



ERWIN SCHULHOFF

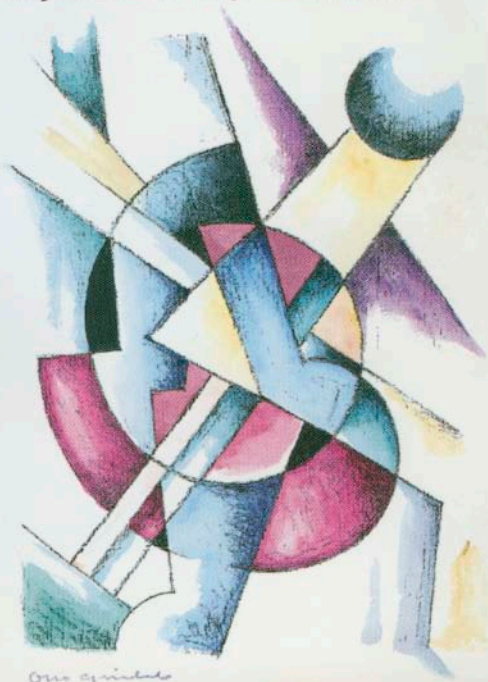
ensemble works - volume 1

CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 6994

EBONY BAND
AMSTERDAM

Werner Herbers
conductor



One quintet

ERWIN SCHULHOFF (1894-1942) - ensemble works - volume 1

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Selections from stagemusic 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' (1926)

- | | | |
|------|---|-------|
| 1. | Ouverture (Adagio, Allegro con spirito) | 03.50 |
| 2. | Sicilienne | 02.22 |
| 3. | Andante | 00.56 |
| 4. | Grand Ballet de Finale: | 08.16 |
| 4.02 | Commedia dell'arte (Allegro) | |
| 4.03 | Danse des Seladines (Andante tranquillo alla Tango) | |
| 4.04 | Danse des Bergères (Andante pastorale) | |
| 4.05 | Danse des Philosophes (Allegretto) | |
| 4.06 | Danse des Ballerines (Tempo di Valse) | |
| 4.07 | Danse des Artistes (Andante) | |
| 4.08 | Danse des Critiques | |
| 4.09 | Danse des Boxeurs (Allegro agitato) | |
| 4.10 | Le 'Knockout' (Adagio pesante) | |
| 4.11 | Finale (Allegro jubilata) | |

Three Tango's Arranged by Geert van Keulen

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 5. | Tango from Partita (1922) | 02.46 |
| 6. | Tango from Esquisses de Jazz (1927) | 02.09 |
| 7. | Tango from 5 Études de Jazz (1926) | 02.01 |

Concerto for String Quartet and Winds (1930)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|-------|
| 8. | Allegro moderato | 08.28 |
| 9. | Largo | 06.58 |
| 10. | Finale, Allegro con brio | 05.40 |

Suite for Chamber Orchestra (1921)

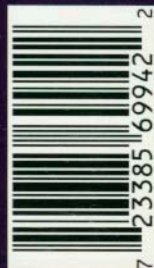
- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 11. | Introductory text (<i>speaker Chaim Levano</i>) | 02.00 |
| 12. | Ragtime | 01.44 |
| 13. | Valse Boston | 03.59 |
| 14. | Shimmy | 02.33 |
| 15. | Step (<i>without music</i>) | 00.48 |
| 16. | Tango | 04.36 |
| 17. | Jazz | 02.05 |

Total time

62.30

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Live recordings:
15 & 20 June 1994

Suite für Kammerorchester *Prolog*

Bierhaussiechen ist meine Seele
und meine Zähne klappern im Shimmytakt.
Grosstadtresonanzen durchziehen
meine Gehirne und brüllen:
Heil Dir im Siejakranz.....
ach mein Lieschen, Du kannst nicht
in die Diele (die kiehle)
schlafend trägt man mich, in die Heimat.... in die Heimat!
Denn ich bin besoffen wie ein Vieh und denke deutsch!
Kennst du meine Farben? - ? !!! - ? !!
ich genieße Sekt und das weib sperma.
grammophone seufzen, schluchzen Vaterlandslieder - und,
wo man singt, da lass Dich nieder, - denn,
böse Menschen haben keine Lieder (siehste woll)
in meinen Eingeweiden kräuseln süsse Kakophonien...
schreien nach Leben,...lechzen nach Manoli und Absynth.
Dreckbande!!!
Sch...kerle!!!! - schaff mir die unerhörtesten Potenzen,
ich will euch alle fressen,
in die Wurstmaschine mit Euch,
Saubande!!!
Dann, - Dann kommt der Augenblick im Kosmos,

B

A

dann werde ich mich in „BAYER Asperin“

E

R

verwandeln!-



THE EBONY BAND - Live recordings: 15 & 20 June 1994 - Photo: Marco Borggreve

conductor: Werner Herbers; **speaker:** Chaim Levano; **flute, piccolo:** Paul Verhey; **piccolo:** Rien de Reede; **oboe:** Ruth Visser; **english horn:** Carlo Ravelli; **E flat clarinet:** Willem van der Vuurst; **clarinet:** Jacques Meertens; **bass clarinet:** Liesbeth de Jong; **alto saxophone:** Leo van Oostrom; **bassoon:** Noëlle Probst; **contrabassoon:** Guus Dral; **french horn:** Jasper de Waal, Joeri de Vente; **trumpet:** Peter Masseurs, Frits Damrow; **trombone:** Harrie de Lange, Peter van Klink; **tuba:** Donald Blakeslee; **violin:** Marleen Asberg*, Anita de Vey Mestdagh*; **viola:** Roland Krämer*; **violoncello:** Daniël Esser*; **contrabass:** Jan van den Boomen; **harp:** Gerda Ockers; **piano:** Gerard Bouwhuis; **xylophone/percussion:** Steef Gerritse; **percussion:** Hans van der Meer, Jens Mijers, René Spierings.

*Ebony Band String Quartet (nr. 8, 9 en 10)

The **Ebony Band** was founded in 1990 by Werner Herbers, solo oboist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. For many years he was one of the artistic directors of the Netherlands Wind Ensemble.

The Ebony Band is concerned with the performance of modern, unusual, and adventurous music, primarily from the first half of this century. Attention is devoted primarily to the work of less well-known composers worthy of (re)discovery.

The Ebony Band devoted several programs to German music at the time of the Weimar republic ('degenerated music'). A program was also given during the 1991 Holland Festival with composers who were involved in the Spanish Civil War. Other programs included 'Leonard Bernstein and Friends', 'Degenerated influences on Jazz' and 'Unknown Russians in the Twenties'.

The core of the Ebony Band consists of musicians from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In the 1993 Holland Festival, the Ebony Band performed music by Robert Graettinger, the legendary arranger for the Stan Kenton band; a live recording of this concert has been issued (City of Glass, CCS 6394, Channel Crossings).

Chaim Levano (originally a musician) is recognized in the Netherlands as an important figure in the field of avant-garde theatre and also in various spatial aspects of the same discipline.

Through his activities in Germany, he contributes to the increased interest there for new and modern theatrical work from the Netherlands.

He was one of the first to conceive and execute not only numerous (musical) theatre productions dealing with Russian and Italian Futurism, Dadaism, the Russian Oberioe Group, Gertrude Stein, Kurt Schwitters and Max Rosenblatt, but also his own ideas and concepts of theatre which were performed in productions for the Holland Festival and other venues abroad.

On 15 June 1994, the Ebony Band celebrated the 100th birthday of **Erwin Schulhoff** (8 June 1894) with a concert devoted exclusively to his music, given in Muziekcentrum Vredenburg, Utrecht.

The concert paid homage to an extremely versatile composer with works to his credit such as the 'classical' 'Concerto for String Quartet and Winds', the striking stage music for 'Le

Bourgeois Gentleman', and the joyful 'Suite for Chamber Orchestra' of 1921, in which Schulhoff was one of the first to show his great affinity for the newest and most fashionable dance music. There are echoes of daily life as well: a car horn is included in the score (in our performance of the 1918 'Nonpareil').

Schulhoff's oeuvre is a highly accurate mirror of the time in which he lived. He probably didn't drink champagne every day, and he certainly didn't have a driver's licence (he was a demon cyclist), but his music sparkles like vintage 'Moët & Chandon Millésimé' and it has the elegance and speed of a 'Maybach 5.7 litre Tourer'.

Schulhoff's artistic interests were not confined to music; this can be seen from his close ties to the Dada movement, as exemplified by several texts which he himself wrote, e.g. the prologue to the Suite and the texts for Bassnachtigall and Wolkenpumpe (both of which appear on the next CD), and also in his collaboration with the painter and graphic artist Otto Griebel (1895-1970), with whom he composed his 'Zehn Themen' in 1920: a collection of 10 piano pieces and 10 lithographs, published together in one book.

Werner Herbers

Although **Erwin Schulhoff** (8 July 1894, Prague-18 August 1942, Wülzburg internment camp, in Bavaria) did not settle permanently in the city of his birth until the end of 1932 (he had studied and worked primarily in Germany up to that time), he soon made his name as a composer among both the German speaking inhabitants of Prague and in native Czech musical circles. One additional proof of this is the commission which Schulhoff received from the Czech National Theatre in the spring of 1926 to compose the stage music for Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The play was given an extremely modern treatment by the director, and he chose his co-workers accordingly. He considered Schulhoff the most suitable man for the job, because the composer showed a sense of humor and a feeling for the ridiculous in his work, he was fond of jazz, expressed himself succinctly and pithily, and was responsive and inventive. Schulhoff's participation in the Dada movement also played a role in the choice: at the time, Dadaist art was still the most current style among theatrical artists in Prague.

Schulhoff did not disappoint expectations. He worked on the commission from May until August, first in Prague, and then during the holidays in the north Bohemian health resort of Doksy, on Lake Mácha. The first performance took place as early as 23 September 1926. The music played an important part in the proceedings, and aroused the liveliest interest. Its axis is formed by the Overture and the ballet scenes in which Schulhoff gave pride of place to both minuets and jazz dances. In several places he showed his enjoyment of musical jokes and humour. The overture and ballet scenes are scored for a small orchestra (without strings) and piano. In addition, the music is interspersed with brief vocal interludes and instrumental numbers (often in two alternative versions). Schulhoff tried to change the theatrical performance into something between a modern operetta and a musical. The music was self-sufficient enough for Schulhoff to transcribe it as a 'Concert suite for piano and orchestra'. He performed this version for the first time with Hermann Scherchen in Königsberg on 26 October 1928.

Schulhoff composed the '*Concert pour quatuor à cordes et accompagnement d'un orchestre d'instruments à vent*' during his summer holidays in 1930. The confrontation between the delicate string quartet sonority and the massive, penetrating sound of the woodwinds and brasses (not even the tuba is left out) is certainly charming and original, but risky as well. Schulhoff, in any case, knew how to overcome this risk quite well when he composed the piece. Moreover, the work was presumably composed with an eye to the radio microphone, with which Schulhoff

had had considerable experience as a pianist; he was familiar with the possibilities for the manipulation of sound by means of mixing technologies. The concerto has the baroque outlines of a concerto grosso, i.e. the same form which Schulhoff had recently used in his 'Concerto for flute, piano, and orchestra'. Nonetheless, the two concerti differ considerably in musical conception and language. The music of the 'Concerto for string quartet and winds' is characterized by rough-hewn beauty; it sounds coarse, abrasive, and aggressive. Its style is an austere, harshly unromantic and unadulterated constructivism. Not a trace remains of romantic reminiscence, impressionistic coloring has given way to black and white, and vertical harmony is replaced by strict linear writing, leading to sharply dissonant clashes between individual voices. The chromaticism which is a consequence of contrapuntal development within the fast-moving course of the music ultimately becomes the expressive symbol of the whole composition. Never before had Schulhoff composed so rigorously. At its premiere in Prague on 9 November 1932, the work was very well received. The performers were the Ondricek Quartet and the Czech Philharmonic, conducted by Vaclav Talich.

The *Three Tangos* are stylistically correct arrangements of piano pieces originating in various cycles composed by Schulhoff between 1922 and 1927. The first Tango comes from the *Partita for Piano* composed in the autumn of 1921 in Berlin. The second Tango was excerpted from the *Esquisses de Jazz* (1927). The third Tango is a movement from the *5 Études de Jazz* (1926) and was dedicated to the wellknown opera composer Eduard Künneke. All three pieces were fixtures in Schulhoff's performing repertoire as a pianist, and he played them with inimitable jazzman's virtuosity.

The *Suite* is Schulhoff's first jazz composition for Orchestra. From 1919, he had composed jazz exclusively for the piano. The *Suite 'im neuen Stil'* (its original title) was composed in May and June 1921, in Saarbrücken, where Schulhoff was employed by the conservatory. In a letter to Alban Berg (12 February 1921), he indicated the inspiration for the suite: "...I have an incredible passion for society dances, and there are even times when I dance night after night with the girls in the bars, purely for the rhythmic enjoyment of it and the sensual undercurrents; this is a phenomenal spur to my creativity, since my personality is very earthy, almost bestial!" In these words, Schulhoff expressed his resistance to the transcendental, spiritualizing trend in music, his distaste for scepticism, nihilism, artistic elitism, expressionism; it was an attitude which bound him closely to the Dadaist. Jazz for him

became a weapon to attack the 'old style'. In the Prologue to the Suite, he emphasized his systematic intention to make an ostentatious break with all the conventionally beautiful music of the past, to bury himself in the midst of reality and 'un-idealized' life. In this way he intended to infuse music with new energy, vitality, and, last but not least, with social justice. The *Suite* consists of six modern dances. Schulhoff exhibits great tonal imagination in the scoring. His love of unconventional instruments (even as a student he used a ratchet in the 'Lustige Ouverture' of 1913) is developed here in very free imitation of the jazz bands of the period. In addition to the ratchet, the score specifies switch, siren, car horn, etc. However, Schulhoff makes sparing use of these elements, and the modern dances sound as attractive as Johann Strauß's waltzes.

Schulhoff himself conducted the premiere in Berlin on 22 April 1922. The orchestra was the chamber orchestra of the 'Staatsoper'. The reception, however, was poor.

Dr. Josef Bek

Translation: David Shapero

Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942)**Selections from stagemusic 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' (1926)**

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Total time**62.30**

Colophon

Production: Channel Classics Studio B.V.

Producer: T. A. Diehl

Recording engineer/
editing:

Bert van der Wolf

Add. Editing: Tom Peeters, Arnout Probst

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(1920) by Otto Griebel (1895-1970)

Cover design: Charlotte Boersma

Liner notes: Dr. Josef Bek

Executive producer: Werner Herbers, C. Jared Sacks

Technical information

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