

Dora: A Case of Hysteria

Ensemble for the Romantic Century

Wednesday and Thursday, 19 and 20 January 2005, 8:00 PM
The Kosciuszko Foundation
15 East 65th Street, New York

Eve Wolf and **Max Barros**, co-artistic directors
James Melo, musicologist in residence

Script by Owen Lewis and Eve Wolf, adapted from Freud's case study and letters.

Ronald Feldman, cello
Curtis Macomber, violin
Mary Ann McCormick, mezzo-soprano
Richard O'Neill, viola
Eve Wolf, piano

Christine Marie Brown as Dora
Jonathan Epstein as Freud

Stuart Feder, guest lecturer (Wednesday, January 19)
Emily Braun, guest lecturer (Thursday, January 20)

Donald T. Sanders, stage director
James Melo, cover design

We would like to thank Dr. Alina Rubinstein for her efforts on behalf of the Ensemble and this program.

SYNOPSIS

Ida Bauer (the patient known to posterity as “Dora”) was thirteen when her father’s friend, Herr K., first made sexual advances to her; at the time, her father was having an affair with Herr K.’s wife. Dora developed hysterical symptoms which seemed to intensify as she became aware of her father’s affair. When Dora was seventeen, she again claimed that Herr K. had made a serious sexual advance towards her as they found themselves alone by a lake where the two families summered. When she revealed this to her father, he confronted Herr K. but then believed Herr K.’s denials and assertions that Dora was sexually obsessed, having been reading sexual physiology books all summer. Dora then made an all-out effort, with even more extreme symptoms, to get her father to break-off all social relations with the K. family. Her father then brought her to Freud for treatment, charging Freud to “bring the girl to reason.” Freud believed that Dora was in denial of her sexual feelings for Herr K. and that this was the reason for her hysterical symptoms. He vigorously pursued this agenda with her, but after three months she ended the treatment.

“Dora” is among the most famous of all psychoanalytic case histories. In it, Freud revealed both his genius and his limitations. We see Freud working out the clinical use of dream interpretation and his sexual theory of neurosis, and his first glimpse of the importance of transference. At the same time, we see Freud struggling to work with a difficult adolescent who does not wish to be in treatment with him, a girl whose sexual mishandling, if not abuse, by her father’s friend, is not recognized by Freud. It is a story of its time, and must be appreciated within that context. The script, like the case history, is centered on two dreams. Contemporaneous to the case, Freud was undergoing a serious period of self-doubt and depression, partly because of the lukewarm reception of *On the Interpretation of Dreams* and the difficulties of establishing a practice for the treatment of neurotic disorders. In his letters to his friend and colleague Wilhelm Fleiss, Freud was often candid about his state of mind. Excerpts from these letters form another part of the script, with Freud seated at a Viennese café.

Dora did not really desire to be in treatment with Freud and was probably quite selective about what she said and did not say to Freud. In the script, Dora is represented not only through the words of the actress, but also through the songs of the singer. In the words, we hear the adolescent who was not interested in treatment and was resistant to Freud; in the songs, we speculate about Dora’s feelings. The texts of these songs form an integral part of the script, and they should be read along with the performance.

Owen Lewis

PROGRAM

R. SIECZYNSKI (1879-1952)	<i>Vienna, City of my Dreams</i>
E.W. KORNGOLD (1897-1957)	Piano Trio in D major, op. 1 -- Scherzo: Allegro
A. SCHOENBERG (1874-1951)	<i>Erwartung</i> , op. 2, no. 1
F. KREISLER (1875-1962)	<i>Caprice Viennois</i> , op. 2
A. SCHOENBERG	<i>Galathea</i> (from <i>Brettli-Lieder</i>)
G. MAHLER (1860-1911)	<i>Selbstgefühl</i>
E.W. KORNGOLD	Piano Trio in D major, op. 1 -- Allegro non troppo con espressione

INTERMISSION

E.W. KORNGOLD	Piano Trio in D major, op. 1 -- Larghetto
A. SCHOENBERG	<i>Sechs kleine Klavierstücke</i> , op. 19, no. 2
A. BERG (1885-1935)	<i>Vier Stücke</i> , op. 5, no. 3
A. WEBERN (1883-1945)	<i>Drei kleine Stücke</i> , op. 11, no. 2
A. BERG	<i>Vier Stücke</i> , op. 5, no. 1
A. SCHOENBERG	<i>Sechs kleine Klavierstücke</i> , op. 19, no. 4
H.E. PFITZNER (1869-1949)	<i>Die Einsame</i> , op. 9, no. 2
	<i>Nachtwanderer</i> , op. 7, no. 2
G. MAHLER	<i>Ich hab' ein gluhend Messer</i>
A. BERG	<i>Schlafen, schlafen</i> , op. 2, no. 1
G. MAHLER	Piano Quartet in A minor (in one movement)
A. MAHLER (1879-1964)	<i>Der Erkennende</i>

PROGRAM NOTES

Fin-de-siècle Vienna

If there is such a thing as a sense of reality, then there must also be something that one can call a sense of possibility...The sense of possibility might be defined as the capacity to think how everything could “just as easily” be, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not...The possibilarians live within a finer web, a web of haze, imaginings, fantasy and the subjunctive mood. For them, a possible experience or a possible truth has in it something divine, a fiery, soaring quality, a constructive will, a conscious utopianism that does not shrink from reality but treats it as a mission and an invention...It is reality that awakens possibilities. Nevertheless, in the sum total or on the average they will always remain the same possibilities, going on repeating themselves until someone comes along to whom something real means no more than something imagined. It is he who first gives the new possibilities their meaning and their destiny; he awakens them. (Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*)

One of the most cherished notions among Viennese artists of the turn of the century was the conception of the artist as a visionary. For Schoenberg, Kandinsky, Klimt, Kokoschka, Kraus, Loos, and many others, the visionary conception of art was never a license for disorganized, uncontrolled creation. The fundamental premise of their aesthetic outlook was the continuous search for a symbiosis between the abstract idea and the concrete means through which it was materialized. In their quest for the inner truth, for the ultimate determinants of the human psyche, and for the sources of artistic creation, Viennese artists fulfilled their role as possibilarians of their time. Schoenberg, one of the most articulate thinkers of his generation, offered an illuminating account of the meaning of art, in words that could stand for the beliefs of many of his contemporaries:

Art is the cry for help of those who experience in themselves the fate of humanity. Who wrestle with it instead of accommodating themselves to it. Who do not bluntly serve the engine of “dark powers,” but who plunge into the running machinery to grasp its construction. Who do not avert their eyes to protect themselves from emotion, but rather open them wide to tackle what has to be tackled. But who frequently shut their eyes to perceive what the senses do not convey, to behold within what only seemingly takes place outside. And within, inside them, is the agitation of the world; what breaks through to the outside is only its echo: the work of art. (Schoenberg, *Frühe Aphorismen*, 1910, no. 12)

This is particularly true in regard to the structure and contents of tonight’s program, which presents an imaginative reading of the human psyche through the combined perspectives of music and psychoanalysis.

At the turn of the 20th century, Viennese society was riddled by moral ambivalence, a culture where overt and covert behaviors joggled with each other on a daily basis. It was within this milieu that psychoanalysis flourished. In addition to its importance as an instrument of cultural interpretation, psychoanalysis soon attracted the attention of many artists by virtue of its potential to unveil the dynamics of the creative process. For one thing, the notion of causality between the artist's inner vision and its externalization into a perceptible form has a remarkable similarity with the psychoanalytic process of drawing out unconscious feelings, emotions, and memories into an external reality that is subject to explanation and understanding. Freud's works were read and discussed by Schoenberg and his students. Webern himself was a patient of the psychoanalyst Alfred Adler for a brief time in 1913, and Mahler visited Freud. The influence of psychoanalysis eventually became pervasive in Vienna. The most striking example outside the musical context is the work of Arthur Schnitzler, whom Freud considered to be his "Doppelgänger". In his plays and novels, Schnitzler portrayed the Viennese society with all its neuroses as if he were conducting a psychoanalytic session. Freud himself, in a famous letter to Schnitzler, manifested his admiration for the capacity of art to arrive intuitively at insights which he himself uncovered only after much analytical reasoning. On another occasion, he noted that "poets and painters possess in their art a master key to open with ease all female hearts, whereas we stand helpless at the strange designs of the lock and have first to torment ourselves to discover a suitable key to it." Interestingly, Freud revealed very little sensitivity to music. He often boasted about his tone deafness, was clearly unable to carry a tune, and had a remarkably limited musical taste. He reportedly never went to concerts, and had no consistent interaction with any of the most prominent musicians and composers of his time. He was fond of some operas, however, perhaps because of the dramatic nature of the librettos and the psychological richness of the characters. Ultimately, Freud's attitude towards art was ambivalent, and his conception of the creative artist was laced with anxiety and a touch of envy:

Freud did not merely dispute the "creativity" of creative artists, he also circumscribed their cultural role. Shouting out society's secrets, they are little better than necessary licensed gossips, fit only to reduce the tensions that have accumulated in the public's mind. It is no accident that Freud should have called the reward one obtains from looking or reading or listening by a name—forepleasure—he borrowed from the most earthy of gratifications. To his mind, aesthetic work, much like the making of love or war, of laws or constitutions, is a way of mastering the world, or of disguising one's failure to master it. The difference is that novels, paintings, and music veil their ultimately utilitarian purposes behind skillfully crafted, often irresistible decorations. (Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, 1988)

Music in fin-de-siècle Vienna

At the turn of the 20th century, musical language was in a state of flux, poised between the last echoes of Romanticism and the incipient development of atonality. As a result, the relationship among composers, performers, and listeners needed to be rethought in

order to address the challenges posed by the emergent styles of composition. Schoenberg captured this need with great precision, when he addressed his critics by saying that, contrary to common perception, his “music was not difficult, just played badly.” He had an unshakeable belief that, with time, the public would come to understand and accept modern music as naturally as they had become familiar with tonality. All the composers represented in the program had a love-hate relationship with Vienna, undoubtedly on account of this continuous tension between composition and reception, between the old and the new. They socialized often in the various cafés of the city and engaged in passionate discussions about the role of their music in society. The stigma of anti-Semitism was always present, which undoubtedly added to ideological tensions and caused composers such as Schoenberg and Korngold to leave the city later on. Like the underlying conflicts discernible in all levels of Viennese society, the coexistence and critical dialectic between the aesthetic, political, and social ideals of these composers constituted one of the most significant aspects of their careers and helped to establish Vienna as the cradle of modernity.

The new music being composed in Vienna at the turn of the century still had links to traditional idioms, as was acknowledged by a composer as innovative as Webern. In a series of private lectures delivered in Vienna in 1932-33, he pointed retrospectively to that period:

So the style that Schoenberg and his school were seeking was a new interpenetration of music's material in the horizontal and the vertical dimensions: an integrated polyphony, which had so far reached its climaxes in the Netherlanders and Bach, then later in the classical composers. There was this constant effort to derive as much as possible from one principal idea. We too are writing in classical forms, which haven't vanished. All the ingenious forms discovered by these composers also occur in the new music. It's not a matter of reconquering or reawakening the old traditions, but of re-filling their forms by way of the classical masters. What happened after them was only alteration, extension, abbreviation; but the forms remained, even in Schoenberg! (*Der Weg zur neuen Musik*, 1932)

Webern's insistence upon the intrinsic value of the traditional forms is significant, not only because it conforms with the prevailing attitude among contemporaneous artists, but also because it provides a possible background for the understanding of some of his own compositional procedures and those of fellow composers such as Schoenberg and Berg.

The repertoire in tonight's program reflects the entire spectrum of the musical genres and styles cultivated in Vienna at the time. Perhaps more important than dwell on specific details about each piece, it would be more profitable to relate the works to three distinct stylistic groups, which complemented and influenced one another:

1. Salon pieces that reflect Vienna's renowned *Gemütlichkeit* (charm, joie de vivre), and which had an important role in the musical life of the city. The works of Rudolf Siczynski and Fritz Kreisler belong to this category.

2. Works written in a late-Romantic or post-Romantic idiom, in which tonal procedures are juxtaposed with incipient atonal elements. Korngold, Gustav and Alma Mahler, and Pfitzner all wrote in this style.
3. Works in which the transition to atonality is already a compositional premise, and tonal elements appear only as residues of an earlier style. The composers that formed the Second Viennese School—Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern—were the acknowledged agents of the onset of modernism in music.

Several analysts have been sensitive to the coexistence of seemingly disparate elements in the music of this period. Jim Samson, for example, has noted that "the rejection of tonality by no means occasioned a rejection of all the concepts and procedures associated with tonal music" (*Music in Transition*, 1977), then went on to suggest that "it will be essential in examining these works to distinguish between residual features, in which coherence depends upon analogy with the tonal past, and recreative features, in which traditional procedures have been invested with a new form-giving significance."

The juxtaposition of traditional elements in order to achieve a different level of artistic expression was not exclusive to music. The writer and satirist Karl Kraus, for example, used similar procedures in his many experiments with the German language. Very often, he would employ juxtaposition in his texts in an attempt to express more than their literal meaning. In music, this was achieved by using traditional elements in an unorthodox context, a technique that has been criticized by many analysts but which was certainly an integral part of a style predicated on the complementarity between new and traditional devices.

The attitude of the turn-of-the-century Viennese artists towards tradition can be more clearly understood in relation to the idea of ornamentation. The architect Adolf Loos, for example, did not want necessarily to create new forms but to strip the old ones of nonfunctional decoration which concealed the beauty of their structure. The same idea pervades Schoenberg's criticism of what he viewed as a tendency towards mere "paddling" in music, a notion that evolved into his concept of developing variation as the musical technique most able to realize the new aesthetic ideas of the time. One of the consequences of the emphasis upon what was considered to be essential for the structure of a work of art was a tendency towards compression of form. Kandinsky stated that "the artistic reduced to a minimum must be considered as the most intensely effective abstraction" (*Blaue Reiter*, "On the Problem of Form"). This statement also implies that the external expansion of the means of expression leads, under certain circumstances, to a reduction of its internal power. All three composers of the Second Viennese School embraced this premise, creating works of great emotional intensity with the barest musical elements. The miniatures by Berg, Webern, and Schoenberg included in this program can be appreciated as snapshots of a state of mind, sparks from the motions of the human psyche, flashes of fleeting emotion. Webern was particularly adept at distilling the essence of a musical idea and presenting it with an

extraordinary degree of economy.

An important point of contact between music and the other arts can be found in the rich tradition of the German lied. The poetic text offered an occasion for articulating images and symbols that could be rendered more powerful through music. The songs included in this program fulfill an important function, as they bring together both the denotative and connotative aspects of perception—through the combined agencies of text and music—and thus provide a window into the emotional life of the protagonist. More than any other pieces in the program, they function as musical surrogates to the analytical and theoretical discourse embodied in Freud's text.

The interface between the conscious and the unconscious is the ultimate testing ground of psychoanalysis, as the interdependence between the objective and subjective aspects of music is the crux of the musical experience. In a letter to Busoni dated 13 August 1909, Schoenberg articulated the manner in which music (or at least the music he envisioned) was capable of articulating the deeper strains of the unconscious:

It is impossible for a person to have only one sensation at a time. One has thousands simultaneously. And these thousands can no more readily be added together than an apple and a pear... And this variegation, this multifariousness, this illogicality which our senses demonstrate, the illogicality presented by their interaction, set forth by some rising rush of blood, by some reaction of the senses or the nerves, this I should like to have in my music. It should be an expression of feeling, as our feelings, which bring us in contact with our subconscious, really are, and no false child of feelings and conscious logic.

James Melo
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