

GEORGE CRUMB
A Haunted Landscape
ARTHUR WEISBERG, conductor

New World Records 80326

WILLIAM SCHUMAN
Three Colloquies For Horn and Orchestra
ZUBIN MEHTA, conductor
PHILIP MYERS, horn
New York Philharmonic

The two works recorded here were both commissioned and premiered by the New York Philharmonic. *Three Colloquies for Horn and Orchestra* by William Schuman was completed on September 4, 1979 and first performed on January 24, 1980. It is the third of Schuman's works to be commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, and is one of a series of compositions for solo orchestral instruments commissioned by the Philharmonic for its principal players. *A Haunted Landscape* by George Crumb was completed in 1984 and first performed on June 7, 1984. Both works, in their distinctively individual ways, exploit the rich varieties of orchestral color infinitely available. Both commissions were made possible with generous gifts from Francis Goelet.

Like all of George Crumb's music, *A Haunted Landscape* is a unique sonic experience, tone color being paramount. His scores are visually as well as aurally beautiful, even with an occasional passage written as a circle in the manner of the medieval composer Baude Cordier (fl. ca. 1400). Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia on October 24, 1929 and studied at Mason College, the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan (with Ross Lee Finney, whom he regards as his principal composition teacher). He has taught at the University of Colorado, and since 1965 at the University of Pennsylvania. He has received numerous grants and awards, including the 1968 Pulitzer Prize for *Echoes of Time and the River*. He regards Debussy, Mahler and Bartok as strong influences on his musical language.

Much of his music contains programmatic and numerological symbolism, but if this is the case for *A Haunted Landscape* he has not revealed it. In fact, in his program note for the premiere he writes that the work

“...is not programmatic in any sense. The title reflects my feeling that certain places on the planet Earth are imbued with an aura of mystery: I can vividly recall the 'shock of recognition' I felt on seeing Andalusia for the first time after having been involved with the poetry of Garcia Lorca for many years. I felt a similar sense of *deja vu* on visits to Jerusalem and to Delphos in Greece. Even in the West Virginia woods, one senses the ghosts of the vanished Indians. Places can inspire feelings of reverence or of brooding menace (like the deserted battlefields of ancient wars). Sometimes one feels an idyllic sense of time suspended. The contemplation of a landscape can induce complex psychological states, and perhaps music is an ideal medium for delineating the tiny, subtle nuances of emotion and sensibility that hover between the subliminal and the conscious.”

The orchestra for *A Haunted Landscape* is of normal size (winds in threes, etc.) except for the percussion section, which is enormous. In addition to the timpani there are four other percussionists

playing some forty-five different instruments, including such exoticisms as Cambodian angklungs (a kind of bamboo xylophone/wind chime), Japanese Kabuki blocks, a Brazilian cuica (a friction drum), Caribbean steel drums, and an Appalachian hammered dulcimer. The amplified piano is also treated as a percussion instrument with the playing occurring on the strings and crossbeams inside the instrument. The two harp players are sometimes asked to tap the sounding boards with their knuckles.

Two solo double basses tune their low C strings down to B-flat and, by overlapping each other, sustain this pitch very softly throughout the work. Crumb writes:

"I had imagined that this low B-flat (sixty cycles, the frequency of alternating current) was an immutable law of nature and represented a kind of cosmic drone.' But, alas, science defeats art. A chemist friend informed me that alternating current is arbitrarily determined by man, and that B-flat is not even international, much less intergalactic!"

A number of mysterious, entrancing, sometimes frightening sounds occur above this "cosmic drone" that is more felt than heard. To mention only a few sonorities: a contrabassoon coiling at the very bottom of its range; a tamtam played with a double bass bow; harps alternating chords and sounding-board tappings; low flutes curling about; a very large tamtam scraped with a coin--these all at the beginning. A little later: loud percussion and violent trilling/flutter-tonguing in the brass; the strings in multiple *divisi* (15 parts) playing very soft sustained triads. Around the middle: distant fanfares in muted horns, and later, trumpets. A frequently recurring idea is a single note in five rapid repetitions. It may occur very loudly in low timpani, two sticks at a time, on bass drum, as chords in double-stopped strings, or on a plucked string inside the piano. Also common are five-note patterns with changing pitches. All these sonorities and many more recur and are developed in rondo-like patterns that reach an ear-splitting climax at about the two-thirds point (or is it the Golden Section?). As the music becomes more and more quiet a trill is heard in the flute shortly before the low B-flat fades to silence.

* * *

William Schuman, born in New York City on August 4, 1910, is a vastly prolific composer, and the more amazingly so considering his busy life as a teacher and administrator. He taught at Sarah Lawrence College from 1935-45 and served as president of the Juilliard School from 1945-62, where he developed the integrated theory course 'Literature and Materials of Music' that has influenced many other institutions. He was president of Lincoln Center in New York from 1962-69. His own training includes Teachers College, Columbia University, where he received a bachelor's and a master's degree, a summer (1935) at the Salzburg Mozarteum earning a certificate in conducting, and two years of study with Roy Harris at the Juilliard School.

The core of Schuman's music is symphonic and includes ten symphonies and such famous other works as *American Festival Overture* (1939) and *New England Triptych* (1956). *Three Colloquies for Horn and Orchestra* employs a standard orchestra as to winds and strings, but for the brass there are only three trumpets and the solo horn. The percussion emphasizes metallophones: glockenspiel, crotales, tubular bells, vibraphone. Also included are timpani, snare drum, xylophone, celesta, harp and piano.

In his note for the premiere he writes that the work was not intended as a concerto to exploit technical virtuosity; "rather, I hoped to create music which required a solo French horn to realize its intentions." However, the soloist is given music as brilliant and challenging as any horn concerto. *Three Colloquies* progresses emotionally and harmonically from the clanging, dissonant seven-note chords that open

Rumination to the peaceful chorale of major triads that closes *Remembrance*. The outer movements are in slow tempi--the first dramatic, the last lyrical. The central and largest movement is a lively symphonic scherzo. There are no pauses between movements.

Rumination. The solo horn slowly emerges from the clanging (metallophones, piano, harp) chords mentioned above and gradually becomes increasingly agitated. In the winds there is a brief hint of the chorale-like music that will end the entire work, just before the timpani joins the horn in its agitation. The intensity reaches a climax of syncopated dissonant chords in full orchestra. As the music subsides, the solo horn plays with the contrast of normal "open" playing versus stopped tones (hand further in the bell) that create a distant brassy sound. A sustained A in the horn connects into

Renewal. Winds and strings present bright, puckish scherzo material. A second theme is presented by three trumpets in close parallel chords. The solo horn joins the frolic and the three sonority-types cavort together. The music quiets into a more solemn "trio" section that begins with the solo horn playing an expansive cantabile waltz theme accompanied by low winds. The violins in very high register repeat the theme while the horn adds more active counterpoint. As the music intensifies, the trumpets with their parallel chords and the timpani and snare drums join the fray. The climax recalls the clanging chords that commenced *Rumination*. The transition to the return of the scherzo proper (in the standard classical format of scherzo-trio-scherzo) has solo horn in a duet with itself by contrasting phrases of stopped and open tones. The return of the opening scherzo theme is heard in the winds while against it is played the waltz theme from the trio in the striking orchestration of two oboes, a muted trumpet and cellos. The horn returns to its scherzo frolics as do the trumpets to theirs, and after more brief play a quiet cadence is made to a B-flat. A short coda rises rapidly to a dramatically reiterated dissonant chord that then gradually fades against a repeated pattern in timpani and bells. A soft roll on suspended cymbal connects into

Remembrance. The tensions and excitements of the first two movements here reach a peaceful serenity. The broad and continuous melodic flow is begun by the solo horn with a countermelody in the solo cello. A solo oboe and then other winds continue the melody. Soon the violins take up lyrical lines with countermelodies from the horn. At the center of the movement the solo horn is accompanied by quiet chords in celesta, harp and high winds. An unaccompanied duet between horn and solo trumpet resolves into the closing chorale of lush, warm major triads. The solo horn cannot completely settle into the serenity of the harmony; against the long-sustained F major triad, passed from one orchestral color to another, the horn insists on its final B-flat. The strings maintain a pure F major triad that dies away, ending the piece.

—Bruce Archibald

Bruce Archibald, *composer and pianist, is a professor of music theory in the College of Music, Temple University.*

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Black Angels, for electric string quartet. Turnabout TVS34610.
Echoes of Time and the River. Louisville LS-711.
Eleven Echoes of Autumn. CRI S-233.
Madrigals (Books I-IV). Turnabout TVS34523.
Makrokosmos I, for piano. Nonesuch H 71293.
Music for a Summer Evening (Makrokosmos III). Nonesuch H 71311.
Night Music I. Candide CE31113 CRI S-218.
Night of the Four Moons and Vox balaenae. Columbia M-32739.
Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death. Desto DC 7155.

William Schuman

American Festival Overture. Desto DST-6404.
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. Turnabout TVS34733.
Credendum. CRI S-308.
New England Triptych. Mercury SRI-75020.
Prayer in Time of War. Louisville LS-721.
String Quartet No. 3. Vox SVBX-5305.
A Song of Orpheus. Columbia MS-6638.
Symphony No. 3 and Symphony No. 5 (*Symphony for Strings*). Columbia MS-7442.
Symphony No. 4. Louisville LS-69-2.
Symphony No. 7. New World 80348-2.
Undertow. New World 80253-2.

Zubin Mehta assumed the post of Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in the 1978-79 season. He was born in Bombay, India in 1936, the son of the Bombay Symphony's founder. At 16 he began studies at Vienna's Academy of Music; he made his conducting debut in Vienna in 1958, at the age of 22. From 1961-67 he was Music Director of the Montreal Symphony, and since 1967 has been Music Director of the Israel Philharmonic. In 1961, Mr. Mehta was named associate conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and succeeded Fritz Reiner as Music Director the next year. He has

conducted leading opera companies and orchestras throughout the world. Mr. Mehta's recordings can be found on the Columbia, London, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA, Angel and New World labels.

Arthur Weisberg was born in New York City and attended the High School of Music and Art and the Juilliard School of Music, where he studied conducting with John Morel and bassoon with Simon Kovar. Mr. Weisberg is Music Director of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble (which he founded in 1960) and the Orchestra of the Twentieth Century; he has numerous recordings with both of these groups. He has also served as Music Director of the Orchestra da Camera. He has guest-conducted the Milwaukee, Rochester, Berlin Radio and Basel Radio orchestras, as well as the Scandinavian Festival Orchestra in Iceland.

Philip Myers performed the world premiere of *Three Colloquies* in 1980 with the New York Philharmonic. He began his tenure that year as Principal Hornist with the Philharmonic. He has served as Principal Hornist with the Atlantic Symphony in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and with the Minnesota Orchestra; he was also third horn with the Pittsburgh Symphony. Mr. Myers has also been an active recitalist. A native of Elkhart, Indiana, he has two degrees from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

The New York Philharmonic, founded in 1842, is one of the oldest symphonic organizations in the world. Among its celebrated conductors have been Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini, Artur Rodzinski, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Leonard Bernstein and Pierre Boulez. Since the 1930s, the Philharmonic has made hundreds of recordings, first for Victor, then, beginning in the 1940s, for Columbia. Recordings of the Philharmonic are currently found on the Columbia, London, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA and New World labels.

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(Both compositions on this disc were recorded during performances and recording sessions, which accounts for the occasional live audience sound.)

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Note: A low B-flat (sixty cycles) tone is heard as a pedal point throughout Crumb's A Haunted Landscape. The score reads: "The 2 soli contrabassi should alternate throughout by unobtrusively overlapping."

George Crumb

1- A Haunted Landscape 17:53

(publ. C.F. Peters Corp.)

Arthur Weisberg, conductor

William Schuman

Three Colloquies

For Horn and Orchestra 22:50

(played without pause)

2- Ruminations

3- Renewal

4- Remembrance

(publ. Theodore Presser Co.)

Zubin Mehta, conductor

Philip Myers, horn

New York Philharmonic

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