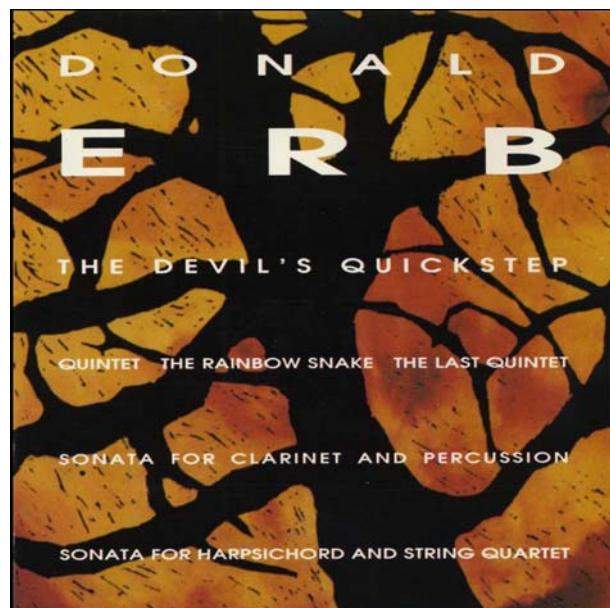


NWCR593

# Donald Erb

## *The Devil's Quickstep*



1. *The Devil's Quickstep* (1983) ..... (8:29)  
Voices of Change (Harvey Boatright, flute; Ross Powell, clarinet; Ronald Neal, violin; Gayane Manasjan, cello; Jo Boatright, piano; Susan Dederich, harp; and Doug Howard, percussion)
  2. *The Rainbow Snake* (1984) ..... (9:04)  
Voices of Change (Mike Anderson, trombone; Robert Fernandez, percussion; Jo Boatright, piano)
  3. *Sonata for Clarinet and Percussion* (1980)..... (10:34)  
Voices of Change (Ross Powell, clarinet; Deborah Mashburn, percussion; Jo Boatright, piano)
  4. *Quintet* (1976) ..... (8:05)  
Voices of Change (Harvey Boatright, flute doubling on harmonica; Ross Powell, clarinet; Ronald Neal, violin; Gayane Manasjan, cello; Jo Boatright, piano and electric piano) Donald Erb, conductor
  - The Last Quintet* (1982) ..... (11:44)
    5. I.  $\downarrow = 120-132$ ..... (1:59)
    6. II.  $\downarrow = 48$  ..... (2:04)
    7. III. *sempre* ..... (1:03)
    8. IV.  $\downarrow = 48$  ..... (2:17)
    9. V. .... (2:05)
    10. VI.  $\downarrow = 160-184$  ..... (2:03)  
Voices of Change (Harvey Boatright, flute; Phillip Sergeant, oboe; Ross Powell, clarinet; Gregory Hastis, horn; Will Roberts, bassoon)
  - Sonata for Harpsichord and String Quartet* (1962) ..... (12:19)
    11. I - Allegro moderato ..... (3:27)
    12. II - Adagio ..... (5:53)
    13. III - Allegro ..... (2:54)  
John White, harpsichord; Koch String Quartet (Joseph Koch, violin; Samuel Epstein, violin; William Kiraly, viola; Donald White, cello)
- Total playing time: 60:32

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## Notes

Unusual sonorities have long been characteristic of the music of Donald Erb. He emerged in the 1960s as one of the leading experimenters with combinations of 'live' and electronic sounds. Since the mid-1970s Erb has dealt primarily with non-electrified instrumental and vocal materials, but rarely has he limited his palette to the sounds traditionally associated with the media at hand; when he is not actually extending the sonic range of performers by prescribing newly invented playing and singing techniques, he is usually at least blending the more or less 'normal' sounds in highly unorthodox ways. Typically the result is music in which the ear-dazzling surface qualities are every bit as interesting as the deftly handled formal elements.

—James Wierzbicki

**Donald Erb** was born in Youngstown, Ohio, in 1927. After brief studies with Nadia Boulanger, he attended Indiana University where he studied with Bernard Heiden. He has held teaching posts at Case Western Reserve University, the University of Melbourne, and at Southern Methodist University (1981-84) during which time a number of the recordings on this disc were made. His orchestral music has been played by the major orchestras of the United States,

Europe, and Australia. Erb has written ten concertos which have been premiered by such artists as Lynn Harrell, Richard Stoltzman, and Stuart Dempster. He is a distinguished professor of composition at The Cleveland Institute of Music and during the 1991/92 season will be composer-in-residence with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

*The Devil's Quickstep* (1983) is a short, intriguing piece inspired by a West Virginia tale about a young man who receives his just deserts, falling off a cliff after taking up the devil's instrument, the fiddle. I deem this explanation necessary since *Quickstep* bears not the remotest resemblance to a mountain fiddle tune! *The Devil's Quickstep* was first performed by Voices of Change in Dallas during the 1982/83 season.

*The Rainbow Snake* (1984) is one of several works which have evolved from the music of the indigenous people of Australia, the Aborigines. Many years ago I became interested in this unique and surprisingly complex music. This work employs circular breathing, slow vowel change sounds, and percussive rhythms, all of which are reminiscent of the aboriginal music. As a former brass player I find it truly fascinating. The rainbow snake is a lizard referred to over and over in Australian aboriginal

folklore. It was commissioned by the International Trombone Association and was premiered at its convention in May of 1986. The featured trombonist at the premiere was Stuart Dempster.

Sonata for Clarinet and Percussion (1980) was a work I simply wanted to write, there being no commission or occasion calling for such a piece. The premiere was given by the Boston Musica Viva at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1981. The original scoring called for, in addition to the clarinet and percussion, an electric organ manipulated by the percussionist. Since then I have found a simpler and more effective way to deal with this portion of the piece. One can simply record the drone on a cassette and play it back. The work is in many ways a sonata in the older sense of the word, that is, a "soundpiece." It is a very virtuosic and difficult work for both players, particularly the clarinetist.

Quintet (1976) was a commission from Bowdoin College for the Aeolian Chamber Players who are in residence at the college each summer. It is scored for flute doubling harmonica, clarinet, violin, cello and piano doubling electric piano with a phase shifter attached. The members of the ensemble also perform on crystal water goblets.

The work is in one movement which is divided into three sections. The shape of the movement is very "Classical" and the development of the musical ideas is executed in a very traditional manner.

*The Last Quintet* (1982) for woodwind quintet was commissioned by Michael Charry for the principal woodwind players of the Nashville Symphony, who premiered it at Vanderbilt University in 1983. *The Last Quintet* is in six rather short movements; each is a study of one kind of sonority or texture. Some of the movements require the players to double on rather unusual instruments such as harmonicas, police whistles, and water tumblers. At other times the instruments are played in unusual ways. One of the movements makes use

of a simple cassette tape which provides a background texture for the quintet. Hopefully these sounds are employed in such a manner as to provide another dimension to the music, rather than a distraction.

In Sonata for Harpsichord and String Quartet (1962), the range, rhythmic incisiveness, and varieties of registration in the harpsichord writing serve as a foil to the myriad textures and timbres of the writing for string quartet. The work is in three movements. In the first, the harpsichord acts as a rhythmic generator propelling the music forward. The slow movement, based on a four-note theme, builds to a climax in a harpsichord cadenza which is sustained by an answering cadenza for the quartet. The peak of the finale is reached by the first violin in a high isolated cantilena opposed by the harsh sonorities of the other instruments.

—Donald Erb

**Voices of Change** is the only professional chamber music ensemble in Dallas, Texas dedicated to music of the twentieth century. Now entering its sixteenth concert season, Voices of Change was founded by Jo Boatright and Ross Powell, and is ensemble-in-residence at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts. Performers in the ensemble include concertmasters and other players from both the Dallas and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras, faculty artists from the Meadows School of the Arts and the University of North Texas School of Music, and nationally recognized freelance performers. The ensemble has performed throughout the United States and Europe, including New York's Merkin Concert Hall, Washington's Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, and Dallas' Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. In both 1989 and 1990 Voices of Change and artistic director Jo Boatright received the ASCAP Award for Adventuresome Programming at the Chamber Music America National Convention in New York.

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## Production Notes

### *The Devil's Quickstep*

Recorded in Caruth Auditorium at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, 1985.

Engineer: Paul Christenson. Originally released on Spectrum Records.

### *The Rainbow Snake*, Sonata for Clarinet and Percussion

Produced and edited by Nancy Kemp. Recorded in Caruth Auditorium at Southern Methodist

University in Dallas, Texas, November 10 and 11, 1986. Engineer: David Lamb.

### Quintet, *Last Quintet*

Recorded by Omega Audio and Productions, Inc., Dallas, Texas, 1984. Engineers: Paul

Christenson (Quintet); Bob Singleton (The Last Quintet). Originally released on Redwood Records.

### Sonata for Harpsichord and String Quartet

Recorded at Kulas Hall, Cleveland Institute of Music, September 22, 1963. The original recording of this work was produced in cooperation with the Cleveland Composers Guild, sponsored by the Kulas Foundation.

### American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Composers Award Recording

This recording was made possible, in part, by a 1985 grant from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Four awards, which include a CRI recording, are given annually to honor and encourage composers and to help them continue their creative work.