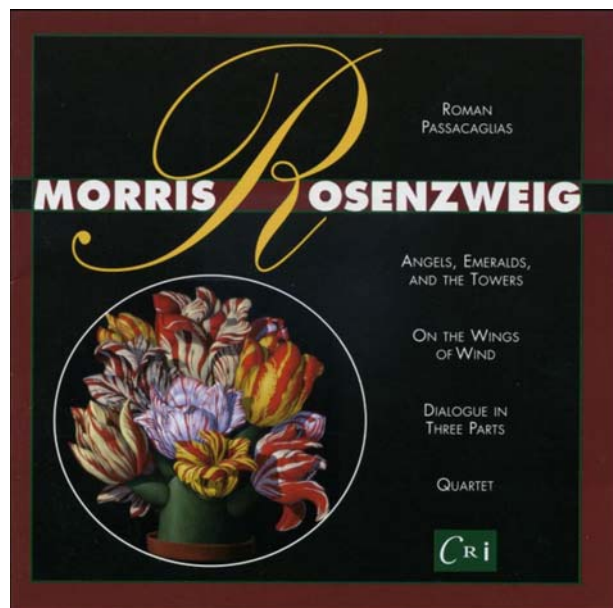


NWCR787

# Morris Rosenzweig

Chamber Music 1992–1997



1. *Roman Passacaglias* (1992) ..... (11:26)  
The Leonardo Trio: Erica Kiesewetter, violin;  
Jonathan Spitz, cello; Cameron Grant, piano
2. *Angels, Emeralds, and the Towers* (1992) ..... (5:59)  
Canyonlands Ensemble: Carlton Vickers, flute,  
piccolo; Jaren Hinckley, clarinet; Jane Woolley,  
horn; Ian Murdock, trumpet; Joseph Evans,  
violin; Teresa Welch, violin; Jennie Outram,  
viola; Karen Cardon, cello; Thomas Dobson,  
double bass; Morris Rosenzweig, conductor
- On the Wings of Wind* (1994) ..... (20:33)

- Six Songs on Hebrew texts
3. I Song at Daybreak ..... (3:38)
  4. II Fleas ..... (2:19)
  5. III Warsaw ..... (3:11)
  6. IV Two Verses from “The Song  
of Songs” ..... (1:36)
  7. V Spring Wine Song ..... (3:15)
  8. VI The Journey ..... (6:34)

Canyonlands Ensemble: Jennifer Larson,  
soprano; Joseph Onstott, baritone; Jaren  
Hinckley, clarinet, bass clarinet; Joseph  
Evans, violin; Matthew Johnson, cello; Lysa  
Rytting, harp; Morris Rosenzweig, conductor

- Dialogue in Three Parts* (1994) ..... (9:41)  
for Flute, Piccolo, Alto Flute and Digital Tape
9. I Chorale ..... (1:52)
  10. II Caprice ..... (3:46)
  11. III Chorale/Chaconne ..... (4:03)  
Carton Vickers, flute, piccolo, alto flute
- Quartet* (1997) ..... (18:51)
12. I Fantasia ..... (4:47)
  13. II Variations ..... (9:57)  
Theme, Variation 1, Variation 2, Variation 3  
Variation 4, Variation 5, Variation 6, Variation 7
  14. III Rondo ..... (4:07)  
The Abramyan Quartet: Gerald Elias, violin; Lynnette  
Stewart, violin; Scott Lewis, viola; John Eckstein, cello

Total playing time: 66:30

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## Notes

This disc contains various chamber works I have written over the past few years. Throughout this period I was interested in working with distinct genres of music for smaller ensembles, each of which offered specific challenges and required unique treatment. Contained here are two pieces for traditional ensembles, a piano trio and a string quartet, as well as music in three idioms well-developed in the twentieth century: a work for flute and tape, a song cycle with mixed instrumental accompaniment, and a work for small chamber orchestra.

In deliberately composing for genres with well-known antecedents, the task of balancing invention with acquiescence begins. And there is where the attraction lies. The sense of precedent weighs more heavily in the case of the three last-mentioned works, inasmuch as these established twentieth-century idioms are more laden with familiar localisms, more type-driven, and ultimately more idiosyncratic. My engagement with them, then, results in an acknowledgment of their style and manner, complemented by a stronger urge to take them along another path.

*Roman Passacaglias* was written between October 1991 and January 1992. It was composed for, and dedicated to, the

Leonard Trio, who premiered it in Amsterdam in March 1992.

The second part of the title refers to the different passacaglia themes which permeate and competitively inhabit the musical landscape.

Of the five passacaglia themes, three project themselves more prominently: the cello passacaglia, which consists of the rapid alternation of bowed and plucked notes (most of which are generated by sixths); the piano passacaglia, which sounds as intermittent chords made in part of perfect intervals; and the violin passacaglia which is scalar in nature and the most aggressive of the three. The mode of variation on these themes is traditional to a point and could be described as ornamental, figurative, and additive in nature. However, as the piece progresses these themes lose their initial identity and are passed around to different instruments.

At one point (about two thirds through the work) all three of these themes sound simultaneously. This particular joining emits a number of specific harmonies which form the chordal basis of another of the work's passacaglias and which also functions as the resource of the piece's freer musical episodes.

Yet another passacaglia theme is the one heard first, played by violin and piano and made of chordal thirds.

The piece opens with unison passages in the violin and piano followed by a similar passage in the cello and piano. The music of these scenes makes possible—both technically and emotionally—the existence of the passacaglia themes and their variations. With the intention of rounding the structure, the opening music recurs in varied form near the end of the composition. This rounding off lends the work an air of Roman pragmatism (not unlike the symmetry of a Roman arch). Much of the harmony in the piece, perhaps more clearly heard near the end, is made of small snippets of sounds reminiscent of scores for Roman movies of the Ben Hur-and-less-variety popular in the fifties and sixties.

*Angels, Emeralds, and the Towers* was composed in 1992 on a commission from New Music (across) America with funds from the C. Comstock Clayton Foundation. Its first performance was given by the Canyonlands Ensemble at the Tanner Amphitheater adjacent to Zion National Park in southern Utah.

This work is a non-programmatic, primal response to the spectacle of Zion National Park, whose unique landscapes were suggestive in its composition. This short piece, a free fantasia, aims to continuously infuse new material into its discourse. Established tempos, orchestration, character and mood last only for short periods as the music leads one to shifting and fresh venues.

The piece was composed with the physical setting of its premiere locale in mind. Located in the desert of southern Utah, the amphitheater uses the base of an imperial red-rock cliff as its backdrop and acoustic springboard. The performance area is sided by raised plateaus. In the evening, the moon shines against the smooth rock, the breeze blows, and the night insects sing.

The song cycle *On the Wings of Wind* was written between 1992 and 1994. The concept of completing a cycle on Hebrew texts came after I was asked to write a song for a friend's wedding, and after I was commissioned by the Hillel Foundation to compose a work in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Together these two songs, "Two Verses" from *The Song of Songs* and "Warsaw," provided the notion to extend the cycle by including ancient, medieval, and contemporary texts, that address the conditions of renewal, complaint, lament, marriage, revelry, and death.

Set for soprano, lyric baritone, violin, cello, clarinet, bass clarinet, and harp, each song in the cycle applies the ensemble, or its various subsets, in different ways. All of the songs are, of course, composed to augment, frame, and express the notion and the structure of each text. For instance, in the first song, the sense of beginning referred to several times in the text is mirrored in the music with a progression of "starts." The last line of each verse in that poem ends with "morning" in one application or another. In response to this, the soprano, always in a different tempo than the baritone, intones these words over and again very slowly, until near the end of the song, she gains her own momentum and "beginning," and counterpoints the last verse of the text with his utterance of the second-to-last verse.

The song about fleas is replete with discomfort, uneasiness, and animated reaction. The allusion of broken and strewn instruments, sighs and resignation informs "Warsaw." The refrain, "Pity the.....," suggested the short ritornello which appears several times in the music and sets the tone of the music's pathos. The game-like flavor of "Spring Wine Song" suggests the exchange, anticipation, and echo which transpire

between the performers. The last song uses as its modus operandi ground-bass aria technique. The two melodic ritornelli—the violin opening and the bass clarinet interlude music—are somewhat varied in their return appearances. The ground-bass material unravels and disintegrates as the song moves to its end.

*Dialogue in Three Parts* was composed during 1994 for flutist Carlton Vickers, who specified that the work be written for piccolo, flute, and alto flute to an electronic accompaniment.

The constituent three segments of the work are intended to contrast one another, while extending and reflecting one another as well.

The tape part was conceived away from the studio in score and later realized at the Vladimir Ussachevsky Center for Electro/Acoustic Studies at the University of Utah. The relation of the flute to the tape part is intensely competitive and participatory.

Written for flute, the "Chorale" operates very much like a traditional chorale prelude. The "Caprice," featuring piccolo, is the most intertwined of all these segments; it gives way to a contrasting trio which pits the alto flute against a metrically regular accompaniment. The music heard at the beginning of the "Caprice" is again enacted and leads into the "Chorale/-Chaconne." This last section returns to the music of the opening "Chorale," but suspends the arrival of the work's strongest centric point, C, until the conclusion of the "Chaconne."

*Quartet* was co-commissioned by the Abramyan Quartet and the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress.

The work was written between September 1996 and February 1997. It is dedicated to the Abramyan Quartet and to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky.

One preoccupation concerning the writing of this work had to do with finding a process that would facilitate the construction of each movement so that each maintained their respective identities, while complementing and reflecting one another. To achieve this goal, various forms of both contrast and unity were employed in making the work's global design and local detail. Each movement is composed using a distinct methodology in an effort to achieve balance in the quartet's structure as a whole.

About nineteen minutes long, the three-movement work is cast in a traditional fast-slow-fast pattern. The first movement, "Fantasia," kinetic, gestural and energetic, is freely written and structured using a network of associated motives. The second movement is a set of seven variations based on a simple, quiet, lyrical theme played in unison at the beginning of the movement. These variations consist of differing characters, among them, a serenade, a waltz, and a scherzo. The sixth variation functions as the work's scherzo, thereby enclosing a movement inside of a movement. The last movement is a rondo, in which the rondo theme reappears not in its traditional repeated form, but as a succession of modular units which are flexibly reassembled and made new with each appearance. Its last sounding gives way to extensive change and brings on the end of the piece.

—M.R.

**Morris Rosenzweig** (b 1952) received his professional training at the Eastman School of Music, the University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University. In recognizing his achievements, the Department of Music of the American Academy of Arts and Letters wrote: "Morris Rosenzweig's music displays images and projects narratives rich with rhythmic energy, orchestral wit, and intense expressiveness. The moment-to-moment events are crafted with laser-like

precision that allows the listener immediate access to a surface full of color and motion. Those moment-to-moment events securely compound into formal designs of great elegance.”

His works have been performed by many noted ensembles and soloists throughout the U.S. and abroad, including Philippe Entremont with the New Orleans Symphony, Joseph Silverstein with the Utah Symphony, Emerson Quartet violist Lawrence Dutton, hornist William Purvis, Earplay, and Speculum Musicae.

He has received honors from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, the Utah Arts Council/NEA, the MacDowell Colony, and the Composers Conference, and has been awarded the McCurdy, Nietzsche, Rappoport, and the International Horn Society prizes in composition. Formerly on the faculty at New York University, he has taught at the University of Utah since 1987 where he also directs the university’s new music ensemble, Canyonlands, and the Maurice Abravanel Visiting Distinguished Composers Series.

In addition to directing Canyonlands, Mr. Rosenzweig conducts the Chamber Players of the League-ISCM in New York and guest conducts many other ensembles. His music may be found on Centaur CD CRC 2103, and CRI CD 705, where he also appears as conductor with Speculum Musicae.

**The Leonardo Trio** has toured the U.S. and Europe extensively since its foundation. Comprised of violinist Erica Kieseewetter, cellist Jonathan Spitz, and pianist Cameron Grant, the trio has performed, with great success, the traditional literature for the ensemble, as well as works by many twentieth-century composers. Now entering its second decade of performance, the Leonardo Trio continues to garner critical acclaim and awards. In 1989 they were prize winners in the Concert Artists Guild awards. In 1989 they were prize winners in the Concert Artists Guild Competition and were finalists in a the Walter W. Naumburg Competition.

**Canyonlands**, the new-music ensemble of the University of Utah, is dedicated to presenting a broad spectrum of contemporary music. Its programs have regularly featured the works of this century’s leading composers, as well as the regional, national, and world premieres of many of today’s important emerging voices. The ensemble was formed in 1977 and has been directed by Morris Rosenzweig since 1988. Comprised of both professional and student musicians, the group appears regularly in Salt Lake City and has toured the western United States.

**The Abramyan String Quartet** has earned a reputation as an artistic ensemble of the highest rank since its arrival on the chamber music scene in 1993. The quartet’s repertoire reflects an equally strong interest in both standard literature and new music. Following its third highly successful tour of Japan, the Abramyan Quartet has been invited to return again in 1997. In keeping with the spirit of Ashot Abramyan, in whose memory the group is named, the quartet is also committed to performing concerts for under-served community members.

**Carlton Vickers** has performed with the Utah Symphony and has been a featured performer with Canyonlands. Specializing in contemporary music, Mr. Vickers has worked in conjunction with, and has won the admiration of, many of today’s most prominent composers including John Corigliano, Milton Babbitt, Shulamit Ran, Steve Reich, Mario Davidovsky, and John Cage.

Soprano **Jennifer Larson** is rapidly building a reputation as an accomplished artist equally at home with traditional repertory and new music. Her rich and versatile voice has been warmly received by audiences throughout the U.S., Canada and England. Highlights of her growing career including performances as a soloist with Robert Shaw, the title role in *Le Rossignol*, and her many performances of works by this country’s leading living composers. In 1997 Ms. Larson was named a National Finalist in the metropolitan Opera National Auditions.

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## Production Notes

*Roman Passacaglias* recorded Marcy 1994, The American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. Recorded by Joanna Nickrenz and Marc Aubort (Elite Recordings). Digital editing by Joanna Nickrenz.

*Angels, Emeralds, and the Towers* recorded December 1993, Abravanel Hall, Salt Lake City. Produced by Barlow Bradford and Mark Ely. Engineered by Imagesphere Sound Design: Dean Harper. Digital editing by Imagesphere Sound Design: Dean Harper.

*On the Winds of Wind* recorded July 1997, Abravanel Hall, Salt Lake City. Produced by Brian Hulse and Jennifer Larson. Engineered by Richard Duke/RMS. Digital editing by Morris Rosenzweig.

*Dialogue in Three Parts* recorded July 1995, Abravanel Hall, Salt Lake City. Produced by Morris Rosenzweig. Engineered by Imagesphere Sound Design: Dean Harper. Digital editing by Morris Rosenzweig.

Quartet recorded May 1997, Abravanel Hall, Salt Lake City. Produced by Morris Rosenzweig. Engineered by Rick McFarland/RMS. Digital editing by Morris Rosenzweig.

Publishing: Composer (ASCAP)

This compact disc has been made possible through the generous support of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Alice M. Ditson Fund, Robert S. Olpin, the Research Committee of the University of Utah, and the Utah Arts Council/NEA.