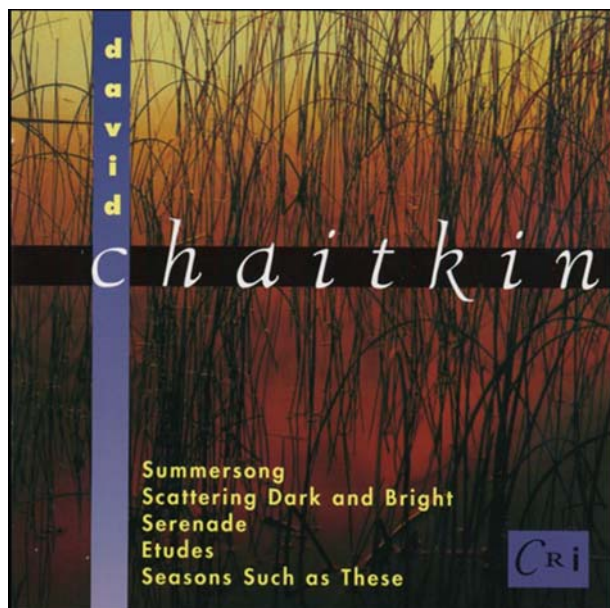


NWCR749

# David Chaitkin

## Summersong



1. *Summersong* for twenty-three wind instruments (1981) ..... (15:35)  
Sylvan Winds: Svyetlana Kabalin, Katherine Hoover, Susan Carlson, flutes; Mark Hill, David Rowland, oboes; Robert Botti, English horn; Charles Neidich, Robert Yamins, Steven Hartman, clarinets; Charles McCracken, Jaffrey Marchand, bassoons; Lauren Goldstein, contrabassoon; Melissa Coren, Janet Uhrlass, Richard Hagen, Ann Yarbrough, horns; Thomas Lisenbee, James Hamlin, Lowell Hershey, trumpets; Terry Pierce, James Scott, tenor trombones; C. Michael Richardson, bass trombone; Todd Kaufman, tuba; Arthur Weisberg, conductor
  2. *Scattering Dark and Bright*: Duo for Percussion and Piano (1979) ..... (16:44)  
Gordon Stout, percussion; Edward Murray, piano
  3. *Serenade* for seven players (1976) ..... (15:10)  
New York Music Ensemble: Jayn Rosenfeld, flute; Daniel Druckman, vibraphone, glockenspiel; James Baker, tubular bells; Alan Feinberg, piano; Cyrus Stevens, violin; Eric Bartlett, cello; Joseph Tamosaitis, contrabass; Robert Black, conductor
  - Études ..... (9:12)
    4. I ..... (1:40)
    5. II ..... (2:45)
    6. III ..... (4:47)  
David Burge, piano
  7. *Seasons Such as These* (1976) ..... (6:25)  
The Cantata Singers; John Harbison, conductor
- Total playing time: 62:53
- © 1976, 1983, 1985, 1997 & © 1997, Composers Recordings, Inc.  
© 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

## Notes

The pieces included here were composed over a seven-year span. From *Études* to *Summersong*, almost from piece to piece, there is an evolution of my harmonic language that parallels the lengthening of the forms. I have worked toward a language that will refresh a long line (especially as in *Summersong*), allow for the possibility of setting a melody in a number of different contexts, and extend the possibilities for progression/contrast, balance, and rhyme (especially as in *Scattering Dark and Bright*). All of the music reflects my natural desire for clarity of line, harmonic recognition, and a sense of phrase.

*Summersong* was begun during a stay in New Hampshire and may well evoke in the listener reflections of summer in the country. In one movement, it divides into two large sections, the first consisting of extended melody, beginning *semplice* in unison clarinets, and continuing through many instrumental exchanges. The second half explores and develops more fully the timbral and textural contrasts inherent in the music, giving the brass a featured role. Repeated and varied fragments, growing into longer units, lead to a culmination in which the flute enters with a line recalling the opening music, over brass accompaniment.

Finding ever-new instrumental combinations and textures was a great pleasure in writing for this most rich of ensembles. The twenty-three instrumentalists are given many opportunities as soloists.

*Summersong* is dedicated to my son, Nathaniel, who was ten years old at the time, and to the Sylvan Winds, who commissioned it through Meet the Composer and gave its first performance in New York in 1981.

When percussionist Gordon Gottlieb commissioned *Scattering Dark and Bright*, I was writing an extended work for orchestra; I began work on the duo immediately after the symphony was finished. I began it with a gesture cut straight from the cloth of the orchestral music, and it maintains and develops the harmonic language of that piece.

In the continuity of melody and harmony running through this work each player is given an equal role; the primary melodic line is often passed between them, and together they share the rhythmic freedom and flexibility that a duo can have. The dynamic range of the percussion part acknowledges the range of shading and nuance that today's virtuosi are so skilled in, and it was in a *cantabile* spirit that I approached both parts. The performers are challenged to maintain a vibrant forward motion throughout.

*Scattering Dark and Bright* was first performed by Gordon Gottlieb and Edmund Battersby at the White Mountains Festival in 1979. The title comes from Louise Bogan's poem "To Be Sung on the Water."

*Serenade* was commissioned by the Philadelphia Composers' Forum for this specific combination of players. The piece was

conceived as a continuous movement, with some elements of refrain. On the largest formal level it divides into three sections and a coda.

The first section presents a progression of contrasting ideas and rates of activity, both rhythmic and harmonic, which reconcile themselves somewhat and lead back to the pitches of the opening. The second section begins with an expansion on the opening ideas, in which the cello predominates. The third provides maximum contrast: it begins with a flute-violin duet, then gradually increases the number of parts and introduces a deliberately regular character to the underlying rhythmic pulse. It culminates in a contrasting passage of free, flexible rhythms, followed in quick succession by a *scherzando*-like passage and a series of choral gestures. The coda begins softly and serenely; it echoes elements of the opening.

The three Études are meant to be heard as bound together harmonically as if by a single, continuous thread. In reworking earlier short pieces, I heard larger connections—both melodic and harmonic—that resulted in an expanded third étude.

The opening étude is quite compact: it combines several varied, short gestures into larger phrases. After a single melodic line emerges from the dense midpoint, the piece closes quietly. The third étude pits the quick tempo and gestures of the first against the slow speed and purely melodic and contrapuntal writing in the second. This results in more spatially expansive textures, in which particular harmonies are reached, then made to change slowly by inflection of their parts, connecting them back into the more active flow of the music. The pianist's control of ever-varying and wide-ranging dynamics is crucial here.

The first performance of the Études was given in 1975 by David Burge, who performed them widely in the following years. I am indebted to him for his enthusiastic advocacy of the music.

In his program notes for the first performance of *Seasons Such as These*, from which this recording is made, conductor John Harbison wrote: "The text comes from the storm scene in *King Lear*, at the place where Lear's mind lights directly on his daughters' ingratitude, then draws back: 'O, that way madness lies, let me shun that; No more of that.' Then saying

to the fool, 'Nay, get thee in, I'll pray and then I'll sleep,' he begins a prayer for all those exposed to the storm. As in so many of the speeches in this 'mad' scene, the lucidity is painful, the vision of a once-proud spirit brought to experience despair, and to question heaven's justice."

"Chaitkin conveys the text through his harmonies. It is sometimes treated in a diffusion of vowel sounds, or by overlaps, its progress defined mostly by large sectional articulations (the opening text-line is restated significantly later in the piece). The hope for justice expressed in the final consonances seems appropriately fragile and conditional."

—David Chaitkin

In 1994 when **David Chaitkin** (*b* New York City, 1938) received an Academy Award in Music, the American Academy of Arts and Letters described his music as "effortlessly original" and commented: "A lyrical metamorphosis of timbre, rhythm, and shape engage the ear. The fluidity of his music is a delight—his music is both intense and sensitive." Over the course of his career, Chaitkin has composed symphonic music as well as a variety of chamber and vocal works. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts, among others.

In addition to the performers on this disc, his music has been performed by such ensembles as the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and the Da Capo Chamber Players, and such artists as Edmund Battersby, Karl Kraber, Gunther Schuller, and Anders Paulsson. He has been commissioned by Chamber Music America, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New Hampshire Music Festival, and the Gotland (Sweden) Chamber Music Festival, as well as by individual soloists and ensembles.

Chaitkin followed early experience as a jazz musician with studies in composition at Pomona College and the University of California, Berkeley, where he received its Prix de Paris. His teachers included Luigi Dallapiccola, Seymour Shifrin, Max Deutsch, Andrew Imbrie, and Karl Kohn. He has taught at Reed College, New York University, and Brooklyn College, and he lives in New York City.

---

## Production Notes

*Summersong*: Recorded by David Hancock in June 1983 at the Church of the Holy Trinity, NY; produced and edited by Carter Harman. Funding provided by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. Publisher: Gunmar Music (ASCAP). (Originally released on CRI SD 519.)

*Scattering Dark and Bright*: Recorded June 1994, Ithaca College, New York; Marice Stith, engineer. Funding provided by Cornell University. Publishers: Nottingham Square (ASCAP); Music Publishing Services, NY agent. (Originally released on CRI SD 519.)

*Serenade*: Recorded by David Hancock, New York, June 1983; produced by Carter Harman. Funded by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. Publishers: Nottingham Square (ASCAP); Music Publishing Services, NY agent. (Originally released on CRI SD 493.)

*Seasons Such as These*: Recorded by David Griesinger, Cambridge Massachusetts, November 1980; produced by Carter Harman. Funded by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. Publishers: Nottingham Square (ASCAP); Music Publishing Services, NY agent. (Originally released on CRI SD 493.)

*Études*: Recorded by David Hancock, October 1975; produced by Carter Harman. Funded by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc. Publisher: King's Crown/Columbia University Press (ASCAP) (Originally released on CRI SD 345.)

This recording reissue was made possible through the generous support of the Aaron Copland Fund for Music and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.