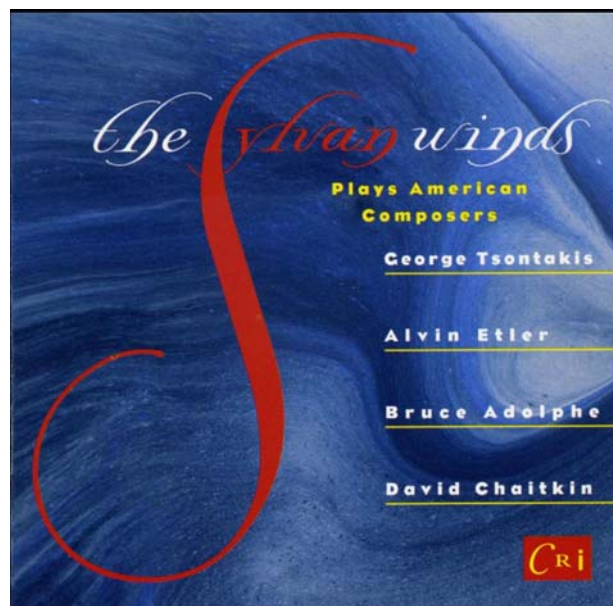


NWCR788

Sylvan Winds

Tsontakis, Etler, Adolphe, Chaitkin



George Tsontakis

- Three Mood Sketches* (1988) (17:28)
1. I – Fleet ‘effortlessly’ (3:17)
 2. II – Gentle ‘harmonic’ (7:58)
 3. III – Hot-blooded & hyper-active (6:01)
- Svjetlana Kabalin, flute; Mark Hill, oboe; Alan R. Kay, clarinet; Charles McCracken, bassoon; Scott Temple, horn

Alvin Etler

- Concerto for Violin & Wind Quintet*
4. I – Allegro Marziale (8:02)

5. II – Elegiao (6:39)
 6. III – Furioso (7:34)
- Michael Tree, violin; Svjetlana Kabalin, flute, piccolo; Mark Hill, oboe; Alan R. Kay, clarinet; Charles McCracken, bassoon; Scott Temple, horn

Bruce Adolphe

7. *Chiaroscuro* (1984) (9:40)
- Katherine Fink, flute; Svjetlana Kabalin, flute; Mark Hill, oboe; Henry Schuman, oboe; Alan R. Kay, clarinet; Jo-Ann Sternberg, clarinet; Charles McCracken, bassoon; Marc Goldberg, bassoon; Scott Temple, horn; John Smith, horn

David Chaitkin

8. *Summersong for Twenty-three Wind Instruments* (1981) (15:35)
- Svjetlana Kabalin, Katherine Hoover, Susan Carlson, flutes; Mark Hill, David Rowland, oboes; Robert Botti, English horn; Charles Neidich, Robert Yamins, Steven Hartman, clarinets; Charles McCracken, Jeffrey Marchand, bassoons; Laren 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

Total playing time: 65:37

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Notes

The Sylvan Winds, an ensemble devoted to exploring the literature of chamber music for wind instruments, is a natural outgrowth of the Sylvan Wind Quintet, founded in 1976. Based in New York City, the group is the only one of its kind to present an annual subscription series which has been critically acclaimed and has been captivating audiences with its innovative programming. Following a concert sponsored by the Carnegie Hall Corporation in 1982, the Sylvan Winds has frequently performed in Weill Recital Hall.

The ensemble has often been featured at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, most recently appearing in the Mozart & Prague week, having also appeared during the Mozart Bicentennial Celebration and Haydn Marathon, as well as in Avery Fisher Hall pre-concert programs, and participating with the Festival’s winds in performances of the Mozart *Grand Partita* (K. 361/370a) and Handel’s original orchestration of the *Royal Fireworks* music. Chosen to perform for New York’s Governor’s Arts Awards in the fall of 1994, the Sylvan Winds have also toured major university and

chamber music series nationally, including performances at the University of the Pacific, Amherst College and the Rutgers University Summerfest. Featured as the chamber ensemble in residence at the White Mountains Festival, the ensemble performed in Korea in the spring of 1993 and has also been heard on New York City radio stations WQXR, WNYC and WBAI, as well as on National Public Radio’s *Performance Today*.

Noted for a wide range and breadth of repertory, the Sylvan Winds have presented a number of New York, United States, and world premieres of works by such composers as Gustav Holst, Gunther Schuller, David Chaitkin, and Arthur Weisberg. Many of the works they perform are written for a variety of instrumental groupings and have included collaborations with guest artists such as conductor Gerard Schwarz, the Guarneri String Quartet, pianist Claude Frank, harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper, and singers Wendy White and D’Anna Fortunato, as well as the American Brass Quintet.

Three Mood Sketches was composed on a commission from the Mary Flagler Cary Trust for the Aspen Wind Quintet, who premiered the work during a State Department tour of the Soviet Union. The same ensemble gave the American Premiere at New York's 92nd Street Y in February 1990.

The piece is more a celebration of the wide array of woodwind color and texture than it is a formal work. The movements are sketches, similar to a myriad of images as artist might draw on various parts of a sketch pad page. They are moods in that their moments, as musical metaphor, are often transient and fickle, and swing back and forth impulsively.

The first mood is mercurial and liquid; this perpetual motion spins a mostly positive and assertive little orbit. The second mood begins with a harmonic pyramid—with a sense of the 'masonic'—but soon after becomes conflicted and searching. A peaceful consonance is sought, but settles for a hollowness, hinting at melancholy. The concluding horn soliloquy, accompanied for a while by a wandering quartet, demonstrates the power of frustration. The knowledge of a Russian/Ukrainian premiere most certainly affected the final mood, resulting in a macabre 'Russian Carnival' atmosphere, with ultra-spiky Stravinskian dissonances. Even the gently swaying glints of Rimsky Korsakov's *Slava* do little to soothe this Petrushka-on-a-bad-day. Refrains of the first two moods end the work.

—George Tsontakis

George Tsontakis (b 1951), conductor and composer, has been a faculty member of the Aspen Music School since 1976. In 1995 Mr. Tsontakis was honored with the highest award in composition of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, its Academy Award "for lifetime achievement." He has received Kennedy Center Friedheim awards for chamber music, as well as numerous other awards and citations. In recent season he has had premieres by the National Symphony, the North Country Chamber Players, Da Camera of Houston, and by Lawrence Dutton and Misha Dichter in Aspen. Recently Koch International Classics released his acclaimed orchestral cycle *Four Symphonic Quartets*, after T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Barlow Endowment, and the NEA, with James DePreist and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo. His orchestral music has also been played by the Aspen, Cabrillo, Spoleto, and Music in the Mountains festivals and several major American and European orchestras. Future commissions include works for Robert McDuffie, Newband, and the Cape and Islands Festival, as well as a violin concerto for Cho-Liang Lin and the Oregon Symphony.

Alvin Etler (1913-1973) showed early promise as a composer with a special affinity for wind instruments. While he was still in high school, his *Suite for Wind Quartet* was performed by the Georges Barrère Wind Ensemble at the behest of Percy Grainger. Etler went on to study composition with Arthur Shepherd at Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University. In 1938, he joined the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra as oboist and two seasons later, he toured Latin America as a member of the North American Wind Quintet. In the early 1940s, he received two Guggenheim fellowships and also two commissions from Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which resulted in his two symphoniettas.

These early successes led Etler to exchange the making and using of reeds (as an oboist) for writing music for them (as a composer). As wind instructor and band director, at Yale (1942-46), he also studied with Hindemith. In 1949, after

brief appointments at Cornell and the University of Illinois, he joined the Smith College faculty in Northampton, Massachusetts where he taught for the remainder of his career.

Within his mostly instrumental output, his background as a wind player resulted in a large number of works for wind chamber ensembles. In earlier compositions, he used an "extended harmonic vocabulary" with occasional jazz elements and that hard-to-define but rather common "American" sound from the pre-World War II period. In the last decade of his life he turned to twelve-tone serialism.

The credit for the highly original instrumentation of the Concerto for Violin and Wind Quintet goes to the distinguished New York Philharmonic violinist and native Hungarian, Gabriel Banat, to whom the work is dedicated. They were both teaching at Smith College and would meet every week for dinner after a day of classes. Following his 1953 debut featuring a work by Gunther Schuller, the violinist was looking for another American work for his second Carnegie Hall recital. After a 1956 New York Woodwind Quintet concert at Smith College, the idea for the type of work became clear. At first, the composer exhibited a ritual reluctance protesting insufficient familiarity with the limits of the violin's possibilities. But a week later, there was some scribbled sketches made on the proverbial paper napkin during a dinner in an Italian restaurant near Northampton. The composer got bolder as the work progressed, and the work got harder and more virtuosic from movement to movement. If one detects some Bartókian echoes in the middle movement, they are intentionally there as an homage to the violinist's famous countryman composer.

—Fedor Kabalin

Chiaroscuro was commissioned in 1984 by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra for its wind players. At that time, I had been teaching a course on the music of Don Carlo Gesualdo at Yale, and which led me to ponder 'mannerism' not only in music, but in painting. The visual effect of chiaroscuro (light and shadow) seemed musically intriguing, especially as it might apply to shifting timbral sonorities. I was also considering the emotional effects of layering—a process which my brother, Jonathan, was then exploring in his paintings. Listening to *Chiaroscuro* is, I hope, like wandering through a dark multi-textured painting: layers of sound are piled up in one area, separated in another, exposed through a crack here, covered thickly there. After all, aren't we ourselves very much that way: layers of memory and experience, some clear, some thickly covered over, some like a ray of brilliant light, others cloudy, vague, possibly frightening? At the very end of *Chiaroscuro*, we come to the edge of the canvas, it thins out, drips, and meets the unconcerned white wall.

—Bruce Adolphe

Bruce Adolphe (b 1955) has composed music for Itzhak Perlman, David Shifrin, the Beaux Arts Trio, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the New York Chamber Symphony, the National Symphony, and many others, including the Brentano, Mendelssohn, and Miami string quartets. His recent works include: *Little Red Riding Hood*, for which he wrote script and music, premiered by Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Andie Musik; *Songs of Radical Innocence* for clarinet and orchestra; *Body Loops* for piano and orchestra; *After the End* for piano and orchestra; and *The Bitter, Sour, Salt Suite*, commissioned by Itzhak Perlman. He has composed four operas, which have been performed at the 92nd Street Y in New York, the Metropolitan Opera Guild, and the Opera Theater of Boston and New England Conservatories. Mr. Adolphe is the

author of two books: *The Mind's Ear: Exercises for Improving the Musical Imagination and What to Listen for in the World*. Since 1992, he has been music advisor and education director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where he lectures before concerts, directs outreach programs, designs family programming, teaches seminars, and consults on matters relating to new music. His recent disc, *Turning, Returning*, featuring pianist Marija Stroke and the Brentano String Quartet, was released in 1997 on CRI.

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 an 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 where the flute enters with a line recalling the opening music, over brass accompaniment.

The harmonic language allows for refreshing the lines as they unfold, and for setting a melody in a number of different contexts. 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.

—David Chaitkin

In 1994 when **David Chiatkin** (b 1938) received an Academy Award in Music, the American Academy of Arts and Letters described his music as "effortlessly original. A lyrical metamorphosis of timbre, rhythm and shape engages the ear. The fluidity of his music is a delight—his music is both intense and sensitive." Over the course of his career, he has composed symphonic 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. His music has been performed by such ensembles as the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the Cantata Singers, and such artists as David Burge, Karl Kraber, Gunther Schuller, and Anders Paulsson. 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. In 1997, CRI released a full-length compact disc of his solo and chamber music.

Production Notes

Three Mood Sketches: produced by Adam Abeshouse and Scott Temple. Recorded August 1996 at SUNY Purchase.

Concerto for violin & wind quintet: produced by Adam Abeshouse and Scott Temple. Recorded July 1995 at SUNY Purchase.

Chiaroscuro: produced by Adam Abeshouse and Scott Temple. Recorded May 1997 at Concordia College

Summersong: produced and edited by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock June 1983 at the Church of the Holy Trinity.

Publishing: Tsontakis: Theodore Presser (BMI); Etlar: Associated Music Publishers (BMI); Adolphe: American Composers Alliance (BMI); Chaitkin: Gunmar Music, Inc. (ASCAP).

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