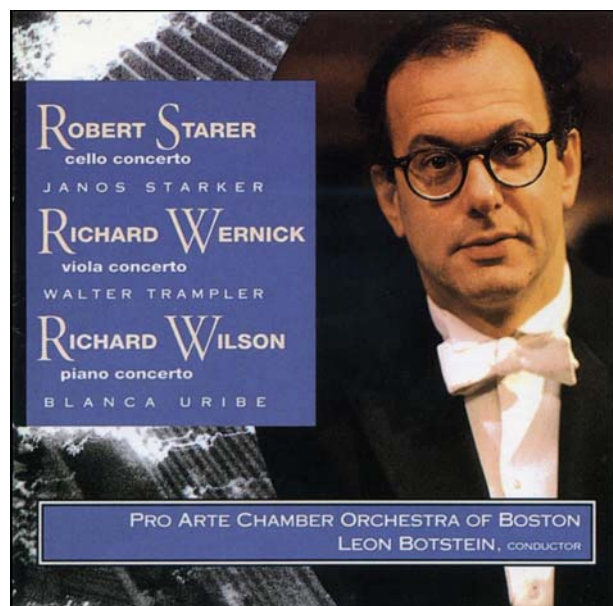


NWCR618

Starer/Wernick/Wilson



Robert Starer (1924-2001)

1. Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1988) (21:10)
Janos Starker, cello

Richard Wernick (b. 1934)

- Viola Concerto (“*Do not go gentle...*”) (1986) (18:48)
2. I. - *Do not go gentle...* (10:06)
3. II - “*...into that good night*” (8:34)
Walter Trampler, viola

Richard Wilson (b.1941)

- Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1991) (33:43)
4. I - Rhapsody (14:04)
5. II - Threnody (12:18)
6. III. - Capriccio (7:10)
Blanca Uribe, piano
Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston,
Leon Botstein, conductor

Total playing time: 74:05

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Notes

This recording documents three new concertos written in the past decade by three distinguished American composers. Although there are distinct stylistic differences among them, these concertos were written with a view to their accessibility to both player and audience. Each was written for the soloist who has recorded it here. Therefore, these performances carry a nearly original sense of a particular collaboration between soloist and composer. The purpose of the recording is not only to provide pleasure to listeners who wish to hear new repertoire but also to encourage performers and conductors to do what increasingly appears to be the most difficult task for new music: the scheduling of multiple performances after a premiere. These works eminently deserve replaying and rehearsing in live contexts. What links them together is that they fairly represent dimensions of late-twentieth-century American musical modernism, which, in turn, mirror the integration of the musical innovations of the early and mid-twentieth-century with the traditions of the nineteenth.

This is the second of two recordings on CRI designed to bring to the public the virtues of the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston with whom it has been a pleasure to work.”

—Leon Botstein

Robert Starer: Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1988)

My cello concerto had its very beginning at a dinner party given in New York after a concert in which Gerard Schwarz had conducted my *Concerto a Quattro* and Janos Starker had been the soloist in a Dohnányi work. The hostess seated us next to each other. I had met Starker before, but we had never talked at leisure. I had always admired his playing and found out that evening that he liked my music. Someone at the other end of the table, seeing us converse so intensely, asked jokingly: “How about the Starer/Starker collaboration?” We both

laughed, but the germ took hold. We looked at each other: not only were our names similar, but we were both born in Europe, had lived most of our lives in this country, and we clearly liked each other. “Not a bad idea,” Starker replied. Subsequent correspondence confirmed our oral agreement.

Writing a concerto with a specific performer in mind is a good way to go about it, perhaps the best. In a way the performer becomes the symbol of his instrument. Having heard Starker play that day I was most impressed by his natural elegance and his power to sustain a musical mood. That latter quality gave me the impulse to write a continuous piece for him rather than one in separate movements.

My concerto begins with the cello alone, in a meditative-improvisatory mood. The orchestra joins gradually and the contemplative mood prevails until a clacking wood-block brings in a lively presto with changing meters. This *scherzando* section is in a vague A-B-A form with a more evenly paced middle part. Another unaccompanied cello passage connects it to a melodious larghetto, which in turn is followed by a *poco agitato* section in which the cello converses with different groups of the orchestra. This finally leads to a vigorous, energetic *allegro risoluto*. Near the end of the concerto, the main thematic ideas of all the preceding sections come by as in a momentary retrospective and the work concludes with a coda of increasing velocity.

The Cello Concerto was written for Janos Starker and premiered by him on May 7, 1988, with the New York Chamber Symphony under Gerard Schwarz’s direction.

—Robert Starer

Robert Starer (b Vienna, 1924, d Kingston, NY 2001) received his musical education at the State Academy in Vienna, the Jerusalem Conservatoire and the Juilliard School. He became an American citizen in 1957. He has taught at Juilliard and at Brooklyn College, where he was named a distinguished professor in 1986. His symphonic works have been conducted by Mitropoulos, Bernstein, Steinberg, Leinsdorf, Mehta, and others. Among his stage works are three operas and several ballets for the late Martha Graham. The recording of his Violin Concerto (Itzhak Perlman with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa) received a Grammy Award. Excerpts from his book, *Continuo, a Life in Music*, have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Musical America*, and the *London Times*. His complete works for solo piano (1946-1991) have recently been published in one volume. Three of his works, including the cantata *Ariel*, *Visions of Isaiah* with soprano Roberta Peters, are available on a CRI American Masters disc (CD612).

Richard Wernick: Viola Concerto (*Do not go gentle...*) (1986)

The concerto is cast in two movements, contrasting in certain respects, similar in others. The viola, of course, is the featured soloist, but not quite in the way one would expect. The solo part is difficult but not virtuosic in the sense that it always draws attention to itself or the violist's ability to negotiate the thornier passages. The orchestra itself is divided into three solo groups of strings, winds and brass set off against both the solo viola as well as the percussion, harp, and remaining strings. In a sense the piece is closer in spirit to the Baroque concerto grosso than to the classical concerto with its quasi-dramatic juxtapositions.

The subtitles of the concerto as well as the individual movements ("*Do not go gentle...*"; "*...into that good night*") are from the well-known poem of Dylan Thomas. In the Thomas poem the verses refer to blindness; in the case of the Concerto to a darkness that is considerably deeper. Apart from the brief allusion to the children's song "This Old Man," which appears at the very end of the piece, there are no literary or programmatic connotations and yet the music is not entirely abstract either. Music does have the capacity to communicate things that are felt profoundly and in a manner that is neither obvious nor literal. Music can and does function on any number of levels, each of which is equally valid. My hope is that the Viola Concerto will be understood for what it is: a concert piece for viola and orchestra that reveals its own sense of logic and musical narrative. But I expect that those who know the genesis of the work might respond in a somewhat different fashion.

The Viola Concerto was written for Walter Trampler and Leon Botstein on commission from the ANL Foundation. It was composed in the fall and early winter of 1986. Messrs. Trampler and Botstein presented the world premiere performances at Bard and Vassar colleges on May 8 and 9, 1987, with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

—Richard Wernick

Richard Wernick was born in Boston in 1934. He received a B.A. from Brandeis and a M.A. from Mills. He has taught at the State University of New York at Buffalo and the University of Chicago, and currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is conductor and musical director of the Penn Contemporary Players.

In addition to a 1977 Pulitzer Prize for music, Mr. Wernick has received awards from the Ford and Guggenheim

foundations, National Institute of Arts and Letters and the National Endowment for the Arts; and commissions from the Fromm Music Foundation, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Aspen Festival Conference on Contemporary Music. Mr. Wernick has composed solo, chamber, and orchestral works; vocal, choral, and band compositions; and a large body of music for theater, film, ballet and television. Since 1983, he has served as the Philadelphia Orchestra's consultant for Contemporary Music.

Richard Wilson: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1991)

During our association of more than twenty years, I have heard Blanca Uribe play—live or on tape—concertos by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Ginastera. I imagine that something of each of these works has "rubbed off" on my own piano concerto. Among the more conscious manifestations of these relationships are: thematic transformation in the first movement of the Schumann and in my finale; the timbral affinity between clarinet and piano exploited by Schumann and Liszt and which I favor throughout; bell sounds interacting with the piano, made famous by Liszt, and which figure in my second and third movements; harp figures taken up by the piano, found especially in Beethoven's fourth as well as in Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms, and which I cannot seem to do without; passages in double octaves, from Tchaikovsky and Brahms, appearing in my first movement; and an extended orchestral exposition upon which the piano later comments, found in all Mozart's, Beethoven's, and the Brahms's D-Minor, and which is central to my first movement.

Of course I hope that there is something of me in this work as well. I have written two large and complex solo piano works for Ms. Uribe in the past and I believe that the concerto is an extension of these pieces, which I regarded as explorations of the rich potential of the instrument. I wanted my concerto not to be an orchestral work with piano obbligato – which is how a number of recent concertos strike me – but rather a very pianistic statement set against the orchestra, which always contents itself with a simpler and more direct language.

This concerto, written especially for Blanca Uribe, is dedicated to the memory of Jack Romann, who was for years director of the concert and artist department of Baldwin Piano Company. A much-admired figure among pianists and other musicians, Jack was a close friend of Blanca's. I got to know him through her. His untimely death in May of 1987 left everyone who knew him deeply saddened. Blanca and I thought at least one piano concerto should be written in his memory. This is the result.

The premiere performances of this work took place at Bard College, Vassar College, and Alice Tully Hall Lincoln Center, on May 3, 4, and 5 of 1991. Blanca Uribe was the soloist and Leon Botstein conducted the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

—Richard Wilson

Richard Wilson was born in Cleveland in 1941. After graduation from Harvard in 1963, *magna cum laude* in music, he received the Frank Huntington Beebe Fellowship for study in Europe. He took his master's degree in music composition at Rutgers in 1966, at which point he joined the Vassar faculty, where he is currently Mary Conover Mellon Professor of Music.

Mr. Wilson is the composer of over sixty works ranging in medium from solo flute to full orchestra, which have been

performed in major halls around the world by such orchestras as the San Francisco Symphony and the London Philharmonic.

In the 1992-93 season, Wilson was appointed composer-in-residence with the American Symphony Orchestra and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. Available on CRI is a retrospective compact disc of Wilson's solo and chamber music (CD 602) and, also with the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and Leon Botstein, his Concerto for Bassoon and Chamber Orchestra and Suite for Small Orchestra (CD 578).

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston is one of the few cooperatively managed orchestras in the country. Founded in 1978 by a group of prominent Boston musicians and late music director Larry Hill, it has been prized by audiences and critics alike for its adventurous programming, unique spirit and exceptional artistry. Gisele Ben-Dor joined Pro Arte as music director in 1991. Gunther Schuller holds the position of conductor laureate. Committed to both commissioning and performing new compositions, Pro Arte has presented over fifty works by living composers, including thirty-eight world premieres. The orchestra also presents traditional repertoire, often alongside rarely heard historic gems.

Leon Botstein is music director of the American Symphony Orchestra, as well as artistic director of the Bard Music Festival and editor of *The Musical Quarterly*. He holds a B.A. from the University of Chicago and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard. Formerly guest conductor with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and conductor of its chamber orchestra series, he has premiered works by many of the more prominent contemporary composers. He has appeared with the London Philharmonic with such soloists as Rudolf Firkušný and Elmar Oliveira; with the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, and with other major orchestras around the world. He has made three recordings, including an all Joachim CD, and has written extensively on music for numerous publications. His book *Judentum and Modernität* was published in Vienna in 1991, and his study of musical life in Vienna at the turn of

the century is forthcoming with the University of Chicago Press. Since 1975 he has been president of Bard College, where he is also professor of history and music history.

Janos Starker the great virtuoso cellist and teacher, is recognized throughout the world as one of the supreme musicians of the century. Hallmarks of his performances and classes, given over the course of an extraordinary career spanning more than five decades, include peerless technical master, intensely expressive playing, and great communicative power. Starker has amassed a recording catalogue of more than 160 works on various international labels. Since 1958 the Hungarian-born artist has taught at Indiana University in Bloomington where he holds the title of distinguished professor.

Walter Trampler has left an indelible mark on the world of music as a passionate advocate and interpreter of contemporary music. He has performed compositions written for him and commissions he has requested that number in the dozens. Performances of these works have given him an international reputation as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. He is a founding artist-member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. A renowned teacher, he is professor of viola and chamber music at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and teaches at Mannes College of Music in New York.

Blanca Uribe was a prize winner at the Beethoven Competition in Vienna, the Chopin International Competition in Warsaw, and the Van Cliburn International Competition in Fort Worth, where she also won the Special Award for Romantic Music. Her repertoire includes the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas, which she performs in cycle, and Albéniz's *Iberia* which she has recorded and performed many times in its entirety. In October 1991, Ms. Uribe made her debut as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. She is professor of music at Vassar College, where she has taught since 1969.

Production Notes

Produced by Paul C. Phillips.

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

All works recorded at Sanders Theater, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Starer: Published by MMB Music, Inc. (ASCAP).

Recorded on February 17, 1991.

Wernick: Published by Theodore Presser Co. (ASCAP).

Recorded on October 7, 1989.

Wilson: Published by Peer-Southern Concert Music (ASCAP).

Recorded on February 16, 1992