

NWCR 575

Richard Wilson / Meyer Kupferman

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston



Meyer Kupferman	
Clarinet Concerto (1984)	(25:55)
1. Con moto	(9:21)
2. Adagio non troppo	(8:51)
3. Allegro vivace e scherzando	(7:43)
Peter Alexander, clarinet	
Richard Wilson	
4. Bassoon Concerto (1983)	(19:32)
Robert Wagner, bassoon	
Richard Wilson	
Suite for Small Orchestra (1988)	(12:39)
5. March	(1:02)
6. Nocturne	(2:05)
7. Waltz	(0:57)
8. Benediction	(1:28)
9. Tarantella	(0:52)
10. Arabesque	(1:14)
11. Prelude	(2:53)
12. Valediction	(2:08)
Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Leon Botstein, conductor	

Total playing time: 58:01

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Notes

My Clarinet Concerto (1984) was commissioned by Leon Botstein for the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and was completed in the summer of 1984. The work was composed especially for Peter Alexander, who had performed my *Tunnels of Love* earlier and premiered my *A Little Licorice Concerto* at the International Clarinet Festival (KlarFest) in Baltimore in 1986.

The new work was inspired by thoughts of Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti, whose 300th birthdays were being celebrated in 1985. The new concerto uses three melodic fragments—one from each of these three—as the basis for its structure.

Although the first movement begins with a strong announcement of the B-A-C-H motif in the horns, the body of the movement is based on a flowing 6/8 Scarlatti tune from his D minor harpsichord sonata. The Scarlatti melody is suggested in lyrical variations throughout the movement with humorous touches in some of the cadenza passages. I tried to achieve a special warmth and expressivity for one of the melodic conversions because I experienced a kind of déjà vu while working on this movement. I was haunted by this tune since childhood and had played it frequently on the clarinet in those early years. Since I was also enamored of George Gershwin during the same period, mixed thoughts of Gershwin and Scarlatti began to play games in my composing head during the rhythmic finale of the first movement.

The second movement is entirely bound up with the B-A-C-H fragment. The design is urgent and intensely concentrated, building to an *altissimo* register climax in the clarinet line. The B-A-C-H motif has been a challenge to me during other creative periods—again perhaps a kind of déjà vu. I remember being entangled with it in two other big works several decades ago, in my Fourth Symphony and my Second Piano Concerto. All three works utilize the motif in powerful orchestral gestures. The Clarinet Concerto, however, slowly fades down after its highest moment to a quiet nostalgic ending.

The finale is a fast scherzo which opens with a theme from Handel's G minor Suite for strings. The tune, introduced by the clarinet alone—which I chose to set in a bouncy articulation—is immediately inverted and adapted to a spicy contemporary chromatic setting. Soon the whole orchestra joins in with comments and variations, often engendering very complex rhythmic patterns as a restless counterfoil to the clarinet virtuosity. There are several clarinet cadenzas here, all of which heighten the focus of extreme virtuosity required of the performer. Since I am still an active performer on the clarinet—and since I was writing for a gifted artist like Peter Alexander, whom I knew well and to whom I could demonstrate my instrumental idea—it seemed quite fitting that I explore new areas of virtuosity, timbre, and expressiveness on that instrument.

—Meyer Kupferman

Meyer Kupferman (*d* New York, 2003) was born in Manhattan in 1926. He received his education at the High School of Music and Art and Queens College. He is entirely self-taught in music composition. For thirty years he has been professor of composition and chamber music at Sarah Lawrence College, where he also served as chairman of the music department for four terms.

Mr. Kupferman was on a Guggenheim Fellowship in Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1975, during which time he completed his major full-length opera, *Prometheus Condemned*. In 1976 and 1978, he received two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts for his Second Piano Concerto and his *Fantasy Concerto*. An award by the Ford Foundation made possible a recording of the Cello Concerto by VOX Records (Turnabout) with Laszlo Varga, cellist. Mr. Kupferman's most recent award was from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1981) which honored him with the composition prize and a recording of his own music.

Mr. Kupferman is an unusually prolific composer who has an impressive output of work in all forms: six operas, twelve symphonies, nine ballets, seven string quartets, and ten concerti. His strong interest in jazz has been abundantly demonstrated by such "classical jazz" compositions as *Concerto for Cello and Jazz Band* (recorded by David Wells), *Sonata on Jazz Elements*, and *Jazz Symphony* (1988), among others. His *Jazz String Quartet* was commissioned by the State Department and performed in Africa, Europe, and at a special performance at the White House by the Claremont String Quartet. Most of these jazz-based compositions are an integral part of his *Cycle of Infinities*, a series of full-length concert works all evolved from the same twelve-tone row, started in 1962.

His Gertrude Stein opera, *In a Garden*, was performed at the Edinburgh Music Festival and his ballet, *Persephone*, was presented at the Salzburg Music Festival by the Boston Ballet Company. His most recent dance work, *O Thou Desire*, choreographed by Martha Graham, was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House and telecast from Wolf Trap on Public TV.

The Louisville Orchestra commissioned and recorded his Fourth Symphony. The Library of Congress, under a subsidy from the McKim Fund, commissioned and recorded his *Fantasy Sonata* (with Robert Mann and William Masselos). This work, chosen as one of the ten best records of the year, was later introduced to New York audiences by Itzhak Perlman and Helen Armstrong. The Saitenberg Little Symphony commissioned and premiered his *Little Symphony*, which won a recording prize by the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Mr. Kupferman's *Lyric Symphony*, commissioned by the Rudofker After Six Fund and recorded by the Japan Philharmonic, was premiered in America by the California Music Center Symphony Orchestra during a festival of his music. During one of their American concert tours, Arthur Weisberg's Contemporary Chamber Players featured Meyer Kupferman's *Infinities 12* (a chamber-jazz symphony) at the University of Chicago, the Library of Congress, the New School, Rutgers, and various colleges of the West Coast.

Mr. Kupferman's Symphony No. 10: "FDR," a symphonic portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was premiered by the Hudson Valley Philharmonic under Maestro Imre Pallo on the 100th birthday of FDR as part of New York State's centennial celebration. His *Symphony for Twelve* was premiered by the Poné New Music Ensemble at the College at New Paltz (SUNY) and at Vassar College two weeks later. The revised version of his *Concerto for Cello and Jazz Band* was premiered at the Aspen Music Festival with Laszlo Varga on cello; Gary Gray, conductor. Helen Armstrong premiered

Kupferman's *Soundspells 5* for solo violin at Alice Tully Hall during the 1982–83 season. *Challenger*, a major work for large orchestra, was completed in 1983 and premiered by the American Composers Orchestra under Dennis Russell Davies. This piece was conceived as a tribute to the spaceship *Challenger* before the disaster of 1985. The work was first performed in Carnegie Hall.

Richard Wilson: Bassoon Concerto (1983)

Dr. Johnson on the idea of a bassoon concerto (spurious): "Like a dog's walking on his hind legs it is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." My reaction when asked to write such a piece was of skepticism. I worried that the bassoon, famous for its ability to blend—to become a horn, clarinet, oboe, or whatever to fill out an instrumental choir—would fail to project, would fade into the wallpaper, would become the anti-hero in a traditionally heroic genre. Beyond the chameleonic tendency, the acoustical complexity of the instrument gives rise to fingering patterns that often impede fluency and inhibit virtuosic display.

Then there is the image problem. Operatic composers since Mozart have labeled the bassoon a buffoon and linked it to preposterous characters and situations on stage.

But it is an instrument that I have always loved. It renders rhythms with particular crispness and clarity. Its plaintive, primordial voice speaks and sings of the precariousness of the human condition. I could not resist the chance to help it reach out to a larger audience.

My Bassoon Concerto exhibits three joined movements that are framed by music acting as prelude and postlude. The first two movements are rather fast and possess at least some characteristics of waltz and toccata, respectively. The concluding slow movement is of a lyrical nature.

Throughout, the bassoon displays a capacity for friendship. Its principal dialogues take place with the English horn, French horn, solo cello, bass clarinet and contrabassoon. It is most at home among the harp and marimba. It is most threatened by the trumpets and trombone. In the end, of course, it easily withstands their onslaughts to have, so to speak, the last word.

This work was first performed on January 28, 1984 by Robert Wagner, soloist, and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, with maestro Imre Pallo. The following summer it was performed in Graz, Austria, at a meeting of the International Double Reed Society, by Cornelius Eberhard and the AIMS Symphony Orchestra. Again Robert Wagner was the soloist.

Suite for Small Orchestra (1988)

In 1979, I composed a set of eight short pieces for piano inspired by the curative and magical properties of herbs. Intended as teaching material for moderately advanced—but youthful—piano students, this work was published under the title *Sour Flowers*.

In the summer of 1988, I scored this music for the same orchestration as my Bassoon Concerto. I have dropped the herbal subtitles and inscriptions but retained the character designations present to the original for each movement.

These names are largely self-evident. However the seventh—Prelude—may appear to be out of order. This title arises out of the tribute that movement pays to the opening of *Tristan und Isolde* rather than its function with the set.

Suite for Small Orchestra was given its premiere by the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Leon Botstein conducting, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on September 10, 1988.

—Richard Wilson

Richard Wilson was born in Cleveland in 1941. He studied piano with Roslyn Pettibone, Egbert Fischer, and Leonard Shure, and cello with Robert Ripley and Ernst Silberstein. His first compositional studies were with Roslyn Pettibone and Howard Whittaker. Much of his early musical study took place at the Cleveland Music School Settlement.

Richard Wilson graduated from Harvard in 1963, magna cum laude in music and member of Phi Beta Kappa. At Harvard, he studied composition with Robert Moevs. The recipient of the Frank Huntington Beebe Award for study in Europe, he worked on piano in Munich with Frederich Wührer and composition in Rome, again with Robert Moevs. He followed Moevs to Rutgers, where he earned his master's degree.

In 1966, Richard Wilson joined the faculty of Vassar College, where he has twice served as chair of the department of music. He currently is Mary Conover Mellon professor of music at Vassar.

Mr. Wilson has composed over fifty works ranging in medium from solo flute to full orchestra. These have been performed in major halls in New York, Washington, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Zurich, Milan, Graz, Stockholm, Tokyo, Bogota, and various cities in Australia, as well as the Aspen Music Festival, the Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles, and at many American colleges and universities.

Among performers and ensembles who have played Mr. Wilson's music may be listed: Harvey Sollberger, Ursula Oppens, Fred Sherry, Arthur Weisberg, Paul Sperry, Nancy Allen, Blanca Uribe, Todd Crow, David Burge, Aleksi Tekenouchi, the Muir Quartet, the Delmé Quartet, the Composers Quartet, the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, the Goldman Band, the William Appling Singers, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, and the San Francisco Symphony.

In 1986, Richard Wilson received the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1988, he received the Creative Arts Award in Music from the City of Cleveland.

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra Of Boston is one of the few cooperatively owned orchestras in the United States. Founded in 1978 by a group of Boston's finest professional musicians and late music director Larry Hill, this unusual ensemble has been praised by audiences and critics alike for its daring programming, unique spirit, and exceptional artistry. Gunther Schuller, noted composer, conductor, and music historian, holds the position of principal guest conductor. At the invitation of the musicians, many other American and international conductors and soloists appear regularly with the orchestra.

Committed to both performing and commissioning new compositions, in its eleven-year history Pro Arte has presented over fifty works by living composers, including thirty-five world premieres. In addition, the orchestra also presents traditional repertoire, often alongside rarely heard historical gems such as Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto, John Knowles Paine's *St. Peter Oratorio*, and arias from Spain's magnificent Zarzuela tradition.

Acclaimed not only for its musical adventurousness, Pro Arte has also received accolades for its model "Access to the Best Music" program. Developed in 1983, this program has allowed hundreds of elderly and special needs music-lovers to attend Pro Arte's concerts.

Leon Botstein, conductor, was born in Zurich in 1946. He holds the B.A. from the University of Chicago and the M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University.

He studied violin and viola with Roman Totenberg and also Herbert Froelich and Bernard Kadinoff. His conducting teachers were Richard Wernick and James Yannatos. At the age of seventeen he won a conducting competition at the University of Chicago and went on to become the assistant conductor of the university orchestras at Chicago and Harvard. In the mid-1970s he was principal conductor of the White Mountain Festival in New Hampshire. From 1975 to 1981 he was a frequent guest conductor with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and since 1981 he has been co-conductor of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

Leon Botstein has premiered works by Richard Wernick, Meyer Kupferman, Robert Starer, Daniel Brewbaker, and Richard Wilson. In 1986, he made his debut in London with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1988, he returned for another engagement with Rudolf Firkušný as soloist. He has also conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra in London and the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston.

He has written on music for the *New Republic*, *19th Century Music*, *Musical Quarterly*, and *Harper's*. His book *Music and Its Public: Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870-1914*, is due for publication by the University of Chicago Press in 1990.

Dr. Botstein is president and professor of history and music history at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Peter Alexander, clarinetist, is the dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts at SUNY—the College at New Paltz. Dr. Alexander has degrees from Columbia University, the University of Wisconsin and the Eastman School of Music. He is principal clarinetist with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and has often appeared with them as soloist. He directs the Hudson Valley Wind Quintet which, since 1984, has received substantial yearly support from the New York State Council of the Arts to perform concerts throughout New York State. He has worked closely with composer Meyer Kupferman and premiered many works including two concertos and numerous pieces of chamber music. He has performed before congresses of the International Clarinet Society and has recorded for Soundspells and Composers Recordings, Inc. During the summers, Alexander directs concerts of twentieth-century music for the Music in the Mountains Festival. In 1984 he was a National Endowment for the Humanities visiting scholar at Harvard University, and he has received numerous grants and awards for a variety of educational and creative projects.

Robert Wagner, bassoonist, began his studies with the famed Simon Kovar and Norman Herzberg in Los Angeles. He graduated with a master of music degree from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Stephen Maxym. Mr. Wagner is principal bassoonist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra; the orchestra manager of the summer American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria; and a member of the Boehm Quintette. As a busy freelance artist, he has been a featured artist at the Salzburg Mozarteum and the soloist in the premiere of Richard Wilson's Concerto for Bassoon and Chamber Orchestra.

Production Notes

Meyer Kupferman
Clarinet Concerto
Published by: Soundspells Productions (ASCAP)
Recorded: February 28, 1988
Producer: Meyer Kupferman, Leon Botstein
John Yanelli, Associate Producer

Richard Wilson
Bassoon Concerto
Suite for Small Orchestra
Published by: Southern Music Publishing Company, Inc. (ASCAP)
(Peer-Southern Concert Music)
Recorded: September 11, 1988
Producer: Richard Wilson, Leon Botstein
John Yanelli, Associate Producer

All works digitally recorded, edited, and pre-mastered by Dr. Toby Mountain, assisted by Jonathan Wyner, Northeastern Digital Recording, Inc.

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