



## ATOUT

the chamber  
music group

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**Anton Webern** Piano Quintet (1907)

**Arnold Schönberg** Chamber Symphony No. 1 op. 9 (1906),  
arr. for quintet by Anton Webern (1923)

**Bruno Walter** Piano Quintet (1904)

# Thursday, 1 August 2013

Schlosstheater Schönbrunn, 7:00 pm

One could regard the Quintet as **Anton Webern's** Opus 0. It dates from the period when he was studying with Arnold Schoenberg. In the 1930's he seems to have thought about revising it, with a view to having it published eventually. But it wasn't until 1947, after Webern's death, that the piece was published. „Pre-Webern music“ is the way it was regarded in the fifties, during the serialist-orientated Webern-Renaissance. The gap between the two „student works“ (the Passacaglia op. 1 was written a year later still under Schoenberg's guidance) isn't very great, either chronologically or in terms of the state of intellectual development documented by the two works. When Webern, having already done exercises in various styles, began to compose his Quintet, he had just completed his University studies. He was in the third year of his studies with Schoenberg; so was the slightly younger Alban Berg, with whom Webern had struck up an immediate friendship. Since Berg, too, was working on a Piano Quintet at this time, one can assume that both works share their origins in a task set by their teacher.

The Quintet has three almost equally large, and clearly demarcated sections, in which one can clearly see the sonata-form concept at work; exposition, development, and recapitulation. Their function, though, is closer to that of an extended ternary form. The principle of symmetry, which almost always plays a fundamental role in the form of Webern's later music, is here so prominent that the forward-moving tendency of the quasi-development is almost completely subordinated to it. The piece was first performed at a private house in Vienna in 1907, as a contribution to a Schoenberg-students' concert. Berg was also on the programme. It says a lot for the perception of the newspaper critic whose report gives our only proof of the by no means unanimous acclaim, that he attests to the talent of both composers. *Friedrich Saathen (from Preface to the Philharmonia Edition, WPhV 485)*

**Arnold Schoenberg's** First Chamber Symphony has long been regarded as one of Schoenberg's most significant works. Like *Pelleas und Melisande* and the First String Quartet which both preceded it, it draws the movements of a Classical symphony into a continuous whole. The musical discourse is compressed into little more than twenty minutes, and the lavish orchestral forces reduced to a mere fifteen instruments (comprising eight woodwinds, two horns and string quintet). Although not the first such work of its kind, Schoenberg's was to attract by far the most attention – not least through difficulties that were encountered in performance of balancing its complement of wind and strings so that the music's often intricately-worked textures can readily be appreciated. Schoenberg himself attempted to remedy this with full orchestral versions of 1922 and 1935, yet its essential character can only be appreciated in a chamber context. Something Schoenberg's pupil Anton Webern bore in mind when he made his highly effective transcription for flute (violin), clarinet (viola), violin, cello and piano during 1922-3. *Richard Whitehouse (from Booklet to CD Naxos 8.572442)*

**Bruno Walter** (1876–1962) is nowadays generally recognised as one of the most significant conductors of the 20th century. However, particularly during his first period in Vienna (1901–1912) he also specifically saw himself as a ‘creative’ musician, to a certain degree as a conductor-composer similar to his friend and role model Gustav Mahler. His initial steps as a composer were taken at the early age of ten. The oldest verifiable composition in the Bruno Walter Estate at the library of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna dates from the spring of 1887, an *Alegro* [sic!] for piano.

But Bruno Walter’s main creative period was the first decade of the 20th century. In the spring of 1903 his String Quartet in D major was premiered in the Vienna Musikverein by Arnold Rosé’s renowned quartet. Together with Alexander Zemlinsky, Arnold Schönberg and others, in 1904 Bruno Walter founded the ‘Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler’ (Society of Creative Musicians), whose aim was ‘to give modern music a permanent home in Vienna’. The premiere of his Piano Quintet in F sharp minor took place in the second chamber music concert given by the Society, on 5 February 1905. It was again played by the Rosé Quartet, with the composer himself at the piano. In comparison with the restrained but friendly reception of the string quartet in the previous year, this time the composition was a resounding success: ‘Artistic freedom, highly modern expression [and] daring imagination on an outstanding level’ were attached to the work. It was also emphatically praised that Walter follows – both formally and in the thematic processing – the ‘urgent logic of his ancestors’, such as Beethoven in his later years, and does not indulge in ‘a young person’s fits of rage’. Walter’s musical language is highly multifaceted and engaging in its harmony and motifs, but stylistically he does not break free from traditional, genre-specific paths. The outer movements are powerfully urgent, while the two inner movements are calmer and more intimate. The second movement was particularly well-received by the critics: ‘... the slow movement, a profession of the soul, flowing from true, inner emotion, is certainly one of the most significant encountered in recent chamber music’ (Robert Hirschfeld). Consequently, the quintet is indeed Bruno Walter’s most important reference work in his striving for recognition as a composer. During the following years Walter mainly composed chamber music: Piano Trio in F major, Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major and also several songs. Towards the end of the decade, in 1909, Bruno Walter’s largest but also final work was premiered: his Symphony in D minor.

The Piano Quintet was first edited in occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bruno Walters death in 2012. It is a joint initiative of the library of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, where Bruno Walter’s musical estate is preserved, and Universal Edition in Vienna. *Michael Staudinger (translated by Rosemary Bridger-Lippe)*

**Atout** is a chamber music ensemble performing a large variety of works ranging from quintets to nonets. The members of Atout are sought-after musicians of different nationalities, all of them having studied in the tradition of Viennese music style and sound. They have been performing as soloists in renowned concert venues such as Wiener Musikverein, Carnegie Hall, Philharmonie Berlin or Philharmonie Kiew. The ensemble is often coached by Johannes Meissl (Artis Quartett) at the University of Music in Vienna. In 2012, Atout was awarded the *Ignaz Pleyel Prize* and the *Josef Windisch Chamber Music Prize* and gave its highly successful debut at the Wiener Musikverein. This year, the group will present its debut at the Wiener Konzerthaus and tour Italy, Germany and Turkey. [www.atout.at](http://www.atout.at)



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