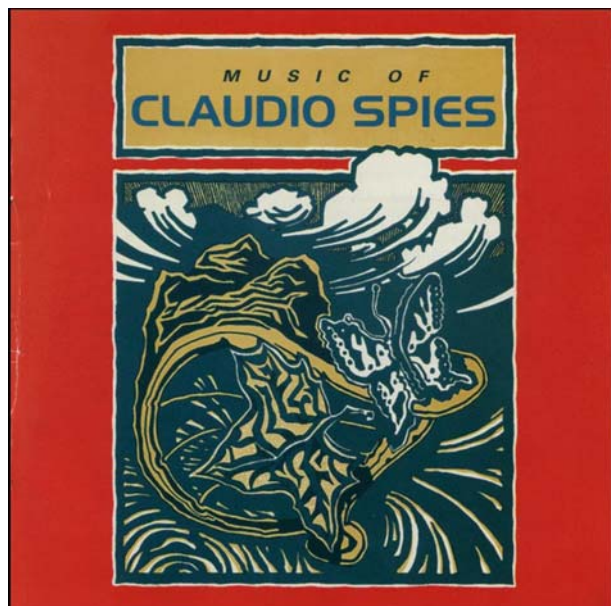


Music of Claudio Spies



Dylan Thomas's "Lament" and a Complementary "Envoi" (1990)

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| 1. Lament | (7:58) |
| 2. Envoi | (2:34) |
| Nathaniel Watson, baritone; Margaret
Kampmeier, piano | |
| 3. <i>Insieme</i> (1994) | (1:29) |
| Elizabeth McNutt, flute; Andrew May, violin | |
| 4. Bagatelle (1970) | (2:04) |
| Alan Feinberg, piano | |
| Five Sonnet-Settings for vocal quartet
and piano (1976-77) | |
| 5. I – Sonnet XVIII | (2:59) |
| 6. II – Sonnet XXVII and Sonnet XXVIII | (5:21) |

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| 7. III – Sonnet CIV | (3:13) |
| 8. IV – Sonnet XLIII | (2:47) |
| Christine Whittlesey, soprano; Johana Arnold,
alto; David Ronis, tenor; Jan Opalach, bass;
Henry Martin, piano; Claudio Spies, conductor | |
| 9. <i>Beisammen</i> (1995) | (5:15) |
| Matthew Sullivan, Brian Greene, oboes and
English Horns | |
| 4 <i>Dádivas</i> (1977-80) | (10:34) |
| 10. A Between-Birthdays Bagatelle for
Roger Sessions's 80th-81st (1977) | (1:39) |
| 11. Ein Aggregats-Walzerl (1978) | (1:38) |
| 12. Bagatelle (1979) (5:09) | (2:08) |
| 13. Verschieden (26.IX.1979) (1980) | (5:09) |
| Alan Feinberg, piano | |
| 14. <i>Animula vagula, blandula</i> (1964) | (1:43) |
| Christine Whittlesey, soprano; Johana Arnold, alto;
David Ronis, tenor; Jan Opalach, bass; Claudio
Spies, conductor | |
| 15. <i>Viopiacem</i> for viola and keyboard
instruments (1965) | (9:42) |
| Samuel Rhodes, viola; Robert Miller, piano | |
| 16. Impromptu (1963) | (2:21) |
| Robert Miller, piano | |
| <i>Three Songs on Poems by May Swenson</i> (1969) | |
| 17. I – Unconscious Came A Beauty | (2:21) |
| 18. II – Living Tenderly | (2:36) |
| 19. III – The Woods at Night | (2:37) |
| Christine Whittlesey, soprano; Alan Feinberg, piano | |

Total playing time: 66:03

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Notes

Born in Santiago, Chile, in 1925, **Claudio Spies** has lived in the U.S. almost continuously since first coming here to study music in 1942, and has been a U.S. citizen since 1966. He holds degrees from Harvard; he has also taught there and at Vassar, Swarthmore, the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, and, since 1970, has been professor of music at Princeton. He has received several awards, including a grant from the Ingram Merrill Foundation, a Brandeis University Creative Arts Award Citation in Music, an award from The National Institute of Arts and Letters, and a Fellowship Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has supplied the following remarks concerning the compositions on this compact disc:

My settings of two poems by Dylan Thomas, *Dylan Thomas's "Lament" and a Complementary "Envoi,"* were finished in August 1990. They are indicative of a continuing preoccupation with varieties of text-setting and, in this particular instance, with the ways in which "irregular" strophic schemes

may be reflected musically. (The recurrence of refrains is in itself unproblematic, but their "displaced" recurrence brings interesting problems to the fore, and offers a welcome challenge to the composer.) These poems are rich indeed; both in their dramatic-declarative content, charged with high emotion and semantic abundance, and in subtler, more internal references and refinements of allusion, they yield in my attempt in setting a musical fabric whose aim is to reflect that richness through far from minimal means. They are dedicated "To those from whom, having taught them, I have learned."

Insieme (Italian for "together") was composed for and dedicated to a young couple that took part in the Second Annual Young Composers' Workshop at Arcosanti, Arizona, in August 1994; it was performed there by its dedicatees, and also performed by them on this recording. It is the first in a probable series of pieces for two instruments designed to

celebrate—in a variety of languages—the delights of being together and of perceiving delight in one another.

Bagatelle, like the Impromptu (its predecessor by seven years), is an independent piece in the sense that it makes no musical attempts to allude to a dedicatee's identity or to a particular time or circumstance. Instead, it is a study in textural differentiations, modified returns, and precisely interrelated tempos.

Five Sonnet-Settings is a long-standing love-affair with the vocal quartets of Brahms and was bound, finally, to be tempted, or goaded, into an act of emulation. I succumbed on rereading Shakespeare's sonnets some years back, and should explain that the emulative aspect of my settings for vocal quartet and piano does not pertain to their musical surface—nothing could sound less like Brahms, after all—but resides in that region between hope and despair with which composers attuned to his unique attainments are so familiar.

The sonnets chosen for this work were assembled into four units—here identified by Roman numerals—of two different kinds. While a considerable variety of common threads run through II and IV, no such links are so readily woven between I and III. (Paired musically, as they are both, by their subject matter and numerical ordering, Sonnets 27 and 28 are considered to be a single unit.) The uncommon intricacy and the abundance of relational ties within and between these poems, as shown in the lexical, semantic and sonic domains, manifested through alliterative, assonantal and illusory riches, suggested—or rather, demanded—a transfer of at least a modicum of such dimensionalities into the musical setting. The Five Sonnet-Settings, first in an ever-lengthening series of such ventures, were composed between May 1976 and September 1977.

Following in the footsteps—both as to occasion, intent, celebration and even shared musical materials—of *Insieme, Beisammen* (German for “together”) was written for a young couple that is very dear to me. The music unfolds according to the available combinations for the two instruments (and their pairings) involved.

The Spanish heading of 4 *Dádivas* denotes a collection of occasional pieces which share the trait of having temporal circumstances and/or personal identification woven into their musical fabric. The first one, again separated from its preceding Bagatelle (1970) by seven years, was appropriately finished on July 7, 1977 (7/7/77). The itch appears, however, to have become annual since then.

“A Between-Birthdays Bagatelle for Roger Sessions's 80th-81st” was composed for a celebration at Princeton, as part of a group of piano pieces by the distinguished composer's students, friends, and colleagues, which were performed on that occasion. The discerning listener will descry in the opening measures, as well as in their re-registered recurrences, the *soggetto cavato* in the pitch class succession: D–G–G–D–E–flat–E–flat–B (=R(e)(s)O(I)-G-ER-S-E-SI...).

“Ein Aggregats-Walzer!” refers topically in its 66 measures to various elements adding up to 12 and was written for my daughter Leah on a birthday in 1978 which, to nobody's surprise, was her twelfth.

“Bagatelle” is perplexingly concerned, among other things, with multiples of thirteen. It is also a study in various kinds of harmonics.

True to its name, “Verschieden (26.IX.1979)” is distinct in this collection both in having somewhat larger dimensions and in being a lament for my deceased friend Seymour Shifrin. The piece uses the set of *Viopiacem*, written fifteen years earlier and dedicated in happier times to the same dear friend.

What attracted me to this little poem, *Animula vagula, blindula*—it is assumed to be but a fragment—was the sensitive balance and verbal juxtaposition within and among its five component lines, so that in setting it for four unaccompanied voices I felt obliged to support the parallels as well as the contrasts between the first and fourth of these by whatever musical means were at my disposal. The brief composition was intended as a modest memorial to Arnold Schoenberg on what would have been, in 1964 his ninetieth anniversary, and was first performed in connection with an exhibit of his paintings and drawings, graciously lent by Mrs. Schoenberg, at Swarthmore College.

In assembling, *Viopiacem*, a “duo for three instruments”—the keyboard-player being required to perform on the harpsichord and the piano—my intention was to provide each of the composition's eight sections with its particular instrumental identity and textural definition. These sections of varying lengths make use of the participating instruments according to the following plan: 1) viola 2) viola and piano 3) piano 4) viola and piano 5) viola 6) harpsichord 7) viola and harpsichord, and 8) viola, harpsichord and piano. In addition, the sections are balanced by an overall tempo scheme, by musical materials held, and derived, in common, as well as by a network of returns. Composed in 1965, its title was derived by joining together the opening syllable of each instrument's Italian name. Felicitous aural associations between this compound and works meaning “life,” “peace,” and “pleasure” neither went unnoticed at the time, nor were unintended.

Composed in March 1963 in celebration of the birth of their first child to dear friends, the Impromptu is subtitled “Cradle music for Adam Henry Zivin,” its purpose is thereby explained.

Three Songs on Poems by May Swenson was composed in the summer of 1969. These songs had their origin primarily in my fondness for May Swenson's spare, well-turned verses which perfectly suited their subjects while suggesting certain musical reflections of, and references to, their elegant inner-workings. They may also be conjectured to have arisen from an inveterate zoophilia (granted that, as in most of the present instances, the objects of such affinity be of the milder species), and to indulge, moreover, in the more discrete forms of pictorialism.

Production Notes

Dylan Thomas's "Lament" and a Complementary "Envoi" was recorded in May 1994

Insieme was recorded in April 1995

Beisammen was recorded in August 1995.

Engineered by James Moses and Robert Ferretti. Produced by Claudio Spies.

Recorded at Taplin Auditorium, Princeton University.

Impromptu, *Viopacem*: Produced by Carter Harman in 1970.

Five Sonnet-Settings; Animula vagula, blandula; Bagatella; Three Songs on Poems by May Swenson; 4 Dádivas produced by Carter Harman, recorded by David Hancock in NYC in 1979 and 1980.

Original recordings funded by grants from the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, and a contribution from an anonymous donor.

5 Dádivas published by Boelke-Bomart.

Viopacem, *Bagatelle*, and *Animula vagula, blandula* published by Boosey & Hawkes. "A Between-Birthdays Bagatelle" and "Verschieden" published in *Perspectives in New Music*, Vol. 16, No. 2, and Vol. 17, No. 2, respectively.

Impromptu published by Elkan-Vogel, Inc.

All other works published by the composer. All works ASCAP.