

NWCR659

John Corigliano

Early Works



1. *Kaleidoscope* for two pianos (1959) (5:28)
2. *Gazebo Dances* for piano, four-hands (1972) (14:52)
 - I. Overture
 - II. Waltz
 - III. Adagio
 - IV. TarantellaJohn and Richard Contiguglia, duo-pianists
3. *Two Richard Wilbur Settings* for a *cappella* mixed chorus
 - I. I. L'Invitation au voyage (1971)
(Baudelaire, trans: Wilbur)
 - II. II. A Black November Turkey (Wilbur) (1972)
William Ferris Chorale; William Ferris, conductor
4. *Sonata* for Violin and Piano (1963) (21:51)
 - I. Allegro
 - II. Andantino (with simplicity)
 - III. Lento (quasi recitativo)
 - IV. AllegroJohn Corigliano, Sr., violin; Ralph Votapek, piano

Total playing time: 53:49

© & © 1996 Composers Recordings, Inc.

© 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

Notes

As the title says, this disc is a collection of works from early in my career. The oldest piece, *Kaleidoscope*, was written when I was twenty-one years old. Both it and the *Gazebo Dances* are lighter, short-form works dedicated to friends and colleagues. The two choral works are presented together for the first time, their unifying factor being the poet and translator Richard Wilbur.

The *Sonata* for Violin and Piano was my first major work and is perhaps the most widely performed. Though it has now been recorded numerous times, this recording remains the definitive performance of the work and also the first recording of my music issued on CRI when I was thirty years old! I've written new notes on that piece for this release. For the other pieces, here are the program notes that I've written over the years.

Kaleidoscope (1959): *Kaleidoscope* for Two Pianos was written during my student years as an undergraduate at Columbia College (1955–59). The work began as a project in Otto Luening's composition class, and is dedicated to Luening and to composer Marc Bucci.

As the title implies, *Kaleidoscope* is a colorful mosaic of changing symmetrical patterns, some infused with a ragtime feel, others highly lyrical in content. The work is in ternary form with an extended lyrical center that treats a folk-like melody to a variety of contrapuntal elaborations. In general, *Kaleidoscope* is high-spirited and full of the energy of youth. It received its world premiere at the Spoleto Festival (Italy) in 1961 with pianists Stanley Hollingsworth and Morey Ritt.

Gazebo Dances (1972): *Gazebo Dances* was originally written as a set of four-hand pieces dedicated to certain of my pianist friends. I later arranged the suite for orchestra and for

concert band, and it is from the latter version that the title is drawn. The title was suggested by the pavilions often seen on village greens in towns throughout the countryside, where public band concerts are given on summer evenings. The delights of that sort of entertainment are portrayed in this set of dances, which begins with a Rossini-like Overture, followed by a rather peg-legged Waltz, a long-lined Adagio, and a bouncy Tarantella.

Each movement was given dedications that are as follows: I - for Rose Corigliano and Etta Feinberg; II - for John Ardoin; III - for Heida Hermanns; IV - for Jack Romann and Christian Steiner.

Two Richard Wilbur Settings:

L'Invitation au Voyage (1971): An *a cappella* choral work, composed in 1971, this is a setting of Richard Wilbur's translation of Baudelaire's *L'Invitation au Voyage*. Wilbur's poignant setting pictures a world of obsessive imagination—a drugged vision of heaven full of sensual imagery. The music echoes the quality of the repeated refrain found in this lush translation: "There, there is nothing else but grace and measure, richness, quietness and pleasure."

A Black November Turkey (1972): Composed as a companion piece to *L'Invitation au Voyage* in 1972, this work is based on an original Richard Wilbur poem. This savage barnyard allegory is set against an inane patter of clucking chickens (marked "with bitter sarcasm" in the score), and it portrays a sad and endless futility, a celebrated and unnoticed death.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1963): This sonata is an optimistic, ultra-rhythmic, tonal-and-then-some duo for two masterful players. I built the themes and harmonics of its four movements—Allegro, Andantino, Lento, and Allegro—all

from a second and its inversion, a seventh. The movements center, respectively, on C, D, G minor, and D—but I freely included non-tonal and polytonal sections when needed. I think its eclecticism, its rhythmic energy, and its bright character give the Sonata a very American quality, though that wasn't the goal of writing it.

I didn't so much develop the lively theme in the opening Allegro as herald it with a brief opening fanfare and then embed it in a detailed backdrop, like a stone in a mosaic. Then, from those backdrop details, I built the first theme of the next movement, a gentle *Andantino* in a modified sonata form. Three themes seem to intertwine in this movement, which peaks and peaks again before quieting—but a closer look should reveal that both the second and third themes are but variations of this first. The third movement caps a tense, emotional violin soliloquy with hushed echoes of the sonata's signal interval (the second). The fourth movement, a rondo with a difference, takes a vivid polytriadic theme and an augmented variation on it, and accompaniment figures from previous movements, and spins them all into a breathless and exuberant polymetric finale.

—John Corigliano

John Corigliano (b 1938) is internationally recognized as one of the leading composers of his generation. In orchestra, chamber, opera, and film work, the passion and thoughtfulness of his highly expressive and compelling works, mediated by a multifaceted and ever-expanding technique, has won for him global critical and popular acclaim.

It was in 1990 and 1991 that Corigliano attracted unparalleled international attention with the premieres, respectively, of his Symphony No. 1 and his opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*. The symphony—Corigliano's impassioned personal response to the AIDS crisis—was commissioned and first performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Upon its premiere, it was immediately scheduled by virtually all of the leading orchestras in the country, and later captured for Corigliano the 1991 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. The Chicago's recording of the piece on the Erato label also won two Grammy awards: for Best Contemporary Composition, and for Best Orchestral Performance of the Year. To date, sixty-eight orchestras in fifteen countries have given performances of the work. The following year, in 1991, the Metropolitan Opera unveiled its centennial commission and its first new opera in twenty-five years—Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, suggested by Beaumarchais's "Figaro" trilogy, to a libretto by William M. Hoffman. Greeted with unanimous worldwide acclaim, *The Ghosts of Versailles* sold out both its initial seven-performance run and its 1995 revival

at the Chicago Lyric Opera House. The original nationwide telecast has since been released on laser disc by Deutsche Grammophon. More honors for Mr. Corigliano included his election in 1991 to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the organization of 250 of America's most prominent artists, sculptors, architects, writers, and composers. Following its premiere, *Ghosts* collected the Composition of the Year award from the first International Classical Music Awards; and *Musical America* named Corigliano their first Composer of the Year.

But Corigliano's pre-1990 catalogue bursts with dramatic and usually groundbreaking essays in nearly all the major musical forms. The Piano Concerto and a trio of woodwind concerti—for clarinet, oboe, and for flute and orchestra, *Pied Piper Fantasy*, commissioned by James Galway—have been performed worldwide and recorded by various artists. His vibrant orchestral portfolio embraces both the youthful exuberance of *Tournaments* and the more recent *Fantasy on an Ostinato*, a sophisticated take on minimalism. His recent *Amen for a cappella* choir joins the stark AIDS cantata *Of Rage and Remembrance* and the full-evening oratorio *A Dylan Thomas Trilogy* in his choral catalogue. His first mature composition was a chamber work: the much-recorded and performed Sonata for Violin and Piano, which, upon its premiere, won the Spoleto Festival chamber music prize. But later chamber music ranges from large-scale solo piano works (*Étude Fantasy*) to *Poem in October*, for tenor and chamber ensemble, to his most recent work: his String Quartet, commissioned and recorded for their valedictory performance this year by the Cleveland Quartet. As for film, his first score, for *Altered States*, was nominated for an Academy Award in 1981; his second, for *Revolution*, received the 1985 Anthony Asquith Award for distinguished achievement in film composition.

In addition to the String Quartet, Corigliano's recent premieres include *Troubadours*, for guitar and chamber orchestra, recorded by Sharon Isbin and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra for EMI Records. Upcoming recordings include a new recording of his Symphony No. 1 by Leonard Slatkin and the National Symphony Orchestra, paired with the world premiere recording of *Of Rage and Remembrance* for BMG Classics; and, in addition to this collection, two more all-Corigliano discs, presented by the Saint Louis Symphony, again under Mr. Slatkin and also for BMG; and the world premiere recording of *Creations* for narrator and chamber orchestra in another all-Corigliano disc presented by I Fiamminghi under the direction of Rudolf Werthen on Telarc Records.

Production Notes

CD mastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Robert Wolff, engineer, at Sony Music Studios, New York City.

Kaleidoscope and *Gazebo Dances* produced by Tim Matryn, Classic Sound. Recorded November 3, 1992, Merkin Concert Hall, New York City.

L'Invitation au Voyage and *A Black November Turkey* produced by Hudson Fair, Ealing Mobile Recording. Recorded in concert February 19, 1988, Mount Carmel Church, Chicago.

From CRI SD215:

Sonata for Violin and Piano. Produced by David Hall; recorded March 1, 1966, Steinway Hall, New York City.

All works published by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP)

This disc was also made possible through the generous support of the Virgil Thomson Foundation.