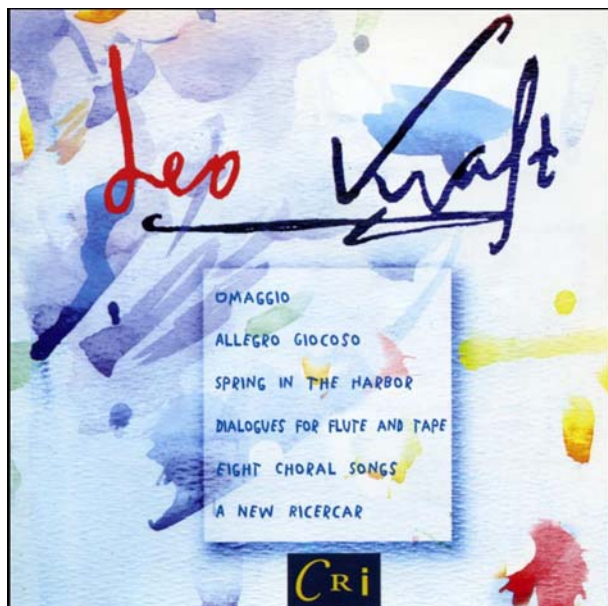


NWCR799

Leo Kraft



- Omaggio* (1992) (14:55)
1. Intenso (3:36)
 2. Tempo di Marcia, Fantastico (0:56)
 3. Liberamente; adagio (7:12)
 4. Risoluto (3:11)
- Chamber Players of the League/ISCM: Sue Ann Kahn, flute; Jean Kopperud, clarinet; Cyrus Stevens, violin; Lois Martin, viola; Ted Mook, cello
5. *Allegro Giocoso* (1956) (2:32)
Robert Helps, piano

- Spring In The Harbor* (1969) (17:00)
6. On Paumanok (4:05)
 7. A Plectrum (2:07)
 8. A Girl Skipping Rope in Flushing (3:34)
 9. The Boy From San Juan (1:27)
 10. Beside A Lake (1:01)
 11. Spring In The Harbor (3:45)
Catherine Rowe, soprano; Gerardo Levy, flute; Alexander Kouguell, cello; Andrew Thomas, piano; Leo Kraft, conductor
 12. *Dialogues for Flute and Tape* (1967-68) (7:10)
Gerardo Levy, flute
- Eight Choral Songs for a cappella Chorus* (1974-75) . (8:13)
13. Drinking Song (1:04)
 14. Nature's Quiet (0:43)
 15. Love's Desire (0:56)
 16. Winter Is Past (0:36)
 17. A Vision of Night (1:05)
 18. The Oak Tree's Branches (0:45)
 19. The Lord Suspends The World
From Nothing (1:09)
 20. To Spring (1:59)
New York Virtuoso Singers; Harold Rosenbaum, conductor
 21. *A New Ricercar* for String Orchestra (12:05)
Slovak State Radio Orchestra; Joel Suben, conductor

Total playing time: 64:26

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Notes

Omaggio is a musical tribute to the memory of the Italian-Jewish chemist and writer Primo Levi: his lucid, objective account of his experiences in Auschwitz, in addition to their value as testimony and to the fact that Levi was able to maintain his own humanity in the face of unimaginable horrors, shows true heroism in the avoidance of self-pity and emotionalism. Having set about to write a serious work that would be of some importance, I sought a figure of genuine nobility to whom I might meaningfully dedicate the music, and I found that in Primo Levi.

My musical homage is written for five instruments, flute (piccolo), clarinet, violin, viola, and cello. The first of the four movements is intensely expressive; the second is a nightmarish march (in the tradition of Berlioz's "March to the Scaffold"); the third is a set of variations on a chord progression, while the energetic finale is meant to express the determination to go forward in the face of adversity.

The earliest work on this CD, which is also the first piece of mine to appear on a record, is the short piano piece *Allegro Giocoso*. It was written for a collection of piano music edited by Josef Probstakoff. The title indicates the character of the piece, which is cheerful and has a certain youthful exuberance.

I am always searching for words to set to music, and when I read the poems of Steve Stepanchev I knew I had found what I wanted. For one thing, anyone who could find something of esthetic value in Flushing, NY, must be a true poet. For another, the poems are lean enough to allow room, a good deal of room, for music. I wrote *Spring in the Harbor* with Catherine Rowe's voice in mind, and voice in mind, and she gave the first performance at the Composers Theatre in New York City, April 25, 1970. The piece is dedicated to her and to the poet.

The six songs that comprise *Spring in the Harbor* are contrasted in mood and general character, but also in scoring and in the use of the piano. The keyboard instrument is not only played in the customary way but its strings are plucked, strummed, and struck with xylophone mallets. In the fifth song, the piano case is locked, and the pianist strikes the case and body of the piano to produce an array of percussive sounds.

In the mid sixties, the new medium of electronic music drew my attention, and I studied it with Vladimir Ussachevsky. I soon decided that my own involvement with this exciting new kind of music would have to combine the electronic element with acoustic instruments if it was going to work for me. One of the works that emerged from this period was *Dialogues for Flute and Tape*. My aim was to combine the two kinds of

sound into a coherent whole. If at times the listener cannot be sure of whether he is hearing the flute or the electronic sounds, I am satisfied that I have achieved my goal. The music was composed with the brilliant flute playing of Gerardo Levy in mind's ear. *Dialogues* is in four sections and a coda. In each section, the conversation between the flute and the tape is a bit different in character. The electronic portion was realized at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center.

In Spain during the middle ages, Christians, Moslems, and Jews lived together in a rather harmonious way. This tranquil period was a golden age for Hebrew literature, and among its outstanding poets were Moses and Ibn Ezra. The poems I have chosen for my *Eight Choral Songs* are among the poet's shorter works, with a single exception. I had thought to make an entire set of secular songs, but the power of one of Ibn Ezra's religious texts impressed me deeply, and I used lines from that work in the seventh song cycle.

Literal translations of Ibn Ezra's medieval Hebrew seem stilted to me. The following English version, therefore, is offered not so much as a translation, but as a paraphrase. I hope that it conveys the sense of the fullness of life and the feeling of wonder at the beauty of the world that is at the heart of the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra.

The term *ricercar* (English spelling) illustrates the truth of Nietzsche's remark that only that which has no history can be defined. The *ricercar* has a long history, and no one definition does it justice. I was attracted to a particular seventeenth-century version in which several different sections, all using imitation, were based on a single musical idea. That is the framework for *A New Ricercar*.

Unlike the older manifestations of the form, I chose to write a long theme upon which to build the entire composition. At the beginning of the piece, the violas state this melody, whose many motives will provide material for continuation and development. As in the earlier models, the first section begins with imitation, but after that the technique recurs only sporadically. Each section flows into the next with hardly a pause, building to a climax towards the center of the piece. By that point the linear texture has given way to an entirely chordal one. The latter part of the piece winds down to a quiet ending in which the elements of the theme return in reverse order, separated by fragments of earlier sections.

It might be thought that this music grew out of my teaching experiences, but in truth it owes more to my prowling around the Queens College music library.

— *Leo Kraft*

Born in Brooklyn in 1922, **Leo Kraft** has had an active career as a composer, educator and author. While the bulk of his work is in the field of chamber music, he has also written orchestra, piano, vocal, band and electronic music. His compositions have been performed and recorded in the USA and abroad. He has served actively with the College Music Society, the Society for Music Theory, and Meet the Composer. Mr. Kraft is past president of the American Music Center. Professor emeritus of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College CUNY, he was also distinguished composer-in-residence at New York University. Mr. Kraft's music is published by Seesaw Music Inc.

Production Notes

CD mastered by Darcy Proper, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

Spring in the Harbor, *Dialogues*, and *Allegro Giocoso* digitally remastered by Robert Woolf, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC

Omaggio & Eight Choral Songs: Produced and recorded by Adam Abeshouse.

From CRI SD 292: *Spring in the Harbor* and *Dialogues* produced by Carter Harman, recorded by David Hancock. The original recording was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

From CRI SD 288: *Allegro Giocoso*: Originally released by RCA Victor in 1966 and by CRI in 1971. The original recording was made possible by a grant from The Abbey Whiteside Foundation.

Allegro Giocoso is published by Lawson-Gould. *Eight Choral Songs* is published by Hal Leonard Publishing Corp. All other works published by Seesaw Music Inc. (ASCAP)

This compact disc has been made possible through the generous support of the Edward T. Cone Foundation.