefferbaumen

Die Stadt ist nach den Engeln genannt

Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen

Diese Stadt hat mich belehrt

In den Hügeln wird Gold gefunden

Political song:

Naturbetrachtung (Op. 13, No. 3) (1928-29)

The Hollywood Songbook (excepts)

Die Landschaft des Exils

Die Heimkehr

Political song:

Auf den Strassen zu singen (Op. 15) (1928)

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Piano Trio No. 2 (1944)

Andante

Allegro con brio

Andante

Allegretto

(Netanel Draiblate, Benjamin Capps, Alexander Shtarkman)

INTERMISSION

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Ode to Napoleon (1942)

(Draiblate, Papa, Diegez, Capps, Sharp, Shtarkman; Gil-Ordóñez conducting)

Discussion

This concert made possible by the support of The National Endowment for the Arts, the Eisler Foundation, the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

This performance is sponsored by Irene Roth and Vicken Poochikian

Tonight's concert inaugurates PostClassical Ensemble's new partnership with Washington National Cathedral as Ensemble-in-Residence.

We will jointly pursue the advocacy of music as an instrument for human betterment. Our programming will be thematic and immersive. We also aspire to capitalize on the ambience of the Cathedral's remarkable performance spaces.

"Music in Wartime" links to **"Secret Music Skirmishes of the Cold War: The Shostakovich Case"** on May 23 – and also to PCE's American premiere presentation, at the American Film Institute (Silver Spring, MD), of the 1929 Soviet classic silent film *The New Babylon*, with Shostakovich's score performed live.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By Joseph Horowitz

Music can serve a variety of compelling functions in wartime. On the home front, it can be an outlet for patriotic rage provoked by the deadly surprise of an enemy attack. For other-minded observers of overseas conflict, it can generate a bemused personal testimonial: a postcard from exile. In the hurricane's eye, it can be an inflamed instrument of catharsis for war's victims. The three composers on tonight's program embody those three responses.

Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) studied with Arnold Schoenberg in Vienna after front-line service in World War I. He made his name in Berlin during the 1920s and '30s as the preferred composer for the poet/provocateur Bertolt Brecht. Eisler's workers' songs – *Kampflieder* ("songs of struggle") – linked to a Workers-Singers Union with 400,000 members. With the actor/singer Ernst Busch, Eisler performed in halls and bars; he became a reckonable political force in support of the Communist Party.

With the coming of Hitler, Eisler fled to the US, where he attempted to help New York City's Composers' Collective foster a comparable proletarian song movement enlisting Aaron Copland, among others. This went nowhere and Eisler wound up exiled in Los Angeles with Brecht. Though he found employment as a film composer, another musical outcome was the estranged *Hollywood Songbook* we sample this evening.

Eisler was next victimized by the Cold War, blacklisted and interrogated as the "Karl Marx of Music." Notwithstanding support from Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Leonard Bernstein, and Charlie Chaplin, he was conspicuously deported in 1948. His response, also widely reported, read: "I leave this country not without bitterness and infuriation. I could well understand it when in 1933 the Hitler bandits put a price on my head and drove me out. They were the evil of the period; I was proud at being driven out. But I feel heartbroken over being driven out of this beautiful country in this ridiculous way." In a sketch for a foreword to his *Hollywood Songbook* he wrote: "In a society that understands and loves such a songbook, life will be lived well and without danger. These pieces have been written with such a society in mind."

In East Berlin, Eisler composed the national anthem for the German Democratic Republic. Though re-united with Brecht, he discovered himself ideologically suspect all over again. In effect, Eisler is a composer who endured a condition of exile for most of his professional life. A fascinating one-man study in music and politics, he is an obvious candidate for rediscovery. The *Hollywood Songbook*, which Eisler never heard performed, is both a potent memento of wartime, and a resourceful amalgam of the various aesthetic currents the composer absorbed during a lifetime of eventful travail.

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In September 1941 **Dmitri Shostakovich**'s home city of Leningrad was circled by Nazi soldiers. The siege – the most devastating in recorded history – lasted until January 1944. It cost some three million military and civilian lives. Like so many Soviet artists and intellectuals, Shostakovich was evacuated to safety. But the fate of Leningrad, and of Russia generally, was the inescapable topic of

Shostakovich's wartime music. Three Shostakovich works – the Symphonies Nos. 7 (1941) and 8 (1943), and the present Piano Trio No. 2 (1944) – are among the most famous musical embodiments of suffering and inhumanity.

The bitter intensities of these works are amplified by another war – Stalin's Terror. In Solomon Volkov's *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (1979), the composer observes:

Too many of our people died and were buried in places unknown to anyone, not even their relatives. It happened to many of my friends. Where do you put the tombstones? . . . Only music can do that for them. . . .

I think constantly of those people, and in almost every major work I try to remind others of them. The conditions of the war years were conducive to that, because the authorities were less strict about music and didn't care if the music was too gloomy. . . .

The Second Piano Trio is also notable for its inclusion of a Jewish theme for the *danse macabre* finale. In *Testimony*, Shostakovich says:

I think, if we speak of musical impressions, that Jewish folk music has made a most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it, it's multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It's almost always laughter through tears. This quality of Jewish folk music is close to my ideas of what music should be. There should always be two layers in music. Jews were tormented for so long that they learned to hide their despair. They express despair in dance music. . . .

This is not a purely musical issue, this is also a moral issue. I often test a person by his attitude toward Jews. In our day and age, any person with pretensions of decency cannot be anti-Semitic. This seems to obvious that it doesn't need saying, but I've had to argue the point for at least thirty years.

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Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), like Eisler a truculent artistic personality, remained ever German in Los Angeles (to which he moved in 1934) notwithstanding his substantial effectiveness as a teacher (at UCLA) and influence (on American composers, if not American listeners). Though he expressed “disgust” with American popular culture and was alienated by Hollywood, his private students included Hollywood’s leading film composers. And he was as prone to gusts of patriotism as to fusillades of disparagement. He once described himself as “driven into paradise,” where “my head can be erect.”

Schoenberg’s *Ode to Napoleon*, closing out the evening, is an unforgettable musical response to Pearl Harbor. Its idiom is an unusually accessible (and unusually lenient) implementation of the 12-tone, “serial” compositional methodology Schoenberg devised in 1921 with the intention, typically contentious, of “insuring the superiority of German music for the next hundred years.” Raging with anger against the Nazis, soaring with patriotic exaltation, this is music that feeds magnificently on Schoenberg’s intensity of temperament and moral engagement.

The *Ode* abounds in Germanic Expressionistic description; it seizes on dark hypnotic detail. The poem, by Byron, salutes the conquering democrat George Washington (here standing in for FDR) as antipode to Napoleon (here taking the place of Hitler). The scoring is for piano, string quartet, and a reciter whose words are set as “Sprechgesang” -- Schoenberg’s unique way of combining speech and song, notating rhythms and relative pitches. The British, American, and Germanic resonances remain unblended and mutually incongruous. That even at his most “American” Schoenberg is proudly and incorrigibly German makes this patriotic gesture the more touching.

I am indebted to the late Michael Steinberg for bringing to my attention the following points of elucidation for Byron’s poem (via the Byron scholars Paul Elmer More and Robert F. Glackner):

“He would of old would rend the oak” is Milo of Crotona, a sixth century B.C.E. Greek athlete who attempted to pull apart a partially split tree, caught his hand in the cleft, and was eaten by wolves.

“The Roman” is Lucius Cornelius Sulla, who resigned the dictatorship of Rome in 79 B.C.E.

“The Spaniard” is Charles V, who abdicated and retired to a monastery in 1555.

“Proud Austria’s mournful flower” is Napoleon’s Empress Marie Louise, who refused to follow him to Elba.

“Corinth’s pedagogue” is Dionysius the Younger, Tyrant of Syracuse, who retired to Corinth in 343 B.C.E. and became a teacher.

“Timour,” better known as Tamerline, is the Turkish conqueror who imprisoned Sultan Bayazid I after the battle of Ankara in 1402.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Eisler: Political Songs

Bauernrevolution

Kurfürstendamm

Naturbetrachtung

Auf den Strassen zu singen

Eisler: *The Hollywood Songbook*

Unter den grünen Pfefferbäumen (Brecht)

Unter den grünen Pfefferbäumen
Gehen die Musiker auf den Strich, zwei und zwei
Mit den Schreibern. Bach
Hat ein Strichquartett imTaschchen. Dante schwenkt
Den dürren Hintern

Underneath the green pepper trees, daily
The composers are on the beat, two by two
With the writers. Bach
Writes concertos for the strumpet. Dante wiggles
His shriveled arsehole.

Die Stadt ist nach den Engeln genannt (Brecht)

Die Stadt is nach den Engeln genannt
Und man begegnet allenthalben Engeln.

Sie riechen nach Öl und tragen goldene Pessare
Und mit blauen Ringen um die Augen
Füttern sie allmorgendlich die Schreiber in ihren Schwimmpfuhlen

This town was christened after the angels
And you come across angels there on all sides.
They all smell of oil, and each one wears a golden pessary
And with deep blue rings all round their eyes
They feed the writers in their swimming pools every morning.

Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen (Brecht)

Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen
Gehe ich auf den Market, wo Lügen gekauft werden.
Hoffnungsvoll
Reihe ich mich ein zwischen die Verkäufer.

Every morning, to start earning my bread
I visit the market where lies are bought and sold.
Full of hope.
I take my place there with the other sellers.

Diese Stadt hat mich belehrt (Brecht)

Diese Stadt hat mich belehrt
Paradies und Hölle können eine Stadt sein.
Für die Mittellosen
Ist das Paradies die Hölle

This city has made me realize:
Paradise and hell-fire are the same city
For the unsuccessful
Paradise itself serves as hell-fire.

In den Hügeln wird Gold gefunden (Brecht)

In den Hügeln wird Gold gefunden

An der Küste findet man Öl.
Grossere Vermögen
Bringen die Träume vom Glück
Die man heir auf Zelluloid schreibt.

In the hills are the gold prospectors. By the sea
You come upon oil. Greater fortunes far
Are won from those dreams of happiness
Which are kept on celluloid spools.

Die Landschaft des Exils (Brecht)

Aber auch ich auf dem letzten Boot
Sah noch den Frohsinn des Frührots im Takelzeug
Und der Delpine grauliche Leiber tauchend
Aus der chinesischen See.
Und die Pferdewäglein mit dem Goldbeschlag
Und die rosa Armschleier der Matronen
In den Gassen des gezeichneten Manila
Sah auch der Flüchtling mit Freude.
Und die duftenden Garten von Los Angeles
Und die abendlichen Schluchten Kaliforniens
Liessen den Boten des Unglücks
Nicht kalt.

I, as a passenger on the last boat
Could see the gaiety of the drawn through the ropes
And how the dolphins grey-colored bodied leapt up
Out of the Chinese Sea.
The little horsecars, brilliantly gilded
The pink sleeves that are worn by the matrons
In the alleyways of targeted Manila
Heightened the fugitive's pleasure.
Likewise the oil derricks and the sweet-scented garden of Los Angeles
And the shadowy ravines of California could
Not leave the envoy of tragedy cold.

Die Heimkehr (Brecht)

Die Vaterstadt, wie find ich sie doch?
Folgend den Bomberschwärmen
Komm ich nach Haus.
Wo liegt sie mir? Dort, wo die ungeheueren
Gebirge von Rauch stehn.
Das in den Feuern dort
Ist sie.
Die Vaterstadt, wie empfängt sie mich wohl?
Vor mir kommen die Bomber. Tödliche Schwärme
Meiden euch meine Ruckkehr. Feuersbrünste
Gehen dem Sohn voraus.

My native town: what will it look like?
Guided by bomber squadrons
I shall come home. Where will it lie? There, where those mountainous
Pinnacles of smoke stand.
There, in the furnace. That
Is it. My native town: then how will it greet me?
Before me go the bombers. Death-dealing locusts
Tell you I shall be coming. Conflagrations
Hail the son's return.

Schoenberg: *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* (Lord Byron)

'Tis done – but yesterday a King!
And arm'd with Kings to strive –
And now thou art a nameless
thing:
So abject – yet alive!
Is this the man of thousand
thrones,

Who strew'd our earth with
hostile bones,
And can he thus survive?
Since he, miscalled the Morning
Star,
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so
far.

Ill-minded man, why scourge thy
kind
Who bow'd so low the knee?
By gazing on thyself grown
blind,
Thou taught'st the rest to see.
With might unquestion'd, -
power to save, -

Thine only gift hath been the
grave
To those that worshipped thee;
Nor till thy fall could mortals
guess
Ambition's less than littleness!

Thanks for that lesson – it will
teach
To after-warriors more
Than high Philosophy can
preach,
And vainly preach'd before.
That spell upon the minds of men
Breaks never to unite again,
That led them to adore
Those Pagod things of saber
sway,
With fronts of brass, and feet of
clay.
The triumph, and the vanity,
The rapture of the strife -
The earthquake voice of Victory,
To thee the breath of life;
The sword, the scepter, and that
sway
Which man seem'd made but to
obey

Wherewith renown was rife-
All quell'd! – Dark Spirit! what
must be
The madness of thy memory!

The Desolator desolate!
The Victor overthrown!
The Arbiter of others' fate
A Suppliant for his own!
Is it some yet imperial hope
That with such change can
calmly cope?
Or dread of death alone?
To die a prince – or live a slave -
Thy choice is most ignobly
brave!

He who of old would rend the
oak,
Dream'd not of the rebound;
Chain'd by the trunk he vainly
broke –
Alone – how look'd he round?
Thou in the sternness of thy
strength
An equal deed hast done at
length,
And darker fate hast found:
He fell, the forest prowlers' prey;
But thou must eat thy heart
away!

The Roman, when his burning
heart
Was slaked with blood of Rome,
Threw down the dagger – dared
depart,

In savage grandeur, home. –
He dared depart in utter scorn
Of men that such a yoke had
borne,
Yet left him such a doom!
His only glory was that hour
Of self-upheld abandon'd power.

The Spaniard, when the lust of
sway
Had lost its quickening spell,
Cast crowns for rosaries away,
An empire for a cell;
A strict accountant of his beads,
A subtle disputant on creeds,
His dotage trifled well:
Yet better had he neither known
A bigot's shrine, nor despot's
throne.

But thou - from thy reluctant
hand'
The thunderbolt is wrung –
Too late thou leav'st the high
command
To which thy weakness clung;
All Evil Spirit as thou art,
It is enough to grieve the heart
To see thine own unstrung;
To think that God's fair world
hath been
The footstool of a thing so mean;
And Earth hath spilt her blood
for him,
Who thus can hoard his own!
And Monarchs bowed the
trembling limb,

And thank'd him for a throne!
Fair Freedom! we may hold thee
dear,
When thus thy mightiest foes
their fear
In humblest guise have shown.
Oh! ne'er may tyrant leave
behind
A brighter name to lure mankind!

Thine evil deeds are writ in gore,
Not written thus in vain -
Thy triumphs tell of fame no
more
Or deepen every stain:
If thou hadst died as honour dies,
Some new Napoleon might arise,
To shame the world again -
But who would soar the solar
height,
To set in such a starless night?

Weigh'd in the balance, hero dust
Is vile as vulgar clay;
Thy scales, Mortality! are just
To all that pass away:
But yet methought the living
great
Some higher sparks should
animate,
To dazzle and dismay:
Nor deem'd Contempt could thus
make mirth
Of these, the Conquerors of the
earth.

And she, proud Austria's
mournful flower,
Thy still imperial bride;
How bears her breast the
torturing hour?
Still clings she to thy side?
Must she too bend, must she too
share
Thy late repentance, long
despair,
Thou throneless Homicide?
If still she loves thee, hoard that
gem,
'Tis worth thy vanish'd diadem!

Then haste thee to thy sullen Isle,
And gaze upon the sea;
That element may meet thy smile
-
It ne'er was ruled by thee!
Or trace with thine all idle hand
In loitering mood upon the sand
That Earth is now as free!
That Corinth's pedagogue hath
now
Transferr'd his by-word to thy
brow.

Thou Timour! in his captive's
cage
What thoughts will there be
thine,
While brooding in thy prison'd
rage?
But one – 'The world *was* mine!'
Unless, like he of Babylon,

All sense is with thy sceptre
gone,
Life will not long confine
That spirit pour'd so widely forth
-
So long obey'd – so little worth!
Or, like the thief of fire from
heaven,
Wilt thou withstand the shock?
And share with him, the
unforgiven,
His vulture and his rock!
Foredoom'd by God – by man
accurst,
And that last act, though not thy
worst,
The very Fiend's arch mock;
He in his fall preserved his pride,
And, if a mortal, had as proudly
died!

There was a day – there was an
hour,
While earth was Gaul's – Gaul
thine –
When that immeasurable power
Unsated to resign
Had been an act of purer fame
Than gathers round Marengo's
name
And gilded thy decline,
Through the long twilight of all
time,
Despite some passing clouds of
crime.

But thou forsooth must be a king,

And don the purple vest, -
As if that foolish robe could
wring
Remembrance from thy breast.
Where is that faded garment?
where
The gewgaws thou wert fond to
wear,
The star – the string – the crest?
Vain froward child of empire!
say,
Are all thy playthings snatch'd
away?

Where may the wearied eye
repose
When gazing on the Great;
Where neither guilty glory
glows,
Nor despicable state?
Yes – one – the first – the last –
the best –
The Cincinnatus of the West,
Whom envy dared not hate,
Bequeath'd the name of
Washington,
To make man blush there was but
one!

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

William Sharp is one of America's most prominent concert singers. He was the central participant of PostClassical Ensemble's 2015 Ives festival. He regularly takes part in Ives and Kurt Weill festivals curated by PCE's Joseph Horowitz.

Alexander Shtarkman, a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, teaches at the Peabody Institute. He last performed for PostClassical Ensemble last season in a program of music by Shostakovich and Weinberg. The same program featured commentary by **James Loeffler**, a prominent scholar of Jewish music who teaches at the University of Virginia.

The former Associate Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Spain, PostClassical Ensemble Music Director **Angel Gil-Ordóñez** has conducted symphonic music, opera, and ballet throughout Europe, the United States and Latin America. In 2006, the king of Spain awarded him the country's highest civilian decoration, the Royal Order of Queen Isabella.

PostClassical Ensemble Executive Director **Joseph Horowitz** has long been a pioneer in classical music programming. As Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, he received national attention for festivals exploring the folk roots of concert works. Now an artistic advisor to half a dozen American orchestras, he directs an NEH-funded symphonic consortium, "Music Unwound." He is also the award-winning author of ten books mainly dealing with the history of classical music in the United States. His blog is artsjournal.com/uq.

PostClassical Ensemble -- called "one of the country's most innovative music groups" (Philip Kennicott) and "wildly ambitious" (Anne Midgette) -- was founded in 2003 by Angel Gil-Ordóñez and Joseph Horowitz as an experimental orchestral

laboratory. PCE programming is thematic and cross-disciplinary, typically incorporating dance, art, film, or theater, exploring unfamiliar works and recontextualizing standard repertoire. PCE concerts and recordings are regularly heard (and archived) on the WWFM Classical Network. www.postclassical.com

The Washington National Cathedral Choir last partnered PostClassical Ensemble in last season's "The Trumpet Shall Sound" at Washington National Cathedral

THE NEXT CONCERT IN THIS SERIES:

"Deep River: The Art of the Spiritual," coming to the Cathedral on Feb. 28, is a multi-media tribute to Harry Burleigh featuring the remarkable Kevin Deas. A forgotten hero of American music, Burleigh was the composer/singer mainly responsible for transforming spirituals into concert songs.

