

Works by John Harbison and Ezra Laderman

New World 80404-2

Eclectic but distinctively original, John Harbison's *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra* reflects an artist of deep sensibility and training. Harbison, born in Orange, New Jersey, on December 20, 1938, is a recipient of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize and has received commissions from numerous ensembles and foundations, including the Boston and San Francisco symphonies and the Koussevitzky Foundation. The brittleness sometimes found in Harbison's harmonic language bears the imprint of Roger Sessions, with whom he studied at Princeton; yet the lyricism of Harbison's melodic line is very much his own, a quality strikingly apparent in this concerto.

The first movement opens with complex chords in the orchestra, establishing a haunting mood that is re-evoked by the imposition of the same material at strategic points throughout the piece. In contrast to these sustained sounds, the viola's entry is an impassioned aria that rarely takes a breath. This *Con, moto rubato* movement, a kind of free-form fantasia, features delicate interchanges between soloist and winds. It is reminiscent of the Berg *Violin Concerto* in its direct emotionality, its dialogue between tonal and nontonal material, and its transparent orchestration.

Writing about the concerto, Harbison describes this transparency as the result of his own experience as a performer on the viola, an instrument with “a somewhat veiled, slightly melancholic quality” that is “always in the middle of things” in an orchestra—“a good vantage point for a composer.” According to Harbison, the orchestration of his concerto avoids “the kind of bombast that makes the wonderful voice of the viola seem outmanned upon re-entry.”

Structurally, each movement is in extreme contrast to the one preceding it. The opening movement eschews repetition, the next is full of repeats; then a simple slow movement is followed by a finale complicated by jagged irregularity at every turn. The character of the entire work moves outward, from introversion to celebration and technical display.

The five-note repeating motive that concludes Harbison's concerto is a bright question mark in keeping with the spirit of mystery that pervades the work. The moody opening of the first movement is echoed in the more ominous orchestral blast that frames the lyricism of the *Andante*. The fast movements have enigmatic elements as well: The brief *Allegro brillante* scherzo sets playful acrobatics against brittle harmonies, then vanishes into nothing just as its energies begin to accumulate; the finale, which requires nonstop virtuosity from the soloist, offers bracing excitement complicated by intricate rhythms. This is a work of bold, incisive gestures even when the material is contemplative or highly abstract.

Born in Brooklyn on June 29, 1924, Ezra Laderman studied with Stefan Wolpe, Otto Luening, and Douglas Moore. His *Concerto for Double Orchestra* is the creation of a

prolific composer; recent commissions include a *Sinfonia Concertante* for Mstislav Rostropovich and the National Symphony, the Symphony No. 7 for Eduardo Mata and the Dallas Symphony, and a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma and the Chicago Symphony. Currently the Dean of the School of Music at Yale, he has been the recipient of numerous prizes and grants, including three Guggenheim Fellowships and the Prix de Rome. Laderman's musical style combines technical virtuosity with a unifying sense of color and drama.

The *Concerto for Double Orchestra* is “double” in more ways than one. It is actually two works joined together for two different ensembles: the three inner movements are for chamber orchestra and may be performed separately; the outer movements are scored for large orchestra.

This method of composition by accretion, which has precedents in the works of composers ranging from Handel to Pierre Boulez has here produced an epic work in which the richly scored outer movements echo and parallel each other while the “chamber concerto within offers a more intimate discourse.

The opening *Allegro misterioso* for full orchestra sets up dramatic tensions and expectations that are not resolved until the finale. Over an ominous sustained note in the bass, several fragmentary ideas—snatches of marches, chorales, percussion riffs—are gradually stitched together. Although largely quiet, this movement exudes a palpable sense of menace and suspense before fading into silence.

In the next three movements the full orchestra is reduced to chamber size. The structures within each movement are remarkably varied, like a series of carefully implemented formal experiments. The *Andante listesso* movement consists of a trio of devices: an accumulation of single notes, a series of solo lines initiated by oboe, viola, and clarinet, and a lyrical melody soaring high in the strings. Laderman speaks of the mood here as being serene, “almost pastoral” but an underlying tension carries over the mood of the opening movement.

The *Allegro giocoso*, the most abstract and playful section of the work, is subtitled “Couplings:” Like the second movement of Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, it consists of a series of duets, in this case six. These duets (oboe-bassoon, horn-cello, clarinet-trombone, violin-double bass, flute-violin, trumpet-tympani) first spread out, then truncate.

The *Allegro* begins with contrapuntal music of great optimism and urgency. This opening music is gradually darkened by string tremolos that seem in character to recall the underlying tension of the first movement. The chamber concerto concludes in what the composer describes as “a frenzied yet hushed, shadowy, and ghostly manner.”

The finale unleashes the full orchestra in a movement filled with anguish and tension. Unlike the earlier movements, which die away or vanish, this *Andante ma non troppo*

risers toward a huge E major climax that concludes the work with a jolt of ecstasy. —*Jack Sullivan*

*Jack Sullivan, chairman of the American Studies program at Rider College, is the editor of Words on Music: From Addison to Barzun.*

**JAIME LAREDO** is internationally renowned as both a violinist and a violist. The youngest winner ever of the Queen Elizabeth competition in Brussels, he has appeared as soloist with major orchestras on five continents and every major orchestra in the United States. As a chamber musician, he performs extensively with Joseph Kalichstein and Sharon Robinson as the Kalichstein/Laredo/Robinson trio. In addition, he has collaborated with Glenn Gould, the Guarneri String Quartet, Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Rudolf Serkin, Pinchas Zukerman, and numerous others. Laredo is the director of New York City's 92nd Street Y chamber music series. He has recorded for MCA, CBS, Nimbus, Second Hearing, and Desto.

**HUGH WOLFF** is the music director for the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and the principal conductor of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Wolff has guest conducted orchestras throughout the world, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the Orchestre National de France, and the London Philharmonic. He has served as associate conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra and has appeared as guest conductor with the New York City and Washington, D.C. operas. Wolff studied conducting with Charles Bruck and composition with Olivier Messiaen, George Crumb, and Leon Kirchner. In 1985, he received the prestigious Seaver/NEA conductors award.

**THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** traces its roots back to 1846, when the Eintracht Orchestra and Singing Society of Newark was founded. It has since become one of the country's leading orchestras and presents over 130 concerts each season. The NJSO has performed at the United Nations, Avery Fisher Hall, Philadelphia's Academy of Music, and the Kennedy Center; and is heard annually at Carnegie Hall. In addition, the NJSO has been featured on four PBS television programs and in regular radio broadcasts. In 1990 and 1991, the NJSO was the resident orchestra at the Adare Festival in Ireland. Under the leadership of Hugh Wolff, the orchestra has won critical acclaim in the national and international press.

## **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

### **John Harbison:**

Concerto for Double Brass Choir and Orchestra. Los Angeles Philharmonic, André Previn conducting. *The Flight Into Egypt*. Roberta Anderson, soprano; Sanford Sylvan, baritone; Cantata Singers and Ensemble, David Hoose conducting. *The Natural World*. Janice Felty mezzo-soprano; Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, John Harbison conducting. New World Records 80395-2.

*Four Songs of Solitude*. Michelle Makarski, violin. New World Records 80391-2.

*Samuel Chapter*. Susan Larson, soprano; Collage, John Harbison conducting. *Ulysses' Bow* Pittsburgh Symphony André Previn conducting. Nonesuch 79129.

Symphony No.1. Boston Symphony, Seiji Ozawa conducting. New World Records 80331-2.

**Ezra Laderman:**

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. Elmar Oliveira, violin. *Sanctuary; Citadel*. Louisville Orchestra, L.L. Smith conducting. Louisville LCD-004.

*June 29th*. Carol Wincenc, flute. CRI CD-561.

*Pentimento*. Albany Symphony, Julius Hegyi conducting. CRI CD-555.

String Quartet No. 6. Audubon Quartet. RCA 7719-2-RC.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**John Harbison:**

Harbison, John. "Six Tanglewood Talks." *Perspectives of New Music*, Spring/Summer 1985, Fall/Winter 1985

Pfeifer, Ellen. "Musician of the Month: John Harbison." *Musical America*, March 1982.

Schwartz, Lloyd. "Music: Hard-won Directness." *Atlantic Monthly* 253, 1984.

Simeone, Lisa. "Music is Like Love and Sex." Interview with John Harbison. *Cadenza*, December 1988.

**Ezra Laderman:**

Berger, Melvin. *Guide to Chamber Music*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1985.

Cantrell, S. "Ezra Laderman: Pentimento." *Nigh Fidelity* 36 (1986). MA 19.

Fleming, Shirley "Ezra Laderman: Musician of the Month." *High Fidelity* 30 (1980). MA 4-5.

Libbey T.W. Jr. "Ezra Laderman: Symphony No.5." *High Fidelity* 33 (1983), MA 28.

*Concerto for Viola and Orchestra* produced by Elizabeth Ostrow.

*Concerto for Double Orchestra* produced by Elizabeth Ostrow and Judith Sherman.

Engineers: Henk Kooistra and Brad Michel, Soundmirror, Inc.

Digital editing: Brad Michel

Editing: Nancy Gunn

Recorded at the Performing Arts Center, SUNY Purchase, August 1990 and February 1991.

Both compositions published by G. Schirmer & Co.

Cover art: Robert Motherwell. *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No.34* (1953-1954). Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 in. Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Gift of Seymour H.Knox, 1957.

Cover design: Bob Defrin

Hugh Wolff appears with the kind permission of Teldec Classics International GMBH.

The two works recorded here were both premiered by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under its music director, Hugh Wolff. John Harbison's *Concerto for Viola and*

*Orchestra* was commissioned jointly by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra with funds from the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program. It received its premiere in May 1990, with the NJSO and soloist Jaime Laredo.

The *Concerto for Double Orchestra* by Ezra Laderman was a NJSO commission, with funds from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and Meet The Composer. It received its first performance in May 1989, in a chamber orchestra version, which now constitutes the three inner movements of the larger work, first performed in January 1991 by the NJSO.

THIS RECORDING WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH GRANTS FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS/DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE BIRCH FOUNDATION, THE GERALDINE R. DODGE FOUNDATION, FRANCIS GOELET, MEET THE COMPOSER, AND THE MEET THE COMPOSER/READER'S DIGEST COMMISSIONING PROGRAM.

John Harbison:

*Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*

1. I. Con moto, rubato (7:29)
2. II. Allegro brillante (2:23)
3. III. Andante (6:05)
4. IV. Molto allegro, gioioso (5:14)

Jaime Laredo, viola

Ezra Laderman:

*Concerto for Double Orchestra*

*"a play within a play"*

5. I. Allegro misterioso (9:04)
6. II. Andante listesso (9:00)
7. III. Allegro giocoso — "Couplings" (5:57)
8. IV. Allegro (7:04)
9. V. Andante ma non troppo (8:31)

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra • Hugh Wolff, conductor

(p)1991 © 1991 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Herman E. Krawitz, President; Paul Marotta, Managing Director; Paul M. Tai, Director of Artists and Repertory; Lisa Kahlden, Director of Information Technology; Virginia Hayward, Administrative Associate; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper

RECORDED ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:  
Francis Goelet, Chairman; David Hamilton, Treasurer; Milton Babbitt; Emanuel Gerard;  
Adolph Green; Rita Hauser; Herman E. Krawitz; Arthur Moorhead; Elizabeth Ostrow; Don  
Roberts; Patrick Smith; Frank Stanton.

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED  
WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION OF R.A.A.M., INC.**

**NEW WORLD RECORDS**  
16 Penn Plaza #835  
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820  
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685  
Website: [www.newworldrecords.org](http://www.newworldrecords.org)  
email: [info@newworldrecords.org](mailto:info@newworldrecords.org)

**LINER NOTES © Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.**