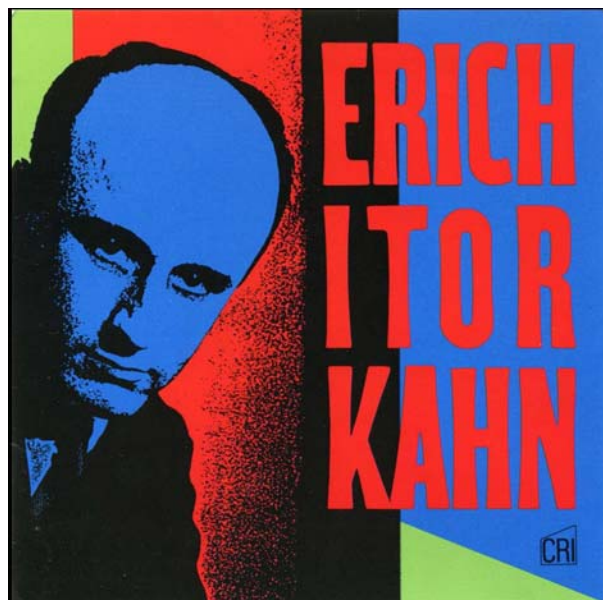


Erich Itor Kahn



Three Inventions (Nos. 8, 4 & 7) (1937) (6:53)

1. VIII(2:45)
2. IV(1:12)
3. VII(2:56)

Thomas Gunther, piano

Nenia Judaeis Qui Hac Aetate Perierunt (1940-41).... (16:19)
(In Memory of the Jews Who Perished in the Holocaust)

4. Andante Molto Sostenuto (5:41)

5. Allegro Moderato, Ma Con Molto Fuoco (10:38)

John Sessions, violoncello;
 Thomas Gunther, piano

Three Bagatelles (1935-40) (12:55)

6. Moderato (for Erich Schmid) (4:45)
7. Adagio, Vivo, Adagio (for Rene Leibowitz) (5:00)
8. Poco allegro (for Beveridge Webster) (3:10)

Thomas Gunther, piano

Trois Chansons Populaires (1938)..... (6:50)

9. J'ai repoussé la bonne rive (2:13)
10. D'ou vient oue le soleil s'en est allé..... (2:07)
11. Dessus l'herbe (2:30)

Catherine Gayer, soprano; Frank Maus, piano

Adagio (1946)

12. (Rhapsodie) from *Concerto a Due* (12:45)
 Johannes Prelle, violin; Thomas Gunther

Four Pieces on Medieval German Poems (1930)..... (14:22)

13. Maria ging whol längs dem meer (3:00)
14. Ich wollt mich zur lieben Maria (2:43)
15. Maria durch ein' Dornwald ging (3:06)
16. Ave Maria, ein' Ros' ohn alle Dorn (5:33)

Catherine Gayer, soprano; Frank Maus, piano

Total playing time: 70:38

© & © 1988 Composers Recordings, Inc.
 © 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

Notes

Although strongly influenced by Arnold Schoenberg, **Erich Itor Kahn** (b 1905, Rimbach, Germany; d 1956, New York City) developed his own distinct and original musical language very early on. He began to compose during the era in which fascism and Nazism, with their reactionary influences, dominated all artistic activities in many parts of Europe. Despite these hostile surroundings, Kahn unswervingly followed the developments of his musical style.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Kahn and his wife Frida were forced to leave Germany and settled in Paris. In 1940, Germany invaded France, and, as foreigners of German origin, both Kahns were interned in concentration camps. Finally, in 1941, with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dushin, they were able to immigrate to the USA where, in 1947, they became citizens. There, Kahn became a highly respected pianist and teacher.

Kahn composed his Eight Inventions, Op. 7 in Paris from 1937 to 1938. Highly pianistic and expressive, these pieces are composed in a twelve-tone structure that integrates tonal elements. Invention No. 8 (*Allegretto tenero*) is an example of this integration. It is based on an old German lullaby of five notes. This melody is supplemented by a row of seven tones, thus creating a "total chromatic." Invention No. 4 (*Allegretto grazioso*) is a twelve-tone canon that moves in contrary motion. Invention No. 7 (*Tempo moderato di valse*) is the

most extended piece of the cycle. It has a greatly differentiated rhythm, and it uses all registers of the keyboard to create a complex and powerful impression.

The main part of *Nenia judaeis qui hac aetate perierunt* (*In memory of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust*) was composed during Kahn's internment in 1940–41 at the French concentration camp Les Milles. He completed it in New York in 1943. *Nenia* is a composition of intense expressivity and astonishing density. Based on a steadily varied twelve-tone row, it uses a procedure that Schoenberg called "continuous variation." Nothing is repeated, but the whole has convincing unity. As is usual for Kahn's music, each note is precise and strong in expression.

The Three Bagatelles for piano are among Kahn's most radical compositions. They were composed in Paris between 1935 and 1940. The fragmented lines and nervous rhythms embrace the entire keyboard, producing rich, atonal harmonies and melodies that range from poetic tenderness to aggressive intensity.

During his exile in France, Kahn was commissioned to write a chamber work on the folk melodies of Brittany. He made an extended study of this material and grew to love it. Upon completion of *Trois Chansons populaires*, he composed a number of orchestral and chamber works using these melodies as thematic material. Among the works were three songs for

soprano and piano based on texts by Joseph Leibowitz. These compositions retain the freshness of folk songs, but are full of Kahn's personal inventiveness.

While still in France, Kahn began composing the three-movement *Concerto a Due* for violin and piano. He continued working on it in New York but only completed the second movement, *Adagio* (Rhapsodie). Although both instrumental parts are technically demanding, this virtuosity is used to produce a concentrated expression of deep melancholy rather than superficial effects. The *Adagio's* rondo form is enriched by variation techniques that articulate its musical discourse.

Kahn composed his *Four Pieces on Medieval German Poems* in Germany in 1930. At that time, few composers dared to write such free and novel music even if it sprang from traditional roots. Both the singing voice and the piano are treated according to their personal characteristics, thus giving the impression of a sovereign independence. Still, the relation between the two parts is very logical. Melody, harmony, meter, and rhythm display a sumptuous variety that stands in marked contrast to much of the music produced in Germany at that time.

—Juan Allende-Blin

Juan Allende-Blin has been acquainted with Erich Itor Kahn's music since 1950 and has directed performances of it for radio broadcast and in concert. He has written several articles about Kahn's music and is working on a biography of the composer.

Thomas Gunther studies at the Folkwang Conservatory in Essen and at the Fine Arts College in Berlin. As a student, Mr. Gunther concentrated on contemporary music and attended the Summer School for Contemporary Music in

Darmstadt where he studied with Herbert Henck. He has performed and premiered many works by young composers and has appeared as a soloist with many leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic.

Cellist **John Sessions** studied at the Manhattan School of Music, the Cologne Musikhochschule, and the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. He is currently professor of music at Smith College.

Catherine Gayer received her musical training at Los Angeles City College and UCLA, and in Europe where she made her operatic debut in the premiere of Luigi Nono's opera *Intolleranza*. She is a principal singer with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and has been one of their leading sopranos for more than twenty years. Ms. Gayer has been a guest artist in many leading opera houses and music festivals throughout Europe.

Frank Maus began his piano studies at age nine and wrote his first composition at age eleven. After formal studies in Wuppertal, Cologne, and Vienna, he began his career as a chamber music performer, accompanist, and vocal coach at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. He has regularly collaborated in master classes with Ernst Haefliger and Nathan Milstein. Since 1983 he has taught at the Fine Arts College in Berlin. Mr. Maus has written numerous works for piano, chamber ensembles, and voice.

Johannes Prelle has served as concertmaster with orchestras in Braunschweig, Hannover, Hamburg, and Cologne. Since 1980 he has been the first violinist with the Leonardo String Quartet with whom he has premiered and recorded many contemporary works.

Production Notes

All works published by American Composers Alliance Editions (BMI).

Bagatelle, Inventions, *Nenia*, *Concerto a Due* recorded June 9–10, 1987.

Adagio recorded November 2, 1987.

Sound studio Nedeltshev, Cologne, Germany.

Engineer: Nedeltshev.

Producer: Juan Allende-Blin.

Trois Chanson populaires, *Four Pieces* recorded November 10–11, 1987.

Ton Studios, West Berlin, Germany.

Engineer: Hansa.

Producer: Juan Allende-Blin.

This recording was made possible through the generosity of Madame Anne Gruner-Schulumberger.