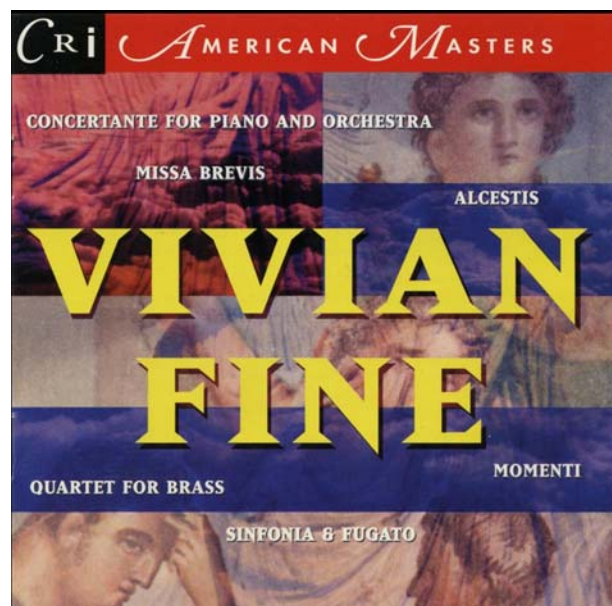


Vivian Fine



- Concertante for Piano and Orchestra* (1944) (12:28)
1. I. Andante con moto (9:21)
 2. II. Allegro risoluto (8:18)
- Reiko Honsho, piano; Japan Philharmonic;
Akeo Watanabe, conductor
3. *Missa Brevis* for Four Cellos and Taped Voice (1972) (20:28)
 1. Praeludium (cellos)
 2. Kyrie (voice)
 3. Omnium – All things (cellos, voice)
 4. Omnium visibilium et invisibilium – All things visible and invisible (cello)
 5. Lacrymosa – Weeping (cellos)
 6. Teste David cum Sibylla – So spoke Dave and the Sybil (cellos, voice)
 7. Dies Irae – Day of wrath (cellos, voice)

8. Eli, Eli, Lomo asov toni – My God, why hast thou forsaken me ... from the 22nd Psalm (voice)
 9. Sanctus – Holy (cellos)
 10. Omein – amen (voice, cellos)
- Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; Eric Barlett,
David Finckel, Michael Finckel, Maxine
Neuman, cellos

Momenti for Piano Solo (1978) (8:53)

4. I. Poco Allegro (1:00)
5. II. Andante lusingando (1:21)
6. III. Allegro (1:02)
7. IV. Con tenerezza (2:03)
8. V. Moderato (0:45)
9. VI. Andante (2:42)

Lionel Nowak, piano

Quartet for Brass (1978) (11:23)

10. I. Variations: Poco lento, espressivo (3:36)
11. II. Fanfare: energico (2:02)
12. III. Eclogue: Lento (4:34)
13. IV. Variations: Lively (1:11)

Ronald K. Anderson and Allan Dean, trumpets; David
Jolley, French horn; Lawrence Benz, bass trombone;

Sinfonia and Fugato for Solo Piano (1963) (5:42)

14. Sinfonia (3:11)
15. Fugato (2:32)

Robert Helps, piano

Alcestis (1960) (10:34)

16. I. Alcestis and Thanatos (5:30)
17. II. Revelling Hercules (1:17)
18. III. Battle of Hercules and Thanatos (1:28)
19. IV. Dance of Triumph (2:10)

Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo;
William Strickland, conductor

Total Playing Time: 75:15

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Notes

By age five it was apparent that **Vivian Fine** (*b* Chicago, 29 Sept 1913; *d* Bennington, VT, 20 March 2000) was a gifted musician. She won a scholarship to attend the Chicago Musical College and later, the American Conservatory of Music. By age eleven, Vivian became a student of Djane Lavoie-Herz, who had studied with Scriabin. Probably Fine would have become a concert pianist had she not begun theory lessons with Ruth Crawford, also a student of Lavoie-Herz. Crawford suggested that Vivian, who was thirteen, write a composition. The result impressed Crawford, and it was not long before friends of Lavoie-Herz, such as Henry Cowell, Dane Rudhyar, and Imre Weisshaus, recognized and supported this teenage talent.

Cowell thought so highly of Fine's *Solo for Oboe* (1929), a three-movement modernistic work, that he arranged for it to be premiered on April 21, 1930, at a Pan-American Association of Composers concert in New York. The next year, following her mentor Crawford, Fine moved to New York City with the intention of studying with Charles Seeger. The lessons did not

happen, but Fine became a member of the Young Composers Group, organized by Aaron Copland, and performed her *Four Polyphonic Pieces* for Piano (1932) at the first Yaddo Festival in 1932. The following year Cowell published her *Four Songs* (1933) for soprano and string quartet in *New Music*. Living in New York gave Fine the opportunity to study composition with Roger Sessions from 1934 to 1942, and piano with Abby Whiteside from 1937 to 1945. Because Fine had a reputation as an excellent performer of contemporary music, she earned a living during this period as a dance accompanist. She wrote the scores for Doris Humphrey's *The Race of Life* (1937), Charles Weidman's *Opus 51* (1938), Hanya Holm's *They Too Are Exiles* (1939), Martha Graham's *Alcestis* (1960), and José Limón's *My Song, My Enemy* (1965).

Fine felt isolated from other composers when she and her husband, Benjamin Karp, moved to New Paltz, New York in 1951. Although she was a busy mother of two daughters, Fine continued composing, and many of her pieces received

premieres. Her situation changed when she joined the Bennington College faculty in 1964. She enjoyed teaching and wrote many compositions for colleagues. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980. She has been the recipient of numerous commissions.

Fine's most recent large composition is *Memoirs of Uliana Rooney* (1993), a multimedia chamber opera to a libretto of Sonya Friedman's, made possible by a grant from the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

This compact disc is a retrospective overview of Fine's music featuring works in almost every genre and from throughout the various phases of her career.

The *Concertante* for Piano and Orchestra (1942) comes at the end of Fine's study with Sessions. Writing an orchestral piece was a project she undertook even though there was no commission or forthcoming performance. When Sessions saw sketches of the *Concertante*, both teacher and student sensed that lessons were no longer needed, Sessions saying, "Now we are colleagues." However, Fine did attend George Szell's class at the Mannes College of Music, because she thought she needed to learn more about orchestration. Szell saw the score and confirmed Fine's innate sense for orchestral color.

The piano is the leader in the *Concertante* and has many virtuoso passages. The beginning orchestral material is a short and complete tonal statement, whereas the piano's entrance is a longer and unrelated lyric passage that soon sheds tonal restraints and becomes the maverick element in the *Concertante's* first movement's loose sonata design. Fine explores the entire orchestral palette, featuring choirs of strings and then woodwinds, before mixing orchestral colors and eventually exchanging materials in the development section, orchestrating the piano's beginning music. The second movement is like an energetic dance, and the concerto grosso plan is evident in the pairing of the orchestra and piano as partners, contrasted with sections featuring the piano as a soloist with orchestral comments. The *Concertante's* virtuosity is a characteristic of Fine's piano compositions, as well as an indication of her own keyboard skills and exuberance.

The *Missa Brevis* for Four Cellos and Taped Voice (1972), composed 30 years later when Fine was at Bennington, demonstrates her compositional confidence. George Finckel, a colleague, had a cello quartet that was Fine's inspiration for her *Missa Brevis*, and Jan DeGaetani, whose voice is heard on the four-channel tape, taught at Bennington for a semester as a sabbatical replacement. The composition is Fine's personal spiritual statement. She selected texts, sometimes just a word, from various Mass traditions. Five of the ten movements, such as *Preludium*, *Lacrymosa*, and *Dies Irae*, are text-less, and Fine portrays the meaning through the celli's gestures and textures. Sometimes they are fused in vertical textures—sounding like modernistic organ music, as in *Preludium*, or resembling singers as in *Lacrymosa's* madrigal-like setting. Fine did not succumb to the temptation of having the tape part be repetitious canons or obvious manipulations of material. As in her acoustic music, each line's counterpoint contributes its own statement.

In 1978 she wrote *Momenti* for piano solo in honor of the 150th anniversary of Schubert's death and dedicated it to Roger Sessions. The six short movements were inspired by gestures from Schubert's *Moments musicaux*, though not until the end of the last movement is there an actual quote. The gestures become transformed into Fine's music, which sounds unselfconscious in its free use of dissonance and vigorous in its frequent changes in rhythmic groupings.

The Quartet for Brass was written at the request of the Metropolitan Brass Quartet of New York City. The piece is scored for two trumpets, horn, and bass trombone. Each of the Quartet's four movements explores a specific idea, and the brass ensemble is heard in differing contexts. For example, in Variations, the first movement, Fine creates a stark intervallic texture that later becomes a retrograde and then accumulates energy by doubling its speed. Fine is careful to emphasize the retrograde with a change in tempo, removal of mutes, and accented dynamics. The ensemble becomes more brass-like for the second movement, Fanfare, in which the listener hears various pairings of the instruments in a contrapuntal texture that is meticulously shaped through dynamics, attacks, and, at times, microtonal tuning. Eclogue, the third movement, is quiet and sparse with solo instrumental lines, ending with a prolonged C that is colored by changes in dynamics and mutes. The fourth movement, Variations, becomes more lively as the ensemble presents individual and unison lines that punctuate the rapidly changing rhythmic patterns. Like the second movement of *Concertante*, Variations is constantly dancing. Material is reused as canons, retrogrades, and in augmentation, but the energy never ceases and the listener does not have time to register the compositional manipulations.

The Sinfonia and Fugato (1952) for solo piano was written when Fine lived in New Paltz. The piece is part of a larger work, Variations for Piano, from which Fine extracted the Sinfonia and Fugato. The Sinfonia is more somber and angular than the *Momenti*, having an étude-like quality featuring sixths in contrary motion and dotted rhythmic patterns. The Fugato is in three voices with two subjects. The first subject is characterized by large leaps and is joined by an accompanying counter-subject. The second has its own exposition and a clear tonal center of C. The remainder of the Fugato consists of episodes using the "heads," or opening sections, of each subject. It ends with a complete statement of the first subject.

In 1960 Martha Graham asked Fine to compose the music for *Alcestis*. The working procedure was much different than it had been in Fine's previous experiences with choreographers. Heretofore the choreography preceded the music. With *Alcestis*, Fine wrote the music from a dramatic script written by Graham. As Fine stated on the score, the piece was "an attempt to depict the dramatic and emotional qualities of the myth ... [while avoiding] descriptive or representational writing." As a musical work, the score is self-sufficient. Fine distilled the essence of the myth into a sonic dream expressed by contrapuntal lines enhanced by imaginative orchestration and flexible rhythms. Later, she extracted sections of the ballet score to create the version heard here, which is divided into the following sections, I: *Alcestis and Thanatos*; II: *The Revelling Hercules*; III: *Battle between Hercules and Thanatos*, and IV: *The Dance of Triumph and the Rescue of Alcestis*.

The following synopsis of the ballet's mythological story is taken from CRI's original LP release: "Alcestis has sacrificed herself to Thanatos (Death) in order that her husband, Admetus, King of Thessaly, might attain immortality. While the house of Admetus mourns her demise, Hercules arrives. As the news of Alcestis's death has been kept from him (for reasons best known to the perpetrators of mythology), Hercules indulges in a heroic, might we say Herculean, bout of feasting and drinking. When he learns, by the careless words of a servant, of her death, he engages mighty Thanatos in combat. Victorious, he returns Alcestis to her husband and her people."

—Heidi Von Gunden

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Production Notes

From CRI SD 135: Concertante for Piano and Orchestra

Produced by Carter Harman.

Published by the composer.

From CRI SD 145: Alceste

Engineered by Toshita Musical Industries, Ltd of Tokyo, Japan.

Funded by the National Council of Women of the United States and the National Federation of Music Clubs, both accredited to the United Nations. Published by the composer. Published by G. Schirmer.

From CRI SD 288: Sinfonia and Fugato. Originally released on RCA Victor in 1966 under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. This re-release was made under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

From CRI SD 434: Quartet for Brass, Momenti, Missa Brevis

Produced by Carter Harman, engineered by David Hancock, New York, October 1979 and June 1981. Funded by a 1979 grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Quartet and *Momenti* published by GunMar Music, Inc. *Missa* published by the composer.

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