

Five Orchestral Pieces, Op 16 (1909, arr. 1925) –  
Arnold Schoenberg (1874 - 1951)

- I. Vorgefühle (Premonitions)
- II. Vergangenes (The Past)
- III. Farben (Chord Colours)
- IV. Peripetie (Peripeteia)
- V. Das obligate Rezitativ (The Obligatory Recitative)

Arnold Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces* were composed in four fertile months in the summer of 1909, and date from a very productive period for the composer in which he would also complete the Three Pieces for Chamber Orchestra and the Piano Piece, Op 11. The work dates from Schoenberg's 'expressionist' period; a movement where real objects are depicted in distorted representations; a deep-delving into the subconscious where dreams, fears and tensions suddenly find full focus. Expressionism in music is exemplified by the otherworldly sonorities and tortured harmonies that are found in the *Five Orchestral Pieces*. The work would prove to be a watershed for Schoenberg, pointing towards the free-atonality of *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) and ultimately the twelve-tone technique, Schoenberg's lasting legacy.

The *Five Orchestral Pieces* didn't originally have the individual titles which they currently possess, these were added by the composer in 1912 at the suggestion of his publisher who felt audiences needed a little 'help' in understanding Schoenberg's new music. Schoenberg was not too impressed at this request, as he noted in his diary:

*"I've found titles that are at least possible. On the whole, unsympathetic to the idea. For the wonderful thing about music is that one can say everything in it, so that he who knows understands everything; and yet one hasn't given away one's secrets – the things one doesn't admit even to oneself. But titles give you away!"*

The five pieces share little material though there are similarities, with I and IV being impetuous and somewhat explosive; II and III being warmer and lyrical. Atonality is present throughout, however the languid second piece is firmly rooted in D minor, perhaps this warranting the title 'The Past' that Schoenberg retrospectively gave it. The third piece too warrants its title, 'Chord Colours', as there are no discernable themes rather combinations of instruments that focus the listener on the colouristic effects and harmony. The fifth piece is perhaps the most interesting, as the structure is here at its freest giving an impression of exploration and motion.

Although *Five Orchestral Pieces* was composed in 1909, it has undergone several modifications through its existence; it was revised by Schoenberg in both 1922 and 1952 and arranged for two-piano duet by Webern and for reduced orchestra by the composer in 1949. The version performed by the LCMG tonight is Schoenberg's arrangement for chamber orchestra, published in 1925.