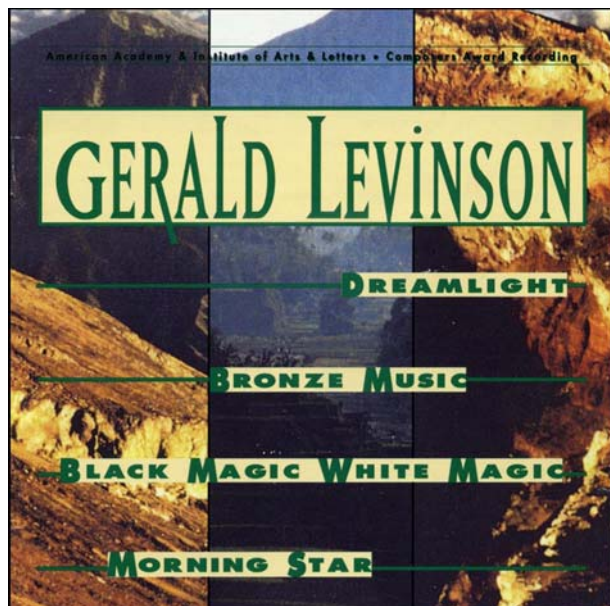


## Gerald Levinson



*Dreamlight* (1990) ..... (38:28)

1. I. Very slow, meditative ..... (9:37)
2. II. Poco Pesante ..... (12:48)
3. III. Very slow, suspended ..... (16:03)

André Emelianoff, violoncello; Peter Basquin, piano;  
Paul Hostetter and Benjamin Ramirez, percussion

4. *Bronze Music* for two pianos (1980) ..... (6:28)  
James Freeman and Charles Abramovic, pianos.

*Black Magic / White Magic* (1981) ..... (22:36)

5. Prelude ..... (0:41)
6. Bright Wish ..... (1:23)
7. Green ..... (1:05)
8. The Hummingbird ..... (1:00)
9. The Tropics ..... (2:59)
10. Twilight ..... (2:31)
11. The Night Herd ..... (0:37)
12. Serpent Song ..... (2:39)
13. Piscivorous Jack ..... (2:17)
14. Stones Sing ..... (4:27)
15. Lilacs ..... (2:18)
16. Envoi (The Pheasant) ..... (0:39)

Constance Beavon, mezzo-soprano; Orchestra  
2001: Pamela Guidetti, flute/alto flute/piccolo;  
Dorothy Freeman, oboe/English horn; Allison  
Herz, clarinet; Dong Jin Kim, clarinet/bass  
clarinet; Barbara Sonies, violin; Lori Barnet,  
violoncello; and Charles Abramovic, piano.  
James Freeman, conductor

17. *Morning Star* chorale for piano,  
four hands (1989) ..... (9:40)  
Charles Abramovic and James Freeman, piano

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## Notes

America: Bali. Any listener to this record – and maybe you should listen first, then begin to wonder – will recognize the places out of which **Gerald Levinson's** music has grown. Distinctively American, one might easily decide, is the dynamism, the virtuosity, the exploring; distinctively Balinese, very often, the sound world, and the sense that vitality and sensuousness are one. That much is obvious. The more essential matters concern what happens next and perhaps the first further lesson of Levinson's music is that the western and the oriental are not separable; that there can be not only linkage but fusion, the kind of fusion out of which births are made.

Levinson was born in 1951, and as a boy learned the piano and later the clarinet. He then studied at the University of Pennsylvania, where his composition teachers included George Crumb, Richard Wernick and George Rochberg; he also attended Bruno Maderna's classes at Tanglewood in 1971. The next year he went on to the University of Chicago, and there studied with Ralph Shapey. From 1974 to 1976 he was a pupil of Olivier Messiaen in Paris—one of the last in a line of alumni that included Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Iannis Xenakis, but not many fellow Americans.

His admiration for Messiaen was obviously intense, but perhaps what he, like so many earlier students, received from Messiaen was more example, challenge and confirmation than redirection. The interests in Eastern music and in percussion sounds, for instance, were already there before he went to

Paris, as was a characteristic way of hearing music in terms of darkness and light: his earlier works had included *Suono oscuro* for large orchestra, *in dark* (three poems of the night) for soprano and eight players, and *Duo: Winds of Light* for violin and piano, as well as a flute solo, *Odyssey*. Then in Paris he wrote three substantial instrumental pieces: *Sky Music* for mixed ensemble; a Trio for clarinet, cello and piano; and Two Poems for large orchestra.

In 1977 he joined the faculty of Swarthmore College, where he has taught ever since, except for periods in Bali in 1979–80 and 1982–83. The first works he wrote back in the United States continued the light-dark theme: *Light dances / stones sing* for eighteen players; another piece of tock music—*Chant des rochers*, for a similar ensemble without the strings—commissioned by the French government in honor of Messiaen's seventieth birthday; and a concerto for English horn, *From Erebus and Black Night*. After that came the earliest of the pieces recorded here: *Bronze Music*, which was written in Bali in 1980.

The title refers to the ringing metallophones of Indonesia, and the music is for Levinson, unusually close to its Javanese and Balinese originals. Without making direct quotation, it is, in his words, “built up from elements reminiscent of several different Balinese styles, from the explosive, dramatic gong kebyar to the stately, ceremonial gong gedé, as well as the majestic court gamelans of central Java.”

“This piece is,” he goes on, “largely written in a five-tone mode [D-E-flat-F-A-B-flat] which approximates a common

Balinese “pelog” tuning. Toward the end of the piece, this basic mode is enriched by extra “foreign” tones in a manner derived from Javanese practice.” At the same time, the layering of tempos through registers recalls the Balinese gamelan, in that there are “slow-moving bass parts, steadily flowing ‘trunk’ tones in the middle range, and rapid interlocking, syncopated ‘flower’ parts in the highest register, sometimes with a free, ornamental melody superimposed.” However, the piece was written not for bronze instruments but for the steel and wood and brass of the concert band, which may explain Levinson’s choice of a quasi-Balinese tuning which emphasizes B-flat, though the tonal center varies. The composer’s transcription for two pianos, which is the version presented here, restores the music somewhat to its resonant sources.

Also begun in Bali, but finished back in the United States in 1981, was the song cycle *Black Magic / White Magic*, Levinson’s first vocal work since *in dark* nine years before. The poems—by his wife, Nanine Valen—might easily have been written for his purposes, since they point so clearly towards minglings of west and east, dark and light, though in fact they had been composed earlier, many of them as children’s poems. (But then perhaps the adult-child dichotomy is another that Levinson’s music, like Ravel’s overcomes.) The setting is for mezzo-soprano with seven players, a slight expansion of the quintet of an earlier light-dark piece, *Pierrot lunaire*: Levinson’s additions are a second clarinetist and an oboist doubling on English horn.

Levinson points out that the instrumental prelude and eleven songs make “a general progression from light...through sunset and twilight, into the night world of dream and myth, with the approach of dawn completing the cycle,” but also that most of the poems have an in-between existence, where darkness shadows light and light shines behind darkness. It is so in the music too, brilliantly precise images are common in Levinson, but they can be brilliantly precise images of the dark or macabre. And dark instruments—the cello, the bass clarinet, the English horn retrieved from its Erebus concerto—can glow.

Each of the movements uses a different instrumental combination, the choices apparently dictated by poetic considerations (the tendrils of oboe and clarinet in “Green,” the piccolo hummingbird in the next number, the high piano-less chords of “Twilight”) and also by mention of musical genres: “Piscivorous Jack” begins as a song for voice and piano; “Stones Sing”—again the mineral music—pays homage to the Schoenberg archetype, and perhaps also to Boulez’s *Le marteau sans maître*, by starting out as a duet for alto flute and voice. Yet despite all the variety, the work is a cycle and not just succession of contrasting miniatures. It seems with motivic connections and also with references to what Levinson calls “the two polar tonalities” of C and A-flat, though these are tonalities more in the sense of Bronze Music than of Brahms.

After *Black Magic / White Magic* Levinson’s remarkable rate of production slowed down, and during the next five years there were just two important works: the chamber-orchestra suite *For the Morning of the World* (1983) and the symphony *Anahata* (1986). Then came a further slowing, with only the four-hand piano chorale *Morning Star* (1989) arriving before the end of the decade. Quite unlike *Bronze Music*, this has the two pianists proceeding through only one layer of time, and a layer that is momentarily slow and still – though, curiously, the basic B-flat major-ish tonality is the same, even if it is now felt as a root of resonance rather than as a site of action. The uses of the extremes of the keyboard, of major chords

with added notes, and of mutings (achieved when one player lightly touches the strings sounded by the other) all accentuate resonance effects, which evoke the distant light suggested by the title, and the inscription from Job: “Were you there when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

*Dreamlight* was begun shortly after the completion of *Anahata*, but not finished until 1990. Scored for cello, piano and percussion, and cast in three big movements, it continues on from the slowness, the singleness and the resonances of *Morning Star* (or more likely, perhaps, the piano chorale was an off-shot from the larger work in progress). The pianist has more work to do inside the instrument: plucking strings at times, or holding them so that harmonics are produced. The percussion instrumentation, too, favors resonant sounds, whether of definite pitch (from vibraphone, marimba, tubular chimes, glockenspiel and crotales) or indefinite (from triangle, cymbals, metal bowls, gongs and tamtams). Meanwhile, the cello often seems to be playing through resonances, rising through overtones, as at the start, where it begins again and again from the low B-flat which is another link with *Morning Star* (the last movement, too, has the same tone-down-ward returning of the bottom string).

The atmosphere is meditative, of listening to one thing, of returning always to that same thing, and to fragmentary details of it. The listening can be excited and dance-like, as it is through most of the middle movement, but even then the objects of attention seems unchanging, and the music’s urge to look beyond—symbolized, perhaps, by its frequent gestures of overshooting the octave—remains. This is a quite different world from that which culminated in *Anahata*—a new growth from out of the same soil, and one which seems to have opened a new phase in Levinson’s music. Since completing *Dreamlight*, he has written a piece for large orchestra, *Sea Changes* (1991), with another due to follow for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

America Bali. That is the beginning of the alphabet.

—Paul Griffiths

**André Emelianoff** is solo cellist of the New York Chamber Symphony and has appeared numerous times as a concert soloist, including in recitals sponsored by the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y. Mr. Emelianoff is cellist of the Aeolian Chamber Players and a member of the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players. He has been a guest artist with Chamber Music at the Y, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Houston Da Camera, and the New Jersey Chamber Music Society. Mr. Emelianoff is a graduate of the Juilliard School where he studied cello with Leonard Rose, Channing Robbins, Luigi Silva, and Claus Adams; and chamber music with Robert Mann and Leonard Shure. Mr. Emelianoff has commissioned works by Aaron Jay Kernis, Joan Tower, Stephen Jaffe, George Perle, Shulamit Ran, Richard Wernick and Gerald Levinson. He also has premiered works by Elliott Carter, Nicholas Maw, Roslavetz, and Shostakovich. He has recorded widely as both a soloist and a member of Da Capo.

Pianist **Charles Abramovic** has won critical acclaim for his solo and ensemble performances both in the United States and abroad. Since his solo debut at the age of 14 with the Pittsburgh Symphony, he has appeared with the Baltimore Symphony, Florida Philharmonic, Nebraska Chamber Orchestra, Pennsylvania Sinfonia, Orchestra 2001, and other orchestras and ensembles. In 1980 Mr. Abramovic won first prize in the American Chopin Competition and, in 1981, won first prize in the Piano Teachers Congress of New York competition resulting in his debut recital at Carnegie Hall.

Percussionist **Paul Hostetter** has performed with numerous organizations including the American Symphony Orchestra. He is a founding member of the contemporary music group, Music Mobile. He has recorded for CRI, Delos, Deutsche-Grammophon, New World Records, and Pro-Arte. **Benjamin Ramirez**, percussionist, studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, Indiana University, and the Juilliard School. He has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, New Haven Symphony, the Spoleto, Italy Opera Festival, and the Waterloo Music Festival in New Jersey.

Pianist **Peter Basquin** has received great critical acclaim for his recordings of virtuoso solo piano music from three centuries: contemporary piano sonatas on Grenadilla records, two J.C. Bach concerti on the Peters International label, and nineteenth-century American words for New World Records. His recital appearances include performances in Europe and the Far East, as well as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. Mr. Basquin has performed as soloist with the American Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Mezzo-soprano **Constance Beavon** receives ongoing critical praise for her "voice of great beauty," "high artistry," and "mastery of style." An international award-winner, her repertoire spans opera, oratorios, and chamber music. She made her debut with the Geneva Opera in 1985, with the New York City Opera in 1987, and with the Chicago Opera Theater in 1988. She has sung with the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Montreal, Houston, Baltimore, New Jersey, Arkansas, and the New Orchestra of Westchester. At home in both classical and contemporary music, she sings at festivals in Paris, Spoleto-USA, Rome (Incontri di Musica Sacra e Contemporanea), Rapallo, Montepulciano, Ojai, Rockport, the

Vermont Mozart Festival, and the Library of Congress Summer Chamber Festival.

Ms. Beavon has premiered more than fifty new works and can be heard on more than a dozen recordings of American music. An honors graduate of Pomona College, Columbia University and New York University, Ms. Beavon lives in New York with her husband, composer Bruce Saylor and three young daughters.

**Orchestra 2001**, founded in the spring of 1988, is dedicated to the performance of twentieth century music and to providing a significant resource and outlet for the many outstanding composers in Pennsylvania. Hailed by Philadelphia's music critics for its imaginative and superbly performed series of concerts in that city, the ensemble has also performed at numerous colleges and universities on the East Coast and is planning a tour of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1993. Orchestra 2001 is committed to the idea that the remarkable variety and vitality of so much of the music of our soon-to-be completed century will be recognized and cherished by everyone who comes in contact with it.

**James Freeman** is the Daniel Underhill Professor of Music at Swarthmore College, co-director of the Swarthmore Music and Dance festival, a member during the summer months of the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, and founder/musical director of Orchestra 2001. He was trained at Harvard University (G.A., M.A., Ph.D.), Tanglewood, and Vienna's Akademie für Musik and counts among his principal teachers pianists Artur Balsam and Paul Badura-Skuda, and his father, double bassist Henry Freeman. He was given the Philadelphia Music Foundation's 1989 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Classical Music and spent part of 1991 as a Fulbright Scholar at the Moscow Conservatory, lecturing on recent American music.

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## Production Notes

*Dreamlight* and *Morning Star*: Produced by Gerald Levinson. Recorded March 15, 1992. Published by Merion Music (Theodore Presser Co.), (BMI).

Black Magic / White Magic Produced by Christopher Oldfather. Recorded October 10, 1990. Published by Merion Music (Theodore Presser Co.). (BMI).

Recording and Editing Engineer: Curt Wittig. All selections recorded at Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

*Dreamlight* commissioned by André Emelianoff and first performed in March, 1992 by André Emelianoff, Peter Basquin, Paul Hostetter, and Benjamin Ramirez at the Miller Theater, Columbia University, New York City. *Bronze Music* (two piano version) was first performed by James Freeman and Gerald Levinson at the Swarthmore Music and Dance festival, 1982. *Black Magic / White Magic* was first performed at the New England Conservatory in March, 1982 by the New England Conservatory Contemporary Ensemble, Mary Westbrook-Geha, mezzo-soprano; John Heiss, conductor. *Morning Star* was first performed by James Freeman and Charles Abramavic at the Swarthmore Music and Dance Festival, September, 1988.

Mastered by Ellen Fitton, Engineer at Sony Classical Productions, Inc. New York, NY.

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