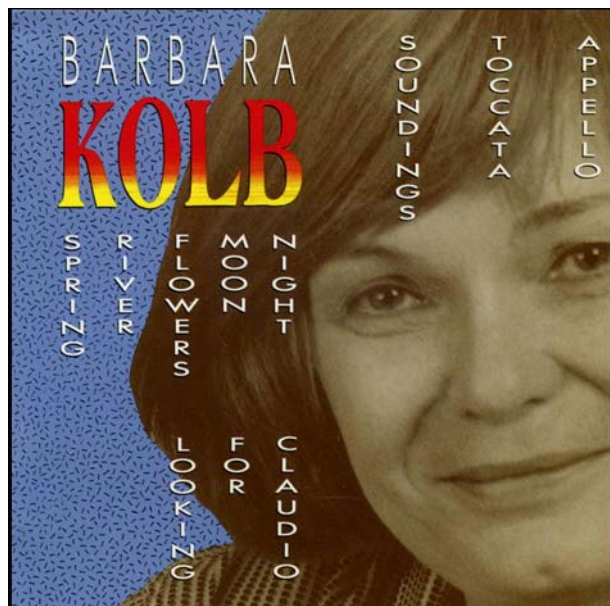


Barbara Kolb



1. *Soundings* (1971-72) (17:15)
L'Ensemble Intercontemporain;
Arturo Tamayo, conductor
2. Domenico Scarlatti: Sonata in
B minor (K. 87, L.33) (3:15)
3. Toccata (1971) (4:11)
Igor Kipnis, harpsichord
4. *Appello* (1976) (13:16)
Jay Gottlieb, piano
5. *Looking for Claudio* (1975) (11:47)
David Starobin, guitar and mandolin; Gordon
Gottlieb, percussion; Alexandra Ivanoff, soprano;
Patrick Mason, baritone (1 and 2)
6. *Spring River Flowers Moon Night* (1974-75) (19:14)
Robert Phillips, Franco Renzulli, pianists; Brooklyn
College Percussion Ensemble; Barbara Kolb,
conductor; David Starobin, guitar and mandolin;
tape realized at Brooklyn College Electronic Studio

Total Playing Time: 69:25

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Notes

Now that CRI has issued a compact disc devoted entirely to Barbara Kolb, the listener has the opportunity to experience five eloquent and differentiated works in close proximity to one another—an excellent way to learn a composer's language.

Like many contemporary artists, Kolb might superficially be described as an eclectic: her music has combined, cheek by jowl, tonal, atonal, serial, chance, and electronic elements. Yet such is the force of Kolb's creative personality that she manages to unify and transcend these divergent elements. She has, as they say, a "profile" and her music never devolves into mere pastiche. Moreover, there is an abiding lyricism in her work which is rarely obscured, no matter how complicated her music syntax.

"Recognizing one's own personality is probably the single most essential ingredient to the development of an artist and may very well take an entire lifetime to achieve," Kolb has written. "The more an individual develops a consciousness of what he is, of himself, the more he's able to transform what comes into him and integrate it into some substance or energy which is also creative."

Barbara Kolb was born on February 10, 1939 in Hartford, Connecticut, a staunchly conservative city which also boasts, paradoxically, a long tradition of nurturing the avant-garde. Her father was a pianist, organist, composer/arranger of popular music, and music director of WTIC, then as now one of Connecticut's most popular radio stations.

She began her musical studies at the age of eleven, when she took up the clarinet. In high school, she wrote both words and music for the class song. Upon graduation, she received a full scholarship to the Hartt College of Music at the University of Hartford. She remained at Hartt for seven years, earning her bachelor of arts degree cum laude in 1961 and her master of

music degree in composition three years later; her teachers included Louis Speyer, Leon Russianoff, and Arnold Franchetti. She spent the summers of 1964 and 1968 at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, where she studied composition with, among others, Lukas Foss and Gunther Schuller.

Kolb spent the year 1966–67 in Vienna, Austria, on a Fulbright Fellowship. In 1969, she won the Prix de Rome (the first American woman to receive the award in music composition) and she spent the next two years at the American Academy in Rome. Her other awards include two Guggenheim fellowships, an American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award, six National Endowment for the Arts grants, and an award from the New York Foundation for the Arts. She has received commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Fromm Foundation (twice), the Portland Symphony Orchestra, WFMT in Chicago, the National Arts Association in Washington, the New York State Council for the Arts and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

In 1981, Kolb collaborated with the filmmaker James Herbert on *Cantico*, based on the life of St. Francis of Assisi; it won first prize in the visual essays category of the American Film Festival in 1983. During 1983–84, Kolb was a resident at IRCAM in Paris at the invitation of Pierre Boulez. Her time at IRCAM resulted in a commission for *Millefoglie* for nine instruments and computer generated tape which received a Friedheim Award in 1987. She has taught composition at the Eastman School of Music, Brooklyn College, and Temple University.

Looking for Claudio, a pensive and (appropriately) searching work for solo guitar and pre-recorded tape, was written in 1975 for the guitarist David Starobin. The tape part is not electronic

but instead contains the sounds of mandolin, six guitars, vibraphone, chimes, and three human voices, the latter of which are supposed to sound “as if preoccupied with thought—walking aimlessly—unaware of external things.”

Another work of this period, *Spring River Flowers Moon Night* (1974–75) again involved Starobin, but this time he was on pre-recorded tape performing on guitar and mandolin, with Kolb conducting the chimes, vibraphone, marimba, and percussion instruments. The real time performers on this work were two pianists. It was commissioned by the New York State Council on the Arts for Robert Phillips and Franco Renzulli. The work is dedicated to the late Leo Bronstein and was inspired by a poem written by Jo-Hsu in the first half of the eighth century and translated by David Lattimore. As was Kolb’s original intent, I will let the text of the poem speak for this work. It can be found in this booklet on subsequent pages.

Kolb composed Toccata in 1971 expressly for harpsichordist Igor Kipnis; it is based on the Sonata in B minor (K. 87, L.33) by Domenico Scarlatti. I cannot improve upon Kolb’s original program notes. “What I found interesting about this material in this particular sonata was its homophonic nature, with harmonies so rich and chromatic that they seem to forecast the nineteenth century. My idea was to embellish these harmonies, thereby creating an entirely different character which emerges out of Scarlatti’s harmonies. The result is rather like a jazz improvisation.”

“Toccata is constructed in three different speeds simultaneously (two parts are on tape and are manipulated electronically), thereby establishing no exact tempo which is discernable,” Kolb continued. “Color and texture are the primary goals, also a movement toward and against tonal agreement. An aural confusion on the part of the listener will occur...a maze-like moving in and out from what he thinks he hears to what he wishes he had heard. Finally, as the continuous motion wears itself out, all voices coincide in tonal agreement and the dissension of contrapuntal involvement is resolved. The original Scarlatti sonata is heard first, preceding my interpretation.”

Appello, for solo piano, was written in 1967, in response to a commission from Diane Walsh and the Washington Performing Arts Society. *Appello* (which is the Italian word for “call”) is built in four sections each of which, according to Kolb, “embodies a specific type of call: calls which are reaching and enticing, rather than insistent or demanding. The four section titles reflect the quality of memory of these types of calls. The first, ‘Quietly, and with a cruel reverberation’ is taken from the second movement of Toru Takemitsu’s *Pause Interrompue*. The second, ‘A vague chimera that engulfs the breath,’ is from a poem by Robert Pinsky. The third, ‘...a perhaps hand (which comes carefully out of Nowhere),’ is from e.e. cummings. The fourth, ‘And I remembered the cry of the peacocks,’ is from Wallace Stevens.”

“Each call implies two kinds of distances: first, the distance that separates the identities of both the ‘caller’ and the ‘perceiver,’” Kolb continued, “an almost mystic distance that is conscious and ‘sub-conscious,’ physical and ‘metaphysical’; second, the distance involved in the perception of sound—distance between silence and music. In many aspects, *Appello* is similar in sound

intent to two other of my recent works, *Looking for Claudio* and *Soundings*, each of which involved an aspect in searching.”

Soundings was composed in 1971–72 and revised in 1975 and 1978. The original work was written for chamber orchestra and was jointly commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation and the Chamber Music Society for their opening concert in October 1972, under conductor Gunther Schuller. The revised version for full orchestra was first performed in December 1975, by the New York Philharmonic with Pierre Boulez and David Gilbert conducting.

According to Kolb, “*Soundings* is a technique which makes it possible to ascertain the depth of water by measuring the interval of time between the sending of a signal the return of its echo. *Soundings* begins at the surface, at the thin edge where the sea spans the earth and the horizon, descends through layers of sound, all of which remain present, whether or not they are actually heard, and suffers ‘a sea-change into something rich and strange’.”

The first movement, Kolb writes, “begins with a linear ostinato in the strings, from which further patterns evolve in successive layers. The texture becomes increasingly rich through extended chromaticism, although the original patterns retain their character as they emerge and disappear from the sound matrix. The whole descends to a climax where the patterns dissolve in the texture.”

“In the second, or soloistic, section, the original patterns are isolated and treated individually as though seen through a microscope. Here linear movement is replaced by spurts of motivic ideas which could not actually be heard within the texture of the previous section, but which are now clarified and developed by the solo instruments. The motivic ideas become increasingly chromatic and the section culminates in a passage for two violins which resolves into a brief transition in the strings of channels I and II where all movement is entirely suspended.”

“The final section is characterized by an ascending linear movement which contrasts with the first section. Here the roles of the strings and winds are reversed, with the winds ascending in chordal clusters and the strings carrying the melodic ideas. The upward movement toward the surface becomes faster and faster through a rhythmic acceleration until the climax is reached. The signal has not returned to its starting point, and it is not clear what has been measured. Suggestions of motivic ideas from the first section quietly appear and disintegrate.”

Today, Barbara Kolb is more active than ever, receiving many new commissions. Currently she is working on a piano concerto with chamber orchestra which is scheduled to premiere in December 1990 on Paris’s Radio France with Jay Gottlieb featured as piano soloist. Gottlieb will also perform the U.S. premiere in Seattle under conductor Gerard Schwartz. For a Readers Digest Consortium commission the composer is planning a piano trio for the Monticello, Leonardo, and Francesco Trios. A work for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1991 will follow and another for the 150th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic in 1992.

—Tim Page

Spring River Flowers Moon Night

By Jo-Hsü. Translated by David Lattimore.

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1. Spring river tidal water
running level with the sea
On the sea the bright moon
rising with the tide
Rolling tossing
down its waves a million miles
Where spring river
do you lack for moonlight
2. The river flows twists turns
around the scented park lands
Moonlight sleeting everywhere
on blooming groves
Through the void flowing frost
flies unseen
White sand of the islets
indistinguishable
3. River sky one color
without a spot of dust
Glittering amid the void
the bright moon's wheel
On these banks what people
first saw the moon
River moon in what year
did you first shine on men
4. Life of man age on age
unexhausted
River moon year by year
looking at each other
Who knows what person
the moon in the river waits for
All you see the long stream
ushering its waters
5. White cloud a single swath
bound far away
Maple green upon the bank
unquenched sorrow
Tonight where is the household

- of the man in the little boat
What place does she think of
in the moonlit lodge
6. Piteously above the lodge
the moon wavers wanders
Shining back on the lonely one
the make-up mirror-stand
Blinds of the jade door
she twists but does not go
Wash-pounding on the stone
though brushed away returns
7. This is the hour to gaze afar
hearing nothing
Wishing to follow the moon-glow
to flow to shine on you
Wild geese far flying
cannot go beyond the light
Fish dragons churning
the depths ripple the surface
8. Last night by the idle pool
she dreamt of falling flowers
She grieves for him at mid-spring
who does not come home
River waters wash away
what's left of spring
River pool the falling moon
slanting westwards
9. Slant moon deep deep
in sea-mist hidden
From Chieh-shih to Hsiao-hsiang
a boundless road
Who knows what people
come home by moonlight
The moonset shakes our feelings
as it fills the river trees

Production Notes

Soundings

Published by Boosey & Hawkes (ASCAP)

Recorded by Didier Arditti at L'Espace de Projection, IRCAM, Paris, France, July, 1984

Toccata

Published by C.F. Peters Corp. (ASCAP)

Parts 1 and 3 (tape): Recorded by Carson Taylor at Capitol-Angel Studios in NYC, 1973

Mixing and filtering: Maggi Payne

Producer: George Sponhaltz

Part 2: Recorded and produced by Edward J. Foster in Redding, Connecticut, May 29, 1986.

Two harpsichords were used for this recording; both are by Rutkowski & Robinette of Jersey City, New Jersey. For Parts 1 and 3, a 1970 model was used; for the Scarlatti Sonata and Part 2, a 1961 model was used.

Appello

Published by Boosey & Hawkes (ASCAP)

Recorded in Paris, France in June 1985

Looking for Claudio

Spring River Flowers Moon Night

Published by Boosey & Hawkes (ASCAP)

Recorded by Glenn Richards, Brooklyn, New York, Winter 1975-76

Producer: Carter Harmon

Digital mastering by Elite Recordings, NYC

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