

## LEJAREN HILLER

(1924–1994)

### SONATAS

CONRAD HARRIS VIOLIN  
JOSEPH KUBERA PIANO

#### *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano* (1971) 14:58

1. I. Furioso 3:58
2. II. Largo 6:35
3. III. Prestissimo 4:23

#### *Sonata No. 5 for Piano* (1961) 21:15

4. I. Sonata Allegro 8:36  
Allegro tranquillo. Allegro agitato
5. II. Interlude 6:00  
Lentissimo
6. III. Rondo 4:19  
Presto
7. IV. Finale 2:10  
Allegro moderato, ma accelerando poco  
a poco all "Allegro vivace"

#### *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* (1955) 15:44

8. I. Allegro 7:05
9. II. Larghetto 3:42
10. III. Allegro molto vivace 4:52

TT: 52:04

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

info@newworldrecords.org www.newworldrecords.org

© & © 2018 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.



## LEJAREN HILLER

### SONATAS

CONRAD HARRIS VIOLIN  
JOSEPH KUBERA PIANO

**LEJAREN ARTHUR HILLER JUNIOR (1924–1994)** was born into an artistic household. His father, born John Hiller, changed his name to Lejaren Á Hiller when he moved from Milwaukee to New York City to pursue a career as an artist. The elder Hiller studied painting and illustration at the Chicago Art Institute and also spent time working in various studios in Paris. He turned his attention to photography, and is considered by some to be “the creator of American photographic illustration.”<sup>1</sup>

John Hiller married Sarah Plummer, who had left home at seventeen due to strife with her parents. Plummer had worked as a model for Charles Dana Gibson, the originator of the Gibson Girl, and as a chorus girl in the Ziegfeld Follies. While John Hiller’s tastes as an artist and connoisseur were both conservative, the household was unconventional to say the least, as Lejaren Hiller Junior (hereafter “Hiller”) recalled:

“Sometimes my parents gave wild parties, with nude women and models running around the house. The police would raid our place occasionally because there was so much noise.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to himself and his parents, the household featured 35 cats and a pet monkey.

From a young age Hiller wrote melodies, and experimented by cutting designs and punching holes in piano rolls for the family’s Duo-Art player piano. His parents sought to formalize his music education by having him take piano lessons from Harvey Brown from 1938 to 1941. During this time he also learned to play clarinet and

1 Lejaren Á Hiller, Sr., *Surgery Through the Ages: A Pictorial Chronicle* (New York: Hastings House, 1944): ix.

2 Vincent Plush, “American Music Series: Interview with Lejaren A. Hiller, Jr.” manuscript, November 12, 1983: 3.

saxophone, and as his interest in composition grew he studied harmony with Harvey Officer for a couple of years.

Hiller was admitted to Princeton University in 1941. While he majored in chemistry, he was also very active in music, studying counterpoint, ear training, and composition with Milton Babbitt, as well as composition, analysis, and fugue with Roger Sessions. Outside the University, Hiller studied oboe with Joseph Marx. During his time at Princeton, he played clarinet and saxophone in, wrote arrangements for, and managed the Princeton Tigers, a dance band.

Hiller graduated from Princeton in 1947 at the age of 23 with a Ph.D. in chemistry. For the next five years he worked as a research chemist for DuPont in Waynesboro, Virginia. During this time he ran a small concert series, continued to write music, and saw the premiere of movements from his *Suite for Small Orchestra*.

Dissatisfied with industrial chemistry, Hiller left DuPont in 1952 to become a research associate and assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Illinois. His chemistry research involved the statistical computation of the dimensions of idealized polymer molecules in solutions. To this end, Hiller utilized the school’s ILLIAC 1 computer to simulate probabilistic environments.

Around 1955, he began studying composition with Dr. Hubert Kessler, focusing much of his studies on Schenkerian analysis. Hiller realized the probabilistic methods he was using in his chemistry research could be utilized to generate music, and his master’s thesis in composition undertook an investigation of this potential, yielding the composition *Quartet No. 4 for Strings, The ILLIAC Suite*. The written portion of his thesis was revised and published as *Experimental Music: Composition with an Electronic Computer*.

Hiller realized that as a chemist he would never be taken seriously as a composer. Thus, he transferred to the School of Music at the University of Illinois in 1958, where he started the Experimental Music Studio, the second electronic music facility at an academic institution in the United States. A decade later, Hiller was invited to be the Snee Professor of Composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

In 1987 Hiller contracted encephalitis. After recovering from many of the symptoms of the disease, it was clear that his mental faculties were declining. Small tasks such as keeping pages in order, bringing recordings to class, and dubbing recordings became great frustrations to him. He even told his wife that he had to learn to compose all over again. Hiller continued to teach until 1989, but he moved into a nursing home three years later, dying of a stroke in early 1994. After his death, it was confirmed that he had suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

Hiller is, understandably, best known for his computer-assisted compositions and works utilizing electronics. Of his 74 self-ascribed opus numbers, roughly a third of them utilized some form of electronic or computer-based technology in their creation. Thus, the lion's share of Hiller's work, those pieces that do not utilize technology, tends to be overlooked.

The three pieces included in this collection span a crucial fifteen-year period in Hiller's career. The first was written two years before *Quartet No. 4 for Strings*, *The ILLIAC Suite*. The second work was written three years into his time as a music professor at the University of Illinois, while the final sonata in this collection was written during his second year at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Despite the significant span of time, all three works are sonatas. Notwithstanding Hiller's notoriety for his computer-composed and electronic pieces, more than 60 percent of his output can be characterized as pieces of absolute music, that is, music that is almost entirely self-referential. Of the forty-some pieces of absolute music that Hiller composed, ten of them are sonatas. All but one of these, *Electronic Sonata for Four-Channel Tape*, are for piano, piano and violin, or piano and cello. Given Hiller's propensity for writing absolute music, it could be argued that these three compositions are more representative of his compositional oeuvre than other recorded assemblages of his music. Frankly, a compilation of some of his absolute works is long overdue.

Hiller characterized his *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* in relationship to the reception of one of his other works:

"Not long after I finished my *Twelve-Tone Variations for Piano* (1954), some excerpts of it were played in public. Because twelve-tone music was somewhat of a novelty in those days, I was asked whether I could write 'normal music.' Annoyed by that attitude, I did just that in [*Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano*.]"<sup>3</sup>

However, in spite of the traditional instrumentation, the slow—fast—slow outline, and appealing surface material, it is difficult to call this sonata conventional.

This often Ravel-esque work is tonally advanced and somewhat unusual in its design. Structurally the first movement, marked "Allegro," is in sonata-allegro form, but the tonal layout of the work is unique. The exposition includes a first theme that starts in A minor, with a second theme in C Major. The re-transition emphasizes the subdominant, rather than dominant. In the recapitulation both themes appear a minor third lower than they do in the exposition, which additionally results in the second theme not conforming to the key of the first.

The second movement functions more like an interlude than a complete movement. Marked "Larghetto," the movement is sparsely scored, and features a few brief declarative motifs. Tonally, this interlude drifts from A minor to D minor and back to A minor, settling however on C minor at the final cadence.

"Allegro molto vivace," the final movement, is a spirited work that alternates between the asymmetrical meters of 5/8 and 7/8. Hiller wrote that,

3 Lejaren Hiller, "18A. *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* (1955)" program notes, manuscript, n.d.

“structurally, it is no more than a greatly extended IV—V—I cadence, that is, it moves from D minor to E to A major.”<sup>4</sup> This large-scale elaboration of a harmonic structure could have been inspired by Hiller’s concurrent studies of Schenkerian analysis with Dr. Hubert Kessler. Furthermore, the melodies in this movement tend to emphasize stepwise, downward motion in the foreground level (Figure 1). Suitably exciting, the movement commences with a twelve-measure passage of the melody doubled in octaves in the piano, accompanied by pizzicato chords in the violin. The final eight measures reprise this texture, adding the violin into the tutti octaves.

Figure 1: Violin melody from third movement of *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano*



All rights reserved. Used by kind permission of the heirs of Lejaren A. Hiller, Jr.

Completed in 1955, *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* initially started off as a work for cello and piano, but after most of it had been completed, Hiller decided to rewrite it for violin and piano, keeping the cello and piano version available for performance as well. The third movement of this sonata premiered in February 1956 at a Composer’s Series concert at the University of Illinois. This performance occurred less than half a year before the premiere of the *ILLIAC Suite*, the work by which Hiller would typically be judged for the rest of his career. A full performance of *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* would not occur for nearly 18 years.

Hiller was invited to Warsaw in 1973 by Joseph Patkowski, a director of an electronic music studio. Appearing in a concert dedicated to Hiller’s music,

<sup>4</sup> Lejaren Hiller, “18A. *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* (1955)” program notes, manuscript, n.d.

*Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* premiered in Warsaw in December with sisters Veronika Knittel on violin and Maria Szaiber on piano. Veronika recently recalled that Hiller’s “presence in Warsaw was a great gift for us, Poland was not a free country at that moment.”<sup>5</sup>

Hiller reports that his *Sonata No. 5 for Piano* makes use of an all-interval row, adding that it is not a twelve-tone row, as the note C# is omitted, and the note F appears twice. The first movement is in sonata allegro form. The first theme is sparse and tranquil, while the second is rhythmic and agitated, making use of repeated sonorities (thirds repeated four times) punctuated by minor ninths (Figure 2). The development effectively integrates material from the contrasting themes. Interestingly, in the recapitulation Hiller chose to present the themes in reverse order, starting with the cadential theme, which is closely based upon the second theme. This reverse order results in a movement that could also be characterized as a rondo with an extended development section in the center.

Figure 2: Second theme of first movement from *Sonata No. 5 for Piano*



Copyright © 1973 by Henmar Press Inc. All rights reserved. Used by kind permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> Veronika Schreiber-Kablubkiewicz, email to the author, January 28, 2018.

The second movement, marked “Interlude,” is scored for the treble portion of the piano, yielding light sonorities and textures. The first twelve measures introduce the bulk of the material for the movement—an ascending, unaccompanied melody, rolled chords, and repeated notes & clusters. A forty-one measure impromptu on this material follows with a few new gestures introduced. The final fourteen measures recap the opening material, but in a jumbled order, starting with the rolled chords, moving on to the repeated notes & clusters, and ending with the opening melody.

Marked “Rondo,” the third movement has the character of a scherzo. The opening theme (Figure 3) invokes its musical joke through metric ambiguity. Both hands alternate between material that emphasize a 6/8 pattern and a 3/4 pattern. Later in the theme the right hand continues to alternate between 6/8 and 3/4, while the left hand bangs out a pattern in 2/4. Later on, a hemiola that repeats once every five eighth notes further muddies the meter.

Figure 3: Opening theme from third movement of *Sonata No. 5 for Piano*



Copyright © 1973 by Henmar Press Inc. All rights reserved. Used by kind permission of C.F. Peters Corporation.

The final movement, marked “Finale,” makes use of 10/8 and 7/8 throughout. It commences with a three-voice fugal exposition. The episodes that follow tend to utilize new material. However, the final section of the movement does not return to the fugal theme, but rather introduces a new theme that references the repeated thirds punctuated by minor ninths from the second theme of the first movement, although here the thirds are repeated three times. A final point of interest about the *Sonata No. 5 for Piano* is the manner in which each movement becomes progressively shorter in time, culminating in a final movement that lasts slightly longer than two minutes.

Composed in 1961, the fifth piano sonata premiered on April 19th, 1969 in New York City with Kenwyn Boldt performing, who later recorded the piece for Orion Records. Paired with Hiller’s *Sonata No. 4 for Piano*, played by Boldt’s wife Frina, the disc was released in 1975.

Like the second sonata, *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano* uses a traditional fast—slow—fast movement design. After this, the differences evaporate rapidly. The third sonata bridges the world of modernism and post-modernity to an extent. Hiller makes a case for the third sonata being in C, with the center movement stressing G $\flat$ . However, he clearly means that these individual notes are emphasized, creating a feeling of being centered on a note, rather than truly utilizing tonality. In general, the work uses post-tonal material emphasizing tone clusters, sevenths, and, to a lesser extent, fifths and tritones. Furthermore, the piece features many of the hallmarks heard in Hiller’s other modernistic pieces, namely numeric patterns, symmetrical structures, and building progressions.

The first movement, marked “Furioso,” is written in sonata-allegro form. While several of the gestures in the movement clearly use a twelve-tone row, it is unlikely that the movement is fully serial. As the first theme comes to a close, the violin plays a minor second double-stop first as a sextuplet, then as a quintuplet, dropping an attack each time until it settles on a quarter note.

The accompaniment of the second theme features a similar pattern, where the right hand of the piano intones a perfect fifth on C for one eighth note, then two, and then three. This pattern is then repeated in the violin as a double-stop on the same pitches. The retransition of the development features an extended section of isolated notes and sonorities in the two instruments, before repeating the opening quadruple stop once every dotted quarter note 18 times while accompanied by clusters in the piano repeated every half note. Curiously, the second and cadential themes of the recapitulation occur a perfect fourth up from where they were in the exposition. With post-modern flair, the movement has the pianist playing tremolos with both hands while playing a tone cluster with his or her chin on several occasions.

Surrounded by two very virtuosic movements, the second movement, marked “Largo,” is non-virtuosic in a theatric, post-modern manner. The violin uses snap pizzicato to play a minor second double-stop once every seven eighth notes for all but the final (bowed) note of the movement. “Largo” is essentially a written-out crescendo. The piano plays the same two notes down two octaves once every five eighth notes. A second pattern in the piano adds an additional second once every 35 eighth notes, until the pianist switches to playing clusters inside the piano using a felt tam-tam mallet. A repeated G♭ in the piano adds additional tones in a systematic way as well, once every 50 eighth notes, then 55, and then 60. Once the movement hits a climax, the pianist lets the sound ring using the sustain pedal, eventually adding a chromatic cluster once every nine eighth notes.

“Prestissimo,” the final movement, is a rondo set in 5/8 time. Every section of the rondo features a mirror structure to one extent or another. Some of the material is run in reverse, while some run forward within a bar, but appear in reverse order. Like the first movement, “Prestissimo” frequently features quadruple stops. In fact, the opening quadruple stop of the piece is repeated by the violin for 18 measures near the end of the piece.

Hiller composed his *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano* for Buffalo area musicians Mark Sokol (violin) and Roger Shields (piano). He wrote the work during the last couple of months of 1970, putting the final polish on the work during a trip to the Canary Islands in January, 1971. Sokol and Shields premiered the work on April 13th of 1971 in Albany, New York, and recorded the piece for Turnabout Records (released in 1973).

When these works were reviewed by the press at performances, Hiller was often referred to as a “composer of electronic music”<sup>6</sup> or an “electronic composer.”<sup>7</sup> A review of the score to the third sonata for violin and piano noted that Hiller, “is probably best known as the writer . . . of the first computer music.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this collection will serve to help re-label Hiller for what he was, a composer.

—James Bohn

*James Bohn is a composer and music technology specialist who teaches at Stonehill College. His book on Lejaren Hiller is published by the Edwin Mellen Press.*

---

Violinist **Conrad Harris** has performed at Ostrava Days, Darmstadt Ferienkürse für Neue Musik, Gulbenkian Encounters of New Music, Radio France, Warsaw Autumn, and the NY Sonic Boom Festival. He is a member of the FLUX Quartet and violin duo String Noise, concertmaster/soloist with the S.E.M. Orchestra, Ostravská Banda, STX Ensemble, Wordless Music Orchestra and Ensemble LPR. He has performed and recorded with Elliott Sharp, Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, “Blue” Gene Tyranny, Jean-Claude Risset, Rohan de Saram, and Tiny Tim. He has also recorded for Asphodel, Vandenburg, CRI, Northern Spy, and Vinyl Retentive Records.

6 Thomas Putnam, “UB’s Hiller Waited 18 Years to Hear His Sonata,” *Buffalo Courier Express* (June 12, 1977): 31.

7 John Dwyer.

8 George Webber, “Music Reviews—Orchestra” *Southwestern Musician—Texas Music Educator* (August 1976): 20.

Pianist **Joseph Kubera** has been a leading interpreter of contemporary music for the past four decades. He has been a soloist at major European and U.S. festivals and has worked closely with such composers as John Cage, Morton Feldman, La Monte Young, and Robert Ashley. Among those he has commissioned are Michael Byron, Alvin Lucier, Roscoe Mitchell, and David First. He has made definitive recordings of major Cage works, and toured extensively with the Cunningham Dance Company at Cage's invitation. A core member of S.E.M. Ensemble, he has been active with many New York groups, from Steve Reich and Musicians to the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He has recorded for Wergo, Albany, New Albion, New World, Lovely Music, O.O. Discs, Mutable Music, Cold Blue, and Opus One. Mr. Kubera has been awarded grants through the National Endowment for the Arts and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. [www.josephkubera.com](http://www.josephkubera.com)

---

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- A Total Matrix of Possibilities*. Contains *Computer Cantata*, *Quartet No. 6 for Strings*, and *Portfolio For Diverse Performers*. New World Records 80694.
- Computer Music Retrospective* (1957–1985). Contains *An Avalanche for Pitchman*, *Prima Donna*, *Player-Piano*, *Percussionist*, and *Pre-recorded Playback*; *Computer Music for Percussion and Tape*; *Expo '85 for Multiple Synthesizers*; *Persiflage for Flute, Oboe, and Percussion*; and *Quartet No. 4 for Strings*, "ILLIAC" Suite. Wergo 60128-50.
- HPSCHD*. John Cage and Lejaren Hiller. EMF Media EM 138-2.
- Metaphors for Guitar Quartet*. The Buffalo Guitar Quartet. New World Records 80384.

*Quadrilateral for Piano and Tape*. Sven Thomas Kiebler. 2e2m 1014.

*String Quartet No. 5 (in Quarter Tones)*. Concord String Quartet. Included on *American String Quartets 1950–1970*. Vox Box CDX 5143.

---

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Robert A. and Lejaren A. Hiller, Jr. "Computer Cantata: A Study in Composition Method." *Perspectives of New Music* 3.2 (1964): 62–90.
- Bohn, James. "Lejaren Hiller." *The Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*. Ed. Larry Sitsky. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- . "Lejaren Hiller: Early Experiments in Computer and Electronic Music" *No Boundaries: University of Illinois Vignettes*. Ed. Lillian Hoddeson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004: 293–303.
- . *The Music of American Composer Lejaren Hiller and an Examination of His Early Works Involving Technology*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.
- Brooks, William. "In re: Experimental Music" *Contemporary Music Review* 31.1 (February 1, 2012): 37–62.
- Caras, Tracy and Cole Gagne. *Soundpieces: Interviews With American Composers*. Metachen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982.
- Hiller, Lejaren A., Jr. "Composing with Computers: A Progress Report." *Computer Music Journal* 5.4 (1981): 7–21.
- . "Informationstheorie und Computermusik." *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 8 (1963): 7–62.

Hiller, Lejaren A., Jr. and Leonard M. Isaacson. *Experimental Music: Composition with an Electronic Computer*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Husarik, Stephen. "John Cage and Lejaren Hiller: *HPSCHD*, 1969." *American Music* 1.2 (Summer 1983): 1–21.

Publishing:

*Sonata No. 5 for Piano*: C.F. Peters Corp.

*Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano*: (MS) © Amanda Hiller & David Hiller.

*Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano*: Theodore Presser Co.

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman

Engineering and editing assistant: Jeanne Velonis

Recorded June 29–30, 2017 at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City.

Steinway technician: Li Li Dong

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions Inc., NYC

Design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc.

Piano by Steinway and Sons

**This recording was made possible by a grant from the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trust.**

Special thanks to John Bewley, Associate Librarian/Archivist, University at Buffalo Music Library.

Thanks to Gene Caprioglio of C.F. Peters Corp. and Amanda Hiller.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Lisa Kahlden, President; Paul M. Tai, Vice-President, Director of Artists and Repertory; Paul Herzman, Production Associate.

ANTHOLOGY OF RECORDED MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Amy Beal, Thomas Teige Carroll, Robert Clarida, Emanuel Gerard, Lisa Kahlden, Herman Krawitz, Fred Lerdahl, Larry Polansky, Paul M. Tai.

Francis Goelet (1926–1998), *In Memoriam*

For a complete catalog, including liner notes, visit our Web site:

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

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

E-mail: [info@newworldrecords.org](mailto:info@newworldrecords.org)

© & © 2018 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.



80799-2

**LEJAREN HILLER**

(1924–1994)

**SONATAS****CONRAD HARRIS** VIOLIN  
**JOSEPH KUBERA** PIANOFile Under:  
Classical/Hiller, Lejaren*Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano* (1971) 14:58

1. I. Furioso 3:58
2. II. Largo 6:35
3. III. Prestissimo 4:23

*Sonata No. 5 for Piano* (1961) 21:15

4. I. Sonata Allegro 8:36  
Allegro tranquillo. Allegro agitato
5. II. Interlude 6:00  
Lentissimo
6. III. Rondo 4:19  
Presto
7. IV. Finale 2:10  
Allegro moderato, ma accelerando poco  
a poco all "Allegro vivace"

*Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* (1955) 15:44

8. I. Allegro 7:05
9. II. Larghetto 3:42
10. III. Allegro molto vivace 4:52

TT: 52:04

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

info@newworldrecords.org www.newworldrecords.org

© &amp; © 2018 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.