



## STEFAN WOLPE SOCIETY BULLETIN

November 2009

### Recent Editions

This Bulletin provides information on new and recent editions of chamber opera, orchestra, cabaret music and cantata, chamber music, songs, and music for one and two pianos. For more information on Stefan Wolpe and his music, please see

[www.wolpe.org](http://www.wolpe.org)

### Chamber Opera

**Zeus und Elida, Musikalische Grotteske (1928).** A satire on the model of Busoni's *Arclecchino*. with stock characters from the puppet theatre: amorous old man (Zeus), femme fatale (Elida), policeman (Public Prosecutor), and skeptical Announcer, and a chorus of street people dressed in rags. In search of Europa, Zeus (Hitler) descends onto the traffic island in the middle of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. He sees a billboard for Elida cosmetics (anagram of Ideal) and mistakes the picture of the blond beauty for the object of his search. A street-walker who resembles the woman in the ad enters, and Zeus accosts her. The imbroglio results in the Prosecutor banning the entire Potsdamer Platz and Zeus being carted off to the asylum. The through-composed scenes are based on the styles of the Boston, Tango, Blues, Foxtrot, Baroque concerto, etc. For Speaker; S, S-Disease, 2 A, T, Tbuffo, lyricBar, 2 B soli, chorus; Ssax/Asax/Tsax/KI, S s a x / A s a x / T s a x / B s a x / K I ,

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Asax/Tsax/Bsax/Kl/Basskl, 2 Trp, Trb, Sousaphon, 2 Cb with C-Saite, Ban, T-Bjo, Jazz-Perc, 12 Vl (separate desks), 2 Pno (2. Pno also Cel). Recorded by Ebony Band, cond. Werner Herbers (Decca 460-001-2). 25:00 min. Peermusic. Full score, No. 3322. Vocal score, No. 3323.

## **Orchestra**

**The Man from Midian (1942).** The scenario by Winthrop Palmer of this ballet score for two pianos is based on the life of Moses. (Darius Milhaud set the same scenario.) Moses here is not the philosopher-priest of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aaron*, but rather the political leader who liberated the Jewish people from slavery. Wolpe scored the First Suite, which was performed by Dmitri Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic (1951). Recorded by Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin, cond. Joseph Silverstein (Naxos 8.559439). Antony Beaumont orchestrated the Second Suite for a new edition of the complete ballet score. 40:00 min. Peermusic.

**Symphony No. 1 (1956).** An important contribution to American abstract expressionism, the Symphony is based on a brief melody, like a primordial glyph of the painters. The high bassoon solo recalls Stravinsky's *Sacre*, but rather than introduce a ritual drama, the melody self-destructs into shard-like aspects of itself that tumble at high speed through the turbulent time-space, like a stone through a window. The first movement is a succession of five ac-

tions that engage two types of material, each with its own tempo. The second movement is a fugue with three subjects: the first is of shuddering, thrusting tremolos and leaps, the second is terse and pacifying, and the third is a deluge of non-pitched percussion (a response to *Deserts* by his friend Edgar Varèse). The three subjects cycle ever closer until they converge. The third movement combines the lyric flow of the first movement with the violent agon of the second in a sonata-like design. After the early performances Wolpe deleted much of the percussion in the second movement for reasons that remain unclear. The new edition restores the original percussion part complete. 25:00 min. Peermusic. Full score, No. 3267.

## **Cabaret Music, Cantata**

**Music for Cabaret 'Anti' (1929).** Blues, "Stimmen aus den Massengrab," Marsch. Wolpe composed this music for the Swiss bandleader Teddy Stauffer, who opened the Berlin theater-club "Anti" with *Teddies und his Jazz-Sinfoniker*. Two instrumental movements *Blues* and *March* frame a setting for speaking chorus of a poem by Erich Kästner. Kästner left Dresden for Berlin in 1927 following dismissal from a newspaper for publishing an erotic poem. "*Stimmen aus den Massengrab*" [*Voices from a mass grave*] is subtitled "In place of a sermon on All Souls Day." It is the angry, bitter cry to the living of the war dead. For 2Sax (Cl), Tpt, Perc, 2Pno. 10:00 min. Recorded by Marcus Weiss (Hat[now]ART 136). Peermusic.

**Cantata on Sport, 'Alles an den roten Start' (1932).** Text: Siegfried Moos. Wolpe composed the cantata for a communist sports rally in a large Berlin stadium. The four numbers include a brilliant instrumental number, *Zweierlei Tempi*, the “*Kampflied*” *Stählt die Muskeln*,” and a March, “Das ist der Sport der herrschenden Klasse.” The Revue was performed by the agitprop troupe Fichte-Balalaika. For brass band and chorus. 10:00 min. Peermusic.

### ***Chamber Ensemble (10 players)***

**Suite from the Twenties.** 1 Tango für Irma, 2 Marsch, 3 Tango, 4 Tanz-Charleston (für Moholy-Nagy), 5 Rag-Caprice, 6 Blues. Brilliant arrangements by Geert van Keulen of piano compositions from the late twenties. For Cl, Bcl, Asax, Trp, Trb, Perc, Bjo, Pno, Vl, Vc. 13:30. Peermusic.

### ***Flute Quintet***

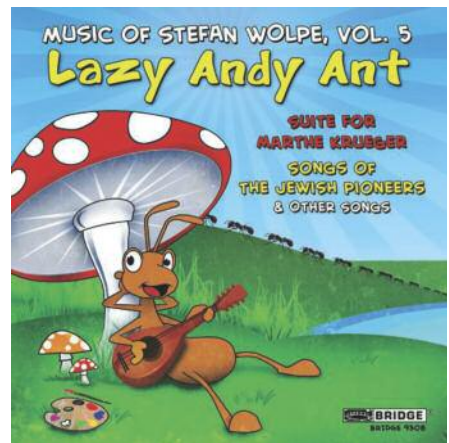
**Palestine Suite (1941).** Wolpe was commissioned by the Palestine Labor Committee to provide music for a short film. The film itself has not been recovered, but the titles of the musical episodes describe scenes of town and country life framed by numbers with a military theme. Wolpe had played piano for silent films and had strong views about film music: “Why Grieg for sunsets? Why Chopin’s B-flat minor when someone is in a bad way?” He argued that rhythm is the principal means for uniting music with the moving image, and these vignettes vividly call up the scenes in wartime Palestine. For Fl, Vl, Va, Vc, Pno. 10:00 min. Stefan Wolpe Society.

## ***Songs***

**Zehn frühe Lieder (1920).** A collection of remarkably accomplished songs by the 18-year-old prodigy, they are among the very few pieces that Wolpe kept from before 1924. They include poems on spiritual love by medieval mystics, and verses by Rilke, Kokoschka, Christian Morgenstern, and the feminist poet Catherina Godwin. Wolpe himself wrote a couple of playful poems for infants. Whether tonal hymns, or post-tonal novelties with dashes of ragtime, the songs display a lively fantasy and impressive control of a wide range of materials. Recorded by Tony Arnold, soprano, and Jacob Greenberg, piano, on Bridge 9209. 15:00 min. Peermusic.

### ***Two Pianos***

**Suite for Marthe Krueger (1940).** The score was recently discovered in the papers of the dancer and teacher Marthe Krueger (1910-2000), who came to America in the 1930s and worked for a time with Martha Graham. The scenario does not survive, but the three movements may have been inspired by Gra-



ham's ballet, *Every Soul is a Circus* (1939), which explored woman's inner landscape. The first movement, "Women," contrasts gently questing and strongly assertive motions in diatonic modes; "Remembrance," for solo piano, is by turns, elegiac, aggressive, and fearful; "The Tides of Man: Passions Spin the Plot" opposes a march-like, directed motion against a freely flowing motion in 5/4 time. Order and disorder, clarity and obscurity play out over this tumultuous, fully chromatic movement that builds until the "tides of man" crash in towering waves of sound. Recorded by Quattro Mani on Bridge 9308. 22:00 min. Peermusic.

### **Solo Piano**

**Piano Music 1939-1942.** Composed soon after Wolpe arrived in America from British Mandate Palestine, these pieces were contributions to a repertoire of new music for the Jewish people, though he was by no means a nationalist. *Lied, Anrede, Hymnus, Strophe* (1939), celebrated his wife Irma Wolpe's birthday, and carries the subtitle: "In anticipation of new musics." The melody appears in the third and fourth movements of the *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* (1941). *Zemach Suite* (1939) was commissioned by the Russian dancer Benjamin Zemach. The pieces (1 Song, 2 Piece of embittered music, 3 Fuge a 3 no. 1, 4 Fuge a 3, no. 2, 5 Jubilation, 6 Complaint, 7 Dance in form of a chaconne) are based on various Middle Eastern modes and dances. *Two Pieces for Piano* (1941): 1 Pastorale, 2 Con fuoco. The gentle Pastorale and

the stormy Con fuoco both make use of the whole tone-semitone (octatonic) scale that Wolpe derived from an Arabic maqam. *The Good Spirit of a Right Cause* (1942) was music to raise the spirits of the people during the darkest days of the war. The march fantasy recalls the *Kampfmusik* that Wolpe composed ten years earlier in Berlin and looked forward to *Battlepiece* (1943-1947). Recorded by David Holzman on Bridge 9116. Peermusic, No. 3470.

**Zwei Tänze für Klavier (1926).** *Blues, Tango.* Wolpe was a skilled improviser in classical and popular styles and enjoyed making outrageously modern renditions of dance forms of the day. These montage-like fantasies of the Blues and Tango were thought to have been lost, until the sole surviving manuscript recently came to light. 4:00 min. Peermusic, No. 3613.

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