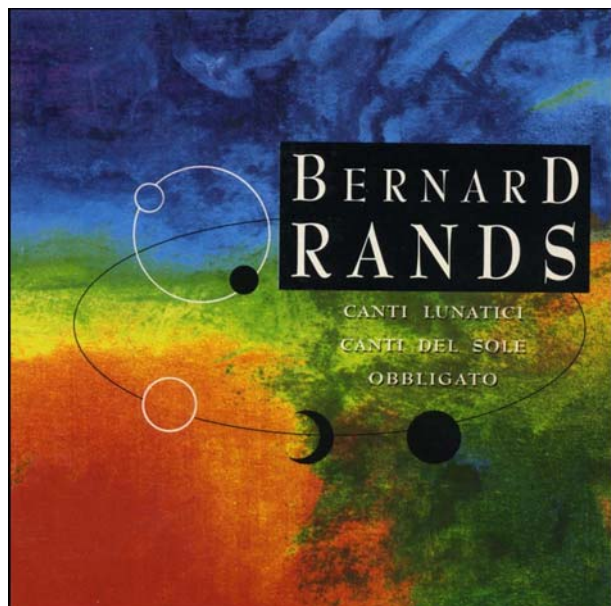


Bernard Rands



1. *Canti Lunatici* (1980) * (28:20)
2. *Canti del Sole* (1982) ** (25:15)
*Carol Plantamura, soprano; **Paul Sperry, tenor
SONOR Ensemble of the University of California,
San Diego: John Fonville, flute; William Powell,
clarinet; Edwin Harkins, trumpet; Miles Anderson,
trombone; Cecil Lytle, piano; Daryl Pratt,
percussion; Dan Dunbar, percussion; David Yoken,
percussion; Janos Négyesy, violin; György Négyesy,
viola; Peter Farrell, cello; Peter Rofe, contrabass;
Bernard Rands, conductor
3. *Obbligato* (1983) (12:30)
Miles Anderson, trombone; Columbia String
Quartet: Benjamin Hudson, violin; Carol Zeavin,
violin; Sarah Clarke, viola; Eric Bartlett, cello

Total playing time: 66:14

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Notes

The practice of creating a large scale vocal composition out of an “anthology” of texts by several authors, sometimes even several languages, collected by a composer for that specific purpose, is largely a phenomenon of our own times; it contrasts with the way the great song composers of past centuries—above all Schubert and Wolf—tended to seize upon one poet at a time and then move on. Today, instead, we have poly-poetic, even polyglot compendiums as Britten’s *Serenade* for tenor, horn and strings, his *Spring Symphony*, both deservedly popular, along with Luciano Berio’s monumental *Coro* and *Sinfonia*, the latter including one extraordinary movement in which several texts in as many languages are smashed together in dense simultaneity. To this distinguished number also belong the two song cycles of **Bernard Rands**, anthologies collected by the composer of many centuries and languages, but chosen for what they say, respectively, about the sun and the moon. “When I began work on *Canti lunatici*,” says Rands, “I tried to recall every poem about the moon that I’d known since childhood. By the time the list got to sixty entries I had to stop, and then I had the tremendous task of reducing it to a final fifteen.”

Born in Sheffield, England, in 1934, Rands early developed a passion for lyric poetry, first of the several dialects of his native country, later of the breadth of other European sources. It is significant, too, that Rands names his three Italian teachers—Luigi Dallapiccola, Bruno Maderna and Luciano Berio—as the most important influences on his own style. All three are composers extraordinarily successful in setting words to music, honoring the Italianate tradition of the expressive lyric line even though thickets of contemporary harmonic practice.

After his years of Italian study, Rands held several teaching posts in England, at York University, and at Oxford’s Brasenose College. In 1975 he joined the music faculty of the University of California, San Diego—one of the most

progressive and composer-friendly music departments in the realm of American academe. In the Fall of 1985 he became professor of music at Boston University. While at the University of San Diego, Rands founded and conducted SONOR, and extraordinary new music ensemble of student and faculty musicians, capable of standing up to the most fearsome demands a composer might concoct. It stretches no point to suggest that the multifarious skills of the SONOR musicians greatly influenced the sense of ecstatic experimentation and virtuosic daring that pours fourth from Rands’s music composed since his immigration to America.

Canti lunatici dates from 1981; Pulitzer Prize-winning *Canti del sole* from two years later. Both works were composed, almost simultaneously, in two versions; one for small ensemble (SONOR-sized, for instance) and one for full orchestra. There are other similarities, of course. Each cycle developed out of Rands’s own selection of poems, which he has arranged to suggest a time sequence; the passage of the sun from dawn to evening and the rising of the moon through night until dawn, as well as the seasonal cycles of each planet. The cycles are further linked; the tiny *terzetto* by Salvatore Quasimodo “orgnuno sta solo...ed e subito sera” which ends the sun poems also serves as the opening text for the moon series.

Yet the music for each of these settings is vastly different, and the contrast epitomizes the divergence of the cycles. There is a luxuriance in the texts for *Canti del sole*, radiant outpourings by the many poets to greet the radiance in the heavens. The poetry shimmers and exults; the words are simply set, one note for each syllable for the most part. The final words of Quasimodo die out on a monotone for singer and ensemble. But the *Canti lunatici* begins with the same words spun out in a—yes, lunatic—vocalise. Throughout this cycle the voice seems to generate long trails of moonbeams, undulating melismas hovering at times at the far edge of what the voice can do,

giggling, whispering, crying; a study in lunacy in every meaning of the word.

If the techniques of *Lunatici* evoke comparisons with some of Berio's vocal writing, and those in *Sole* seem more beholden to the severe, subtle lyricism of Dallapiccola, both works epitomize Rands's own approach to the setting of words. Not content to set poetry line by line, the easy way out, Rands concerns himself as well with the structure, the mechanics of the poem and of each individual word. "I like to examine the details of each word in a linguistic sense," he says, "Why? Because I don't want to set the poem to music, in the sense of a 'song,' but rather to create a complex inseparable unit, a third element that is neither all word nor all music, but something apart from both."

Techniques and methodologists are, of course, easy to explain, an often haven't much to do with the music at hand. The remarkable thing about Rands's music, however, is that for all his avowal of complexity, the overriding quality is its power of instant communication.

—Alan Rich, 1986

Obbligato (Memo 2c) for trombone and string quartet was completed early in 1980 in response to a commission for trombonist Miles Anderson and the Sequoia String Quartet, who gave its premiere performance in April, 1980 at the Bing Theater of the County Museum, Los Angeles. *Memo 2* for solo trombone (also written for Miles Anderson) is one of the series of original solo works, each with the title *Memo*, which are subsequently incorporated into other musical and instrumental contexts. Thus, *Memo 2* becomes *Memo 2b* when performed in association with a role for female dance/mime and becomes *Obbligato (Memo 2c)* when performed in a string quartet 'setting'.

—Bernard Rands

Over the decade of the 1970s, **Bernard Rands's** music gained international recognition and established him as a major figure among his generation of composers. Through an impressive number of works written for many performance styles, the originality and distinctive character of his music emerged—music acclaimed for its "plangent lyricism," "dramatic impact," "strength of ideas and technical sophistication"—qualities he developed from his association with Dallapiccola, Maderna, and Berio. Some sixty works (commissioned by noted soloists, ensembles and orchestras) are published by Universal Editions, London and Vienna, and are regularly performed and broadcast in many countries.

Since coming to the United States in 1975, Rands has been honored by major awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Broadcast Music Inc., the Guggenheim Foundation, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Fromm Foundation. *Canti del sole* for tenor and orchestra was premiered by Paul Sperry with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Zubin Mehta at the Horizons '83 Festival. It was awarded the 1984 Pulitzer Prize.

As a conductor, Rands is recognized by composers, performers, audiences, and critics for his performance of a large and diverse repertoire of contemporary music. Engagements have included the American Composers Orchestra, New York; the BBC Symphony orchestras of London, Glasgow, Manchester and Cardiff; the San Francisco and San Diego Symphony orchestras, and the Buffalo

Philharmonic; the Maggio Musicale Orchestra, Florence; and the Symphony orchestras of Melbourne and Sydney.

As a teacher, Rands has held professorships and fellowships at the universities of Wales, Oxford, and York; in the United States, at Princeton, Yale, the California Institute of the Arts, and the University of California, San Diego. He has taught composition at Boston University and the Juilliard School and has been composer-in-residence at the Aspen, Tanglewood, and Darlington summer festivals. Currently, he teaches at Harvard University and is composer-in-residence for the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Carol Plantamura, soprano, began her professional career singing with Pierre Boulez at the Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles. From 1966 to 1978, she lived in Europe where she was a founding member of "Musica Elettronica Viva" in Rome. Since 1978, she has been professor of music at the University of California, San Diego. She has recorded extensively throughout her career and many composers, such as Erickson, Feldman, Foss, Oliveros, Rands, Reynolds, and Rzewski have written works expressly for her.

Paul Sperry, tenor, is a leading champion of contemporary vocal music. His large repertoire also includes works of Monteverdi and Bach as well as hundreds of songs in more than a dozen languages. He premiered Bernard Rands's *Canti del sole* with the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, and has performed it across the United States, Paris, and Moscow. He also premiered and recorded Leonard Bernstein's *Dybbuk Suite No. 1*, with the composer conducting. He is currently president of the American Music Center.

SONOR was established in 1975 as a forum for the presentation of new music by the faculty of the University of California, San Diego. SONOR has recently participated in the North American Music Festival, the Darmstadt New Music Festival, and the Xenakis at UCSD Festival. Resident composers with the ensemble have included Erickson, Ferneyhough, François, Harkins, Ogdon, Reynolds, Steiger, and Yuasa—most of whom have written new works for the ensemble. All SONOR programs, including its live monthly radio broadcast series, are presented by its extended membership of UCSD graduate students, associate performers and guest artists. The ensemble has also released a second Pulitzer Prize piece (Roger Reynolds, 1989) on Compact disc.

Miles Anderson, trombone, was the first brass player to receive a solo recitalist's fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He was a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony orchestras, and now performs regularly with violinist Erica Sharp in the new music duo (*trom-brown*). With the duo, Mr. Anderson collaborates on the creation of music/dramas, film scores and recordings.

Columbia String Quartet was founded in 1976 as the resident ensembles of the Group for Contemporary Music. It performed the premieres of many contemporary works, including Wuorinen's *Archangel*, the quartets by Feldman and Berg's *Lyric Suite* in its newly discovered version with soprano. Although the quartet no longer performs, this 1983 recording features the newly reformed quartet, with Sarah Clarke, viola replacing Janet Lyman Hill, and Eric Barlett, cello, replacing André Emelianoff.

Production Notes

All works published by Helicon Music (BMI)

Canti lunatici & Canti del sole

Produced by Carol Plantamura and Cheryl Brown. Recorded by Josef Kucera at the University of California, San Diego on September 12-15, 1985. Edited by Georges Block. Technical assistance by Robb Huff. The original recording was made possible, in part, by public funds from the national Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding was generously provided by the University of California, San Diego, with special thanks to Dean Richard Attiyeh, Dr. Marrian McDonald, and the Academic Senate.

Obbligato

Produced by Carter Harman and Eve Beglarian. Recorded at Eras Recording Corp. Studios, NYC on December 21, 1983. Edited by Eve Beglarian.