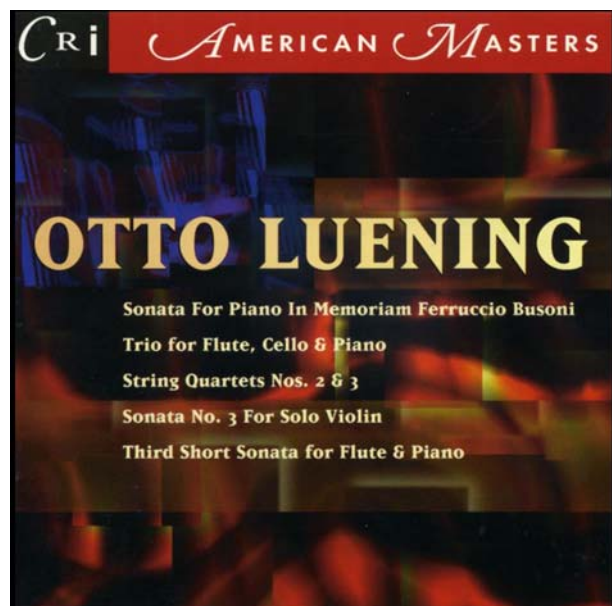


# Otto Luening



String Quartet No. 3 (1928) .....	(16:07)
1. I. Allegro Vivace .....	(8:22)
2. II. Allegro Moderato .....	(7:45)
Sinnhoffer Quartet of Munich: Igor Sinnhoffer, violin; Werner Grobholz, violin; Herbert Blendinger, viola; Franz Amann, cello	
Sonata for Piano "In Memoriam Ferruccio Busoni" (1966) .....	(20:54)
3. I. Introduction .....	(3:06)

4. II. Dramatic Scene .....	(4:59)
5. III. Burlesque .....	(6:32)
6. IV. Fantasia .....	(6:17)
Ursula Oppens, piano	
7. String Quartet No. 2 (1924) .....	(8:40)
Sinnhoffer Quartet of Munich	
8. Trio for flute, cello, and piano (1962) .....	(10:10)
Harvey Sollberger, flute; Fred Sherry, cello; Charles Wuorinen, piano	
Sonata III for solo violin (1971) .....	(13:06)
9. I. Allegro .....	(1:10)
10. II. Moderato .....	(0:59)
11. III. Slow .....	(2:00)
12. IV. Fast .....	(1:33)
13. V. Slow, freely .....	(2:41)
14. VI. Presto .....	(0:57)
15. VII. Moderato .....	(1:25)
16. VIII. Fast .....	(2:21)
Max Pollikoff, violin	
Third Short Sonata for flute and piano (1967) .....	(4:04)
17. Slow and somewhat free in tempo .....	(2:07)
Interlude – Free in tempo and dynamics	
18. With fantasy and freedom .....	(1:57)
Sue Ann Kahn, flute; Andrew Willis, piano	

Total playing time: 73:34

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## Notes

**Otto Luening** (1900-1996) was born into a musical family of German extraction. His maternal grandfather was a tenor and his father, active as a pianist, composer, and conductor, was musical director of the Milwaukee Music Society and a professor at the University of Wisconsin. When Luening was twelve, his formal education ended with the seventh grade and his family settled in Munich, where he studied at the Akademie der Tonkunst. When the United States entered World War I, he was exiled to Switzerland and studied in Zurich where he made his debut as a performer, conductor, and composer.

In 1920 Luening returned to the United States, composing, performing, and teaching successively in Chicago, at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, the University of Arizona in Tucson, Bennington College in Vermont, and Barnard College, Columbia University, and the Juilliard School in New York City. In the early 1950s, working with Vladimir Ussachevsky at Columbia, he began a series of experiments and compositions using the new medium of tape and electronic music, some of the earliest work of its kind in the world; in 1959, he co-founded and co-directed the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. He has also been active in the founding and direction of the American Music Center, American Composers Alliance, and Composers

Recordings, Inc. Luening's autobiography, *The Odyssey of an American Composer*, was published in 1980.

Although he is probably best known for his tape and electronic music, much of his output consists of solo and chamber music for traditional instrumental combinations. There are more than forty orchestral works, fifty songs, the opera *Evangeline*, the oratorio *No Jerusalem But This*, and music for plays. The threads that run through the almost mind-boggling diversity of Luening's work are the solidity of his knowledge and technique, his use of a harmonic practice derived from the overtones of the harmonic series, and, above all, the strength of his wit. A dry and sophisticated humor is an important part of Luening's personality and a strong component of his teaching technique; it is also a major and often overlooked quality of his music. Only Otto Luening could end a relentlessly and almost comically surreal serial piece with a blazing C Major chord.

Luening's String Quartet No. 1, composed in 1919, was performed at a Berlin ISCM concert in 1924 and established the young composer's reputation in Europe. The two string quartets represented here likewise show Luening's strong European heritage. The String Quartet No. 2, dedicated to his teacher Philipp Jarnach, was written in 1924 shortly after his return to this country. According to the composer, it was

rejected by several contemporary music societies and quartets because of its technical and stylistic difficulties, and it was first performed only in 1965 by the Jean Benjamin Quartet at a Group for Contemporary Music concert at McMillan Theatre (now called Miller Theatre) at Columbia University. Although this intense and tightly organized work teeters between shifting tonal centers and atonality, it also contains the classic outline of a traditional form—introduction, sonata, slow movement, scherzo and finale—but all compressed into a single nine-minute movement.

The String Quartet No. 3 was composed in 1928 and is dedicated to the arts administrator Oliver Daniel (who, with Luening and Douglas Moore, co-founded CRI in 1954). It is a more original and exuberant work with strong tonal elements and a clear, elegant form. There are three movements: a “sonata” with themes and development that is followed, without pause, by a charming and surprising pastorale in F and a finale which is, typically for a composer who can never sit still, made up of twenty-one suave and witty variations on a twelve-tone theme. The work was first performed in 1935 by the Walden String Quartet at the Yaddo Festival, Saratoga Springs, New York.

The Trio for flute, cello and piano, of 1962, was a commission from the Group for Contemporary Music for their inaugural concert of October 22, 1962, at McMillan Theatre, Columbia University, their home for many years. The work, in quasi-serial form, is a witty take on the serialist predilections of the period, complete with pregnant pauses, fits and starts, and that astonishing C Major finish already mentioned. This recording features the original performers, Harvey Sollberger, flute; Charles Wuorinen, piano (both his students); and Fred Sherry, cello.

The Sonata for Piano “In Memoriam Ferruccio Busoni” was written for the 1966 centenary of the birth of Luening’s teacher. This recording by Ursula Oppens, the winner of the 1969 Busoni prize in Bolzano, Italy, was originally issued in 1973 on the fiftieth anniversary of Busoni’s death. Luening points out Busoni’s important but little-recognized influence on American music. The famous pianist/composer and musical philosopher taught at the New England Conservatory in the 1890s and toured the United States a number of times. His book, *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, published in 1907, suggested the possibility of electronic music and called attention to the Dynamophone, invented by the American Thaddeus Cahill. According to Luening, Busoni was influenced by the theories of a German-American theorist, Bernhard Ziehn, who also had an impact on his own ideas about harmony. Among Busoni’s many pupils, Edgard

Varèse, Stefan Wolpe, Kurt Weill, and, of course, Luening himself, were all major and influential figures in American music who made highly original contributions to twentieth-century music. It is also significant that two of them, Varèse and Luening, were pioneers of the electronic music of which Busoni was an acknowledged prophet.

The Sonata pays homage to Busoni’s eclecticism in a series of pieces in Busoni-esque style without ever quoting him directly. There are four movements: an “Introduction” which sets the framework for the tonal ideas of the work; a “Dramatic Scene” which quotes harmonic and canonic devices used by Busoni; a “Burlesque” which uses jazz/pop elements in combination with Busonian ideas, and a virtuoso “Fantasia” which evokes the performing spirit of the great pianist/composer.

“Since 1965,” the composer writes, “after exploring and composing much electronic music, I again became interested in the power of the single tone and of the melodic-rhythmic line as a vehicle for complete musical statement. This resulted in a number of solo works for flute, cello, and viola, as well as duets for these and various other instruments. Three solo sonatas for violin were composed for Max Pollikoff.”

The Sonata No. 3 for Violin Solo was written in January 1971 and performed on March 7 of that year at Pollikoff’s Music in Our Time series at the 92nd Street Y in New York. This is a substantial work, full of charming allusions to the classical and virtuoso tradition. It is in eight short and highly contrasted movements, using a variety of composing and performing techniques but unified by a sure harmonic sense and by the composer’s typically poetic wit. The composer himself calls it a “tone poem with eight stanzas.” It is performed here by the dedicatee, Max Pollikoff, for whom it was written.

The Third Short Sonata for flute and piano, dating from 1976, is dedicated to Harvey Sollberger, a student of Luening and, like his teacher, a flutist and composer. Sollberger, who was one of the founders of the Group for Contemporary Music, gave the work its premiere at a Group concert in 1976. The composition is in two parts separated by an improvisatory interlude and cadenza. According to the composer, “the concise, aphoristic materials of the sonata lend an aura of spontaneity to the work...” Spontaneity and wit combined with great craft and a mastery of the widest range of twentieth-century styles and forms are the hallmark of the fertile musical imagination of this artist.

—Eric Salzman

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## Production Notes

From CRI SD 303; String Quartet No. 2

String Quartet No. 3

Produced by Carter Harman

Published by C.F. Peters

Recorded by Karl Grobholz (Munich) in Moeschenfeld Church

From CRI SD 334

Sonata for Piano "In Memoriam Ferruccio Busoni"

Produced by Carter Harman

Recorded November 4, 1974 by David Hancock

Published by Bardic Edition

From CRI SD 303

Trio for Flute, Cello and Piano

Sonata III for Solo Violin

Produced by Carter Harman

Recorded by David Hancock

Published by C.F. Peters

From CRI SD 531

Third Short Sonata for Flute and Piano\*

Produced and engineered by Max Wilcox

Digital engineering by Kevin Boutote, New York

Digital Recording recorded at the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York City, on November 8 and 9, 1985 and at RCA Studio A, New York City, on February 11 and 19, 1986.

Publishing: Manuscript

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

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