

Jubal Songs



1. Donald Freund: *Backyard Songs* (1990) (15:44)
 George Crumb: *Federico's Little Songs for Children* (1986) (13:07)

- La Señorita del Abanico (Señorita of the Fan) (1:58)
 2. La tarde (Afternoon) (1:36)
 3. Canción cantada (A Song Sung) (1:34)
 4. Caracola (Snail) (2:25)
 5. ¡El lagarto está llorando! (The Lizard Is Crying) (2:13)
 6. Cancioncilla Sevillana (A Little Song from Seville) (1:50)
 7. Canción tonta (Silly Song) (1:31)
 8. Harvey Sollberger: *Life Study* (1985) (19:10)
 9. Tania León: *Journey* (1990) (3:26)
 Eric Stokes: *Song Circle* (1993)
 10. Night by Lake Calhoun (3:31)
 11. Chameleon Wedding (2:22)
 12. Onion (3:57)
 13. Car (2:56)
 14. The God and Goddess of Carrots (2:49)

The Jubal Trio: Christine Schadeberg, soprano; Sue Ann Kahn, flute; Susan Jolles, harp

Total Playing Time: 68:05

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Notes

Since its founding in 1974, the **Jubal Trio** has effectively established an entirely new genre of chamber music. The trio has actively sought out new works from living composers to enlarge the existing repertoire for flute, harp, and soprano. This CD is a recent harvest of their collective talent, tenacity, and artistic commitment, presenting premiere recordings of five works, all written for the Jubal Trio. Each of the five composers has approached the unusual challenge of combining flute, harp, and soprano with a different perspective. This unique collection of chamber music, in vibrant performances by the Trio, is eloquent testimony to the wide-ranging variety of sounds and textures possible from such an unconventional chamber ensemble.

Donald Freund composed *Backyard Songs* in 1990 in honor of the Jubal Trio's fifteenth anniversary. The Indiana University-based Freund is active not only as a composer, but also as pianist, conductor, and lecturer. Freund has written:

Backyard Songs emulates the carefree virtuosity heard in the jazz singing of Ella Fitzgerald and the raw emotional power communicated by Memphis blues singer Ruby Wilson. The voice-dominated “songs”—settings of poems by Pulitzer Prize-winning Chicago poet Gwendolyn Brooks—are introduced and linked by “scat” sections in which the voice is instrumentally integrated to create a real mixed trio texture. The set moves dramatically from the whimsical naughtiness of “A Song in the Front Yard” to the threatening suppressed violence of the up-tempo “We Real Cool,” and concludes with the wrenching, cathartic blues-cortège of “DeWitt Williams on His Way to Lincoln Cemetery.”

With his amalgam of jazz-blues and traditional western classical instruments, Freund has taken a firm stand in the

crossover camp. The harp in *Backyard Songs* functions as the string bass and rhythm section might in a jazz ensemble. Similarly, the flute plays the role of saxophone or trumpet. The soprano must retain a flexibility that implies improvisation, even though the scat sections are fully written-out. Freund manages to evoke the styles of both blues and jazz effectively without being derivative. It is a tricky tightrope to walk, but Freund's compelling music is an apt setting of Gwendolyn Brooks's powerful texts.

Among the five composers represented on this CD, **George Crumb** (*b* Charleston, WV, 24 Oct 1929) is the elder statesman. His affinity for the poetry of Federico García Lorca is well known; so too is his poignant identification of the world of children. *Federico's Little Songs for Children* (1986) brings together those two recurring aspects of his music. The composer knew the artistry of harpist Susan Jolles from her performances and recording of *Ancient Voices of Children* and of flutist Sue Ann Kahn through her many performances of his music. Perhaps because he had the particular sound of the Jubal Trio in mind, Crumb's *Federico's Little Songs for Children* is expertly written for all three participants. The composer has written:

The seven little poems constituting the *Canciones para Niños* (poetry by García Lorca) reflect many different aspects of a child's fantasy world. The mood can be reflective, playful, mock-serious, gently ironic, or simply joyous. At an early stage in the sketching process I decided to include all four instruments of the flute family so that I might associate an appropriate timbre with the innate character of each poem. Of course the varied treatment of voice and harp, together with purely

compositional choices (tempos, themes, texture, etc.), likewise help delineate the desired mood.

The opening song, “Señorita of the Fan,” is set for the most part in a quintuple measure. The reference to “crickets” is illustrated by a chirping piccolo motif. “Afternoon” (with flute in C) is delicate and idyllic throughout. “A Song Sung” is set in a very capricious style. The alto flute personifies Lorca’s “Griffon bird.” The central song in the cycle, “Snail” (bass flute), projects a sense of time suspension and wonder. The soprano whispers the opening and concluding lines of the poem; for the central portion, the soprano sings in *Sprechstimme* style, combined with highly coloristic use of the harp. In “The Lizard is Crying!” the soprano alternates between a quasi-cadenza style of singing and rhythmically articulated spoken passages. The alto flute participates in the general sobbing! “A Little Song from Seville” parodies a well-known type of Spanish music. The concluding piece, “Silly Song,” is . . . just a silly song!

Harvey Sollberger (b Cedar Rapids, IA, 11 May 1938) has divided his career equally among composing, conducting, and playing the flute. He currently teaches composition and conducting at University of California, San Diego; he served previously on the faculties of Manhattan School of Music, Columbia University, and Indiana University. Sollberger has enjoyed a prominent reputation as a performing flutist. He has experimented extensively with new sounds that can be produced on the family of flutes, techniques that come into play in *Life Study*.

Sollberger’s own poem is presented fragmentarily at the beginning of *Life Study*. Only at the end of the piece, when it becomes an extended song, do we hear it in its entirety. Both flutist and harpist participate in the half-whispered, half-chanted fragments of text that introduce the work. Along *Life Study*’s journey the composer touches on a wide variety of musical and literary styles.

These include quotations from or allusions to the early fifteenth-century Franco-Italian composer Matteo da Perugia, Dante’s *Inferno*, pointillist atonality, a Swiss military march, one of Shakespeare’s sonnets, the cabaret style of Lotte Lenya, Sigmund Freud, and salsa. Some of Sollberger’s diverse sources have special resonance in his life; others he found serendipitously and thought might fit into the mix. The effect is patchwork, a musical collage that fades from one image to the next like a multi-screen slide show, an aural pastiche. *Life Study* brims with intricate detail and can startle with its abrupt switches from one context to another. Yet each speck in the apparent chaos is individual and important. Sollberger’s mosaic derives a spiritual unity through its gradual progression from the nightmarish world of uncertainty to the jubilation of the close. The piece gathers strength and conviction as it proceeds, with its strongest, most affirming text and musical statement (Sollberger calls it “Jubalant”) at the end.

Sollberger perceives *Life Study* as program music, but qualifies that categorization in a stream-of-consciousness description that captures the atmosphere of his piece. He writes:

Life Study does not attempt to “paint or depict aspects of external “reality” (windmills, sheep, a glass of beer); rather, what is depicted is the ebb and flow of the composer’s consciousness as projected through the metaphor of a dream. The result is a kind of psychological program music in which the piece, as it unfolds, could be said to be describing or enacting its own composition.

As to the dream which the piece embodies (or is the piece embodied in the dream? It would take Borges or Calvino

to entangle some of this . . .), what populates its at times nightmarish corridors, mazes and mirrors? Firstly, certain personal preoccupations of the dreamer as revealed or hinted at in the text, *Life Study*, as well as in other literary and musical texts and subtexts which wander into this landscape; secondly, the composer’s hesitations, doubts, wonder, anxiety, visions as, in his dream-work, he wrestles with creating this piece, this *Life Study*, for the Jubal Trio, (the name of the group—as well as those of its members—is embroidered at times in the dream-flow). The piece’s overall trajectory describes a process of working through the contents of this phantasmagoric night-world, as sounds, words, and images coalesce finally into song.”

Life Study was commissioned through a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Cuban-born **Tania León** (b Havana, 14 May 1943) is well known both as the New York Philharmonic’s Revson Composer and as the founding music director of Dance Theatre of Harlem. Her ancestry is French, African, Spanish, and Chinese, in addition to Cuban. León was educated in Cuba and at New York University. Over the course of nearly a quarter-century in the United States, she has established a double profile as composer and conductor. León describes herself as “very inspired working with poets.” Her most successful works bring poetry to life with vivid, evocative sounds. León’s most recent major work is an opera based on South African author Wole Soyinka’s *A Scourge of Hyacinthe*.

Like Freund’s *Backyard Songs*, *Journey* was written in 1990 in honor of the Jubal Trio’s fifteenth anniversary. León writes:

Journey was inspired by all three members of the Jubal Trio, and is based on a text written for them by Californian Etal Adnan, an American poet, writer, and painter, born in Beirut. The work reflects movement and contrasts in moods, and is dedicated to Julius Eastman and Talib Rasul Hakim.

León’s brilliant flourishes transform the “gentle” instruments of this trio into a bold proclamation of fanfares. Her music is celebratory, embracing the universal scope of Adnan’s anticipatory quatrain. Only the opening and closing phrases of the text — “the human spirit”—are declaimed as written; León calls for the balance of the text to be sung in retrograde. The effect is gestural, and the gestures are broad. Using flashy harp glissandos and broad leaps for soprano and flute, *Journey* emphasizes the exploratory possibilities of its title.

Minnesota composer **Eric Stokes** (b Haddon Heights, NJ, 14 July 1930) has roots in tonal lyricism, with a liberal sprinkling of electronic music and other avant-garde currents expanding his musical horizons since the 1960s. A violist who began his musical career as a boy soprano, Stokes also writes poetry. “I like to work on poems,” he says, “but I don’t hang out a shingle. I love composing for the voice in English—or American.” Stokes has written a considerable amount of vocal music, and notably the operas *Horspfa!* (1969) and *Apollonia’s Circus* (1994), and the chamber opera, *We’re Not Robots, You Know* (1986), on a libretto by Keith Gunderson. When harpist Susan Jolles suggested that Stokes write a piece for the Jubal Trio, he initially thought of a traditional song cycle, but couldn’t find a text that seemed quite right.

The solution turned out to be texts by three poets: Keith Gunderson, Robert Samartotto, and the composer himself. Prior to *Song Circle*, Stokes had written a substantial corpus of vocal works and compositions for flute. In these songs, Stokes has risen admirably to the less familiar challenge of

writing for harp, an instrument whose wonderful coloristic resources he acknowledges demand study if one wants to work with them with facility. *Song Circle* is Stokes's first setting of his own writing or Samarotto's. According to the composer, the title is a double entendre that obliquely refers to the song cycle which it isn't, and also to his Minnesota circle of poet friends. Stokes's music is rich with text-painting on the vivid imagery of *Song Circle*'s capricious texts. The

five poems have little connection to one another, but collectively their lighter mood provides a contrast to the other pieces recorded on this CD.

The commissioning of *Song Circle* was funded by Chamber Music America with funds from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

— Laurie Shulman © 1996

Text

Harvey Sollberger: *Life Study*

9. *Life Study*

It is difficult to say what must be said, at times,
To sing it, too, is no great help, but some,
For the dream diminished dies uneasy,
Lingers,
As into daylight sleepers wake to find
That Love's outlived its year or five,
That self expended in its flight
May crash in thicket or in darkest night,
And this is difficult to say but has to be, at times,
To sing the way it is, too, is no great help, but some,

For song engrafting sound and word,
With luck soars beyond what's merely heard
To touch the dream and passing there
Mend heart's empty, dead despair.

So it is difficult to say, at times, what must be said

To sing it, too, no great help, but some,
And must be done.

My song's begun.

(Sharp is the knife that saves the life.)

Eric Stokes: *Song Circle*

11. Night by Lake Calhoun*

Wynd, wind
Great harping woods
Bark gloved, bobbin branched,
Your needling fingers,
threading wind,
Wind that scuffling sound,
That autumn wound
Softly round the heart.

— E. Stokes

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12. Chameleon Wedding

(sprightly)
lizard
married
lizard
on a leaf
yesterday
and the bridesmaids
all wore
red
lovely red
no, brown
no, green
no, red
lovely red
o well
anyway
nonetheless
what-the-hell
on a leaf
yesterday,
lizard
married
lizard
and it
looked o.k.

— From *To See a Thing*
by Keith Gunderson

13. Onion

Tear-jerker, sob-sister
You are the fruit of sorrow.
Your story is as old as life
For the death of my father
I mourned three days.
For my mother
I cry feathers and dust
But when you come apart in my hand
Tears bloom in my eyes,
I swim in your universal sorrow
“In water dense as blindness.”

— From *Vegetable Poems*
by Robert Smarotto

14. Car

God plies my throttle
I do his speed
under His foot
my pedals work
We accelerate.
My tire treads go
'round rosaries unnumbered.
They repeat.
The brakes are many.
They mark my way.
He holds a mirror to my past
sees through the glass
my dark'ning road
and into nightfall as We go,
my beams like motes in others' eyes,
my speakers giving useless news and
melodies
that play across the rhythms of my
racing heart
He drives.

— E. Stokes

Born from a musical kinship of three gifted artists, the **Jubal Trio** has forged a unique place in chamber music history. The available repertory for soprano, flute, and harp convinced the three colleagues that their particular combination of voice and instruments created an extraordinary musical palette that could become as colorful as their imaginations allowed. Drawn to Haden's great aria, "O Had I Jubal's Lyre and Miriam's Tuneful Voice," they took Jubal, the father of all who play upon the harp and pipe (Genesis 4:21), for its own name. From its first season, the Jubal Trio embraced a remarkably rich and varied repertory, ranging from the Renaissance to the avant-garde. In addition to presenting its own arrangements of significant music of the past, the Trip has inspired composers from a wide variety of styles in American music to write for its special sound. Composers as diverse as George Crumb, Harvey Sollberger, Joseph Schwantner, Donald Freund, Susan Botti, Eric Stokes, Leo Kraft, Ursula Mamlok, Tania León, Francis Thorne, Meyer Kupferman, Susan Blaustein, Henry Brant, and Peter Schickele, among many others, contributed to the Trio's large body of new works, which has been tapped by chamber music societies across the nation and by trios spawned from the Jubal model.

15. The God and Goddess of Carrots

The god
of the
carrots
is
orange,
all
orange.
Grumpy
and
stiff
he
sulks
in
a hole.
The god-
dess of
carrots is
green
all
green.
She
lies with
the wind,
she
waves to
the rabbits.

—From *To See a Thing*
by Keith Gunderson

Among the Trio's many honors are the first C. Michael Paul Chamber Music Residency, commissioning awards from Chamber Music America, Nonesuch Records, and the City of Baltimore, and grants from the J.M. Kaplan Fund, Consolidated Edison, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. In 1993 the Jubal Trio was presented at Lincoln Center by the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, marking the fifteenth anniversary of the Trio's Alice Tully Hall debut as winner of the 1977 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. Recent awards include recording and operating support from the Aaron Copland for Music and residency grants from Chamber Music of America.

Future projects include premieres of commissioned works by Ronald Caltabiano, Eric Chasalow, Joel Feigin, Laura Kaminsky, Eric Moe, Wayne Peterson, and James Primosch, publication of the Trio's innovative arrangements of standard repertoire, and a residency at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

This recording is the Jubal Trio's first complete disc for CRI.

Production Notes

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Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Assistant Engineer: Jeanne Velonis

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