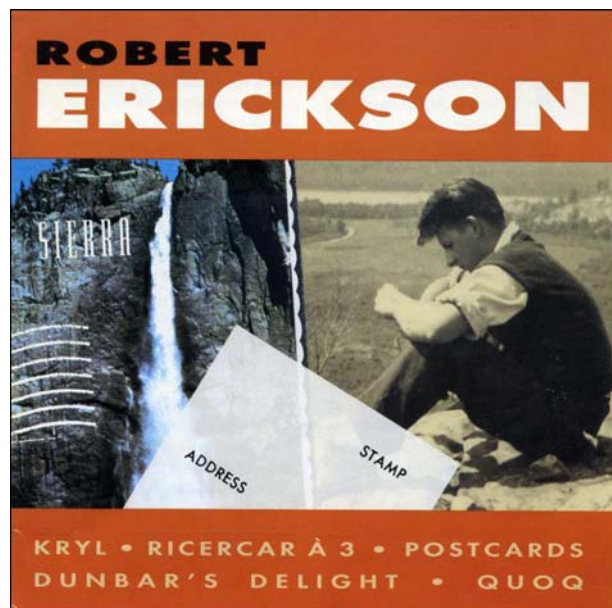


NWCR616

Robert Erickson

Kryl; Ricercar à 3; Postcards; Dunbar's Delight; Quoq



1. *Kryl* (1977) (6:15)
Edwin Harkins, trumpet
2. *Ricercar à 3* (1967) (10:14)
Bertram Turetzky, contrabass

- Postcards* (1981) (13:16)
3. I. Prelude (2:33)
 4. II. Stockholm (1:49)
 5. III. Paris (1:49)
 6. IV. Hotel (2:50)
 7. V. Venice (1:55)
 8. VI. Capri (1:48)

Carol Plantamura, soprano; Jürgen Hübscher, lute

9. *Dunbar's Delight* (1985) (14:32)
Dan Dunbar, timpani
10. *Quoq* (1978) (8:32)
John Fonville, flute
11. *Sierra* (1984) (15:54)
Philip Larson, baritone

SONOR Ensemble: (Sebastian Winston, flute; Susan Barrett, oboe; Robert Zelickman, clarinet; David Savage, bassoon; Edwin Harkins, trumpet; Cynthia Earnest, French horn; Louise Titlow, trombone; Marie Peak, violin; Francesca Savage, viola; Peter Farrell, cello; Bertram Turetzky, contrabass; Sheila Sterling, harp; Cecil Lytle, piano; Jean-Charles Francois * Dan Dunbar, percussion); Thomas Nee, conductor.

Total playing time: 68:15

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Notes

Robert Erickson lies imprisoned in his own body, but his spirit soars free. Virtually immobilized for the past decade with a wasting muscular disease, Erickson has, in that time, continued what must be reckoned as an ecstatic exploration into the vast realm of the musical possibilities that the world around him offers. Of the six pieces on this collection, three were composed in a wheelchair, and, probably, in pain. The power of affirmation that has illuminated all his music remains bright and clear in these later works, and also in his even more recent scores.

Born in Marquette, Michigan on March 7, 1917 (*d* San Diego, April 1997), Erickson's early studies were highlighted by eleven years (1936–47) of working closely with Ernst Krenek, who surely guided his disciple toward an awareness of his own middle-European background. "I had already studied—and abandoned—the twelve-tone system," he once told me, "before most other Americans had taken it up." Certainly the teacher who inspired a generation of musical hotheads around San Francisco in the 1950s and early '60s—electronic experimenters Morton Subotnick and Pauline Oliveros in the aerie known as the San Francisco Tape Music Center—was a spokesman for freedom of expression, with a healthy thumb of the nose toward serial organization.

When the Regents of the University of California set up a brand new music department at their showcase campus in San Diego, some wise guardian angel told them to send for Erickson. Together with another freewheeling composer, Will

Ogdon, Erickson set up a school music department like none other, devoted to experimentation, dedicated to an ongoing defiance of stuffy academic attitudes. "We decided we wanted a department," he reminisced, "where composers could feel at home, the way scholars feel at home in other schools."

The composers flourished there, and so did the new generation of performers such as bass player Bert Turetzky, who wanted something out of life besides playing the oompahs in symphony orchestras, trumpeter, Ed Harkins, the airborne flutist, Bernhard Batschelet, the great singer, Carol Plantamura (a performance authority on early music) now become a sterling proponent of new music as well. Most of the music on this recording came about as the direct result of the close contact between Erickson and his performing colleagues. "I could go to Bert or Ed with something I'd written down and ask, "Hey, can you do this?" And I'd get an immediate answer. It was a fabulous time for cross-feeding."

And so we have the insane delights of *Kryl* (1977), in which Ed Harkins plays some wild and fantastic solo lines on his trumpet and accompanies them from time to time with a zany alteration between singing and playing. A device, says Erickson, inspired by the medieval practice known as "hocket." (The name, by the way, was that of the legendary Bohumir Kryl, a traveling cornet player whom Erickson heard back in Michigan at the age of twelve.) "As I composed *Kryl*," Erickson remembers, "I presented Harkins with chunks of the piece for approval or criticism, and I am still amazed at

his courage in allowing some of the very difficult moments to stand.”

We have the equally phenomenal *Quoq* of 1978 (composed originally for Batschelet and here played with equal panache by John Fonville), which again makes awesome demands on a soloist, including microtones and some exotic toneless blowing techniques. (Its name is from *Finnegan's Wake*: “Quoq, And the buncksleydoodle! Kidoosh!”) The *Ricercar à 3* for Bert Turetzky is even earlier—1967. The soloist plays against two tracks previously recorded: a one-man trio, you might say, with marvelous timbral effects from the combination of the three instrumental parts.

Dunbar's Delight (1985) is the latest of the solo pieces, written for another of UC–San Diego's special breed of instrumental miracle-workers, the timpanist, Dan Dunbar. “I had thought of [timpani] as orchestral instruments, anything except a métier for solo performer, but Dan's demonstration opened a great new panorama of sounds.” Erickson insists that *Dunbar's Delight* is as much a collaboration as a composed work.

Edwin Harkins, trumpet, studied with Renold Schilke and Robert Nagle, and composition/theory with Gunther Schuller, Mel Powell, Ralph Shapey, and Richard Hervig. He was a member of three contemporary music groups before teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music. At UCSD, he has been a member of SONOR, EVTE (Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble), and founder of [THE] with baritone Philip Larson. This duo has performed internationally and has worked collaboratively with John Cage, Toro Takemitsu, and Anthony Braxton. Harkins has been soloist several times at Lincoln Center, has made numerous recordings, and is currently writing a book on contemporary trumpet techniques.

Bertram Turetzky, contrabass, is a leading figure in the world of contrabass raising the instrument's status from mere accompanist in the orchestra to a solo instrument in its own right. He is a performer of jazz, traditional classical repertoire, and contemporary music. Turetzky's unique techniques have inspired hundreds of works from contemporary composers creating a large and impressive repertory of music for his instrument. His recordings of new works number 160, making him the most recorded contrabass soloist in America.

Carol Plantamura, soprano, is considered by many critics to be one of the foremost interpreters of both seventeenth and twentieth-century music. She has collaborated with some of the leading composers of our time such as Berio, Boulez, Globokar, Oliveros, Foss, Jolas, Ogdon, Rands, and Erickson, to name only a few. She continues performing internationally since coming to UCSD in 1978.

Jürgen Hübscher, lute, was born in West Germany and studied with Walter Gerwig and Michael Shaffer. He is permanent lutenist with Concentus Musicus of Vienna under Nikolaus Harnoncourt and has performed in the most important music festivals in Europe and the United States. He has been the teacher of lute and basso continuo at the Musikhochschule since 1981.

Dan Dunbar, timpani, has studied with Randolph Baunton, Fred Hinger, and Jean-Charles François. He received an M.A. in performance from UCSD where he is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Theoretical/Experimental Studies. He has recorded for Musical Heritage Society, Crystal, CRI, and Lovely Records. In May, 1985, he premiered Robert Erickson's *Dunbar's Delight* at the Sound Shapes III Festival at UCSD.

Writing for voice came relatively late in Erickson's range of interests, beginning with the haunting 1981 setting of Wallace Stevens' *Idea of Order at Key West*, written for Carol Plantamura and recorded by her on CRI 494. *Postcards* came a year later. With a combination of voice and lute, it is a tribute to the singer's early involvement with early songs. “I needed to write these songs,” says Erickson. “My excuse for writing my own texts is that they are only postcards after all.” *Sierra* dates from 1984, a fabulously creative year for Erickson with two big orchestral works as well as this piece for vocalist and large ensemble. “When you come right down to it,” Erickson has said more than once, “all we really do is to compose our environment.” Commissioned by the Bay Area baritone Tom Buckner, *Sierra* is, says Erickson, “a spiritual journey, represented in place names, from the heights of Yosemite, through the gold country, and up again to Lake Tahoe. Heroes are honored, friends saluted.” The framing quotations are from the writings of John Muir.

—Alan Rich
Music Critic, L.A. Daily News

John Fonville, flute, has performed contemporary music as a soloist and with ensembles in the United States and Canada. Now on the faculty of UCSD, he has also taught at the University of Illinois, where he received a doctorate. He has been a member of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Early Music Ensemble, Roulette, and now works with the Tone Road Ramblers, the University of California Baroque Ensemble, and with Tom North. His solo album, *Autonomic Music*, is on the Lumina Label.

Philip Larson, bass baritone, has been a member of the New Music Choral Ensemble, Group for New Music, Pomerium Musicae, The Bach Aria Group, SONOR, and the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble. He is a member of the music theater group [THE] with Edwin Harkins. Larson has performed throughout the world and has been recording since 1968. His latest recording is Roger Reynolds's *Voice Space* on Lovely Records. He is currently a visiting lecturer in the music department at UCSD.

SONOR was established in 1975 as a forum for the presentation of new music by the faculty of the University of California San Diego. 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 the recordings on this disc, are presented by its extended membership of UCSD graduate students, associate performers, and guest artists, including the following:

Sebastian Winston, flute, has appeared in venues as diverse as the IRCAM (Paris), the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, with Chaka Kahn, Tito Puente, Steve Reich and Musicians, the Group for Contemporary Music, and SONOR.

Susan Barrett, oboe, is currently a member of the La Jolla Wind Quintet, SONOR, a piano-oboe duo with Bonita Ford, and a classical trio with guitarist Randal Pile and soprano Pamela Maran.

Robert Zelickman, clarinet, is instructor of Clarinet at UCSD and a member of SONOR. He performs with the San Diego Opera, Starlight Opera, and the Klezmir Ensemble, Zmirus. He has been a member of the Mexico City Philharmonic and the Vera Cruz Symphony.

Dennis Michel, bassoon, performs with the San Diego Symphony and teaches at UCSD.

Cindy Earnest, French horn, is director of the wind ensemble and instructor of French horn at UCSD. She plays principal horn with the La Jolla Civic/University Symphony and performs with other orchestras and numerous chamber groups.

Louise Titlow, trombone, performs regularly in the southern California area and has been active in several local ensembles. Her recent appearances have included performance with SONOR and the CalArts Contemporary Chamber Players.

Marie Peak, violin, is the concertmaster of the La Jolla Civic/University Symphony Orchestra. She has performed throughout the West and Northwest as a soloist and member of various ensembles. She holds a master of music degree in violin performance from the University of Utah.

Francesca Savage, viola, is a free-lance performer living in the San Diego area.

Pete Farrell, cello, teaches at UCSD and performs with SONOR. As soloist, and a member of ensembles, he has performed contemporary music at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, the Darmstadt Festival, the Yaddo Festival, and the Illinois Festival of Contemporary Arts, among others.

Sheila Sterling, harp, has been the principal harpist with the San Diego Symphony and the San Diego Opera since 1968. In addition to her experiences as an orchestral harpist, she has

performed several solo works with orchestra and chamber ensembles.

Cecil Lytle, piano, is serving a second term as UCSD music department chairman. Lytle was a first prize winner in the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition. The award-winning *Naked Gershwin*, presented on public television stations nationally, was produced and performed by Lytle with assistants. He has recorded for Nonesuch, Lovely, and CRI records and is now preparing the complete piano works of Scriabin for Klavier Records.

Jean Charles François, percussion, studied at the Paris Conservatorium and with the Australian composer Keith Humble. He has served as principal percussionist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (1969–71) in Australia, director of the Center for Music Experiment at UCSD (1979–82), and chairman of the music department at UCSD (1983–85).

Thomas Nee, conductor, was educated under Ernst Krenek, Stefan Wolpe, and Herman Scherchen. Conductor of numerous distinguished premieres (Wolpe, Erickson, and Brant), Nee has directed the Minnesota, Rochester Orchestras, the La Jolla Civic/University Orchestra, as well as the American Composers Orchestra.

Postcards

Text by Robert Erickson

3. I. Prelude

Greetings!
Hello!
My Dear!
Darling (no not that)
Hi!

Having a wonderful time, wonderful wonderful, and I wish you were here, dear. I wish you were having a wonderful wish you were here dear time.

Sorry I had to rush away. Can you amuse yourself until we – together –
London. At last. And the sun, the sun, the bright sun!
I wish you were wonderful, having a time here dear, wonderful, glorious, ravishing.
I wish you were here, I do wish you were here, having a wonderful wonderful –
I – wish you were here!

Ever thine
Yours
With love
Truly truly yours
So long
Gotta split.

4. II. Stockholm

What miserable weather! Rain, foggy, bitter cold.
The hotel is warm enough, thank heaven. From the lobby I hear a sweet orchestral murmur of contented Swedes.
Could these men, men like these, could they have sailed long Viking ships, blown war horns, shouted in bloody struggle?
This purring, humming, lilting song, no clash, no brittle crackle, no sound to make a battle cry.
O my dear peaceful Swedes! O admirable, quiet me, what have you lost?

5. III. Paris

I saw Gauguin today. There he was.
Those muscular arms, heavy shoulders.
He looks like you, a little, glowering from the wall.
He was a man, that one!

Everywhere along the Seine lovers bend and sway
(I saw Gauguin today)
Windy boulevards are rustling – leaves and lovers' whispering.

The sky is like your eyes, bright blue.
Bluer than Matisse's painted skies. I love Matisse,
His colors reek of love, and loving.
Lovers: they leave the Jeu de Paume in pairs, fondly –
Eyes touching, swaying and bending together.

6. IV. Hotel

In the dumps! Alone, sick among strangers,
- Dreaming of home. O how I, if only, only
How I wish we

It must have been a clam. The lobster?
Snails? I feel green, Paris green, like my father
used to spray on bugs. In my green hotel I see
your face, in the cracked, green, poisonous walls.

Smile at me, damn you!

Time has unwound. Still. A dead bug.
Motionless.
O I do feel rotten! Absolute zero.

I wish, I wish, O how I wish I were there with you.
There!
Walking the long beach, whistling sand, sea birds,
And lapping waves, singing.
I feel ten thousand long, empty endless miles away.
Is everything over? All over?

7. V. Venice

The name is music. Venezia.
Like trumpets. Venezia!

In the square (coo-de-roo-de-roo) doves
bobbing, beckoning –
Earthbound angel music.

But the bells, the wild bells, crashing, echoing,
- echo, echo.
They are Venice, rich, cruel, mighty, proud- and old.

O Venezia, rouged and painted, rotting away
- I shiver in the sun.

8. VI. Capri

Last night I heard a bird I never heard before.
Not one of ours. A singer, Italian, *molto*
brillante con amore.

The moon is coming full.
Magical –
Too much, when the seductive mandolins –
Enough of that. I am having a wonderful time,

Wonderful.

Are you walking out long beach? Alone?
Do you sleep well, in that watery bed?
I hope so.

I wish you were here, I wish, O, I wish –
Take care. I am
Having a wonderful marvelous time
But I wish you were here,

Ah, how I wish you were here. Here!

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11. Sierra

Yosemite.
Tuolumne. Tuolumne Meadows. Tuolumne River.
Oh those vast, calm, mountain days in whose light
Light! I live

Wawona
Ah, the quiet trees. Hush. Hush.
Abwanee. Quiet.

Sugar pine. Down. Nipinawasee. Down, Down. Down, Down.
Bootjack. Morman Bar. Down. Down.
Hello Helen. Hello Mike.

Mount Buillion. Gold. Ah, Golden Hills.

Coulterville. Moccasin. Jimtown. Sonora. Mormon, Ah –
- Jackass Hill. Tuttletown. Angel's, Angel's Camp.
Hello Mark and Bret. Where's the Gold?

Murphy's. Mok Hill. Rich Bar. North Bar. Big Bar. Grand Bar.
Grand.
Ground Hog's Glory. Hell's Delight. Miller's Defeat. Ladies Canyon.
Devil's Basin. Bogus Thunder. Ione. Bedbug.

Oh Californy, that's the land for me.
I'm bound for Sacramento
With a banjo on my knee.

Sutter Creek. Drytown. Fiddletown. El Dorado.
Gold. Gold. Ah, Gold! Gold!
Ah, - John Marshall. Ah, Ah, Ah, Ah,
Growersville. Dry Diggins.
Last Chance.

Bedrock. Little Bar. Good Bar. Bid's Bar. Better Bar.
Best Bar. Richer Bar. Rich. Rich. Rich. Ah.

Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold. Ah.
Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold.
Gold. Golden Hill Grass Valley. Green.
Hi, Terry!

Comptonville. Downeyville. Sierra.
Yuba Pass. High,
Sierraville. Truckee. High,

Tahoe. Bliss.

I am always glad,
To touch the living rock, again.

Production Notes

Produced by John Fonville.

Engineered by Josef Kucera.

Final mastering by Sonic Solutions, San Francisco, California.

All recorded in San Diego, California and at the University of California at San Diego:

Kryl: Warren Studios on March 18-20, 1991.

Ricercar à 3: Tape created at Studio 431 on May 14, 1985; solo recorded at Warren Studios on July 1, 1991.

Postcards: Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD on February 28, 1987.

Dunbar's Delight: Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD on March 25, 1987.

Quoq: Studio 431 on August 22-23, 1987.

Sierra: Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD on March 27, 1987.

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Robert Erickson