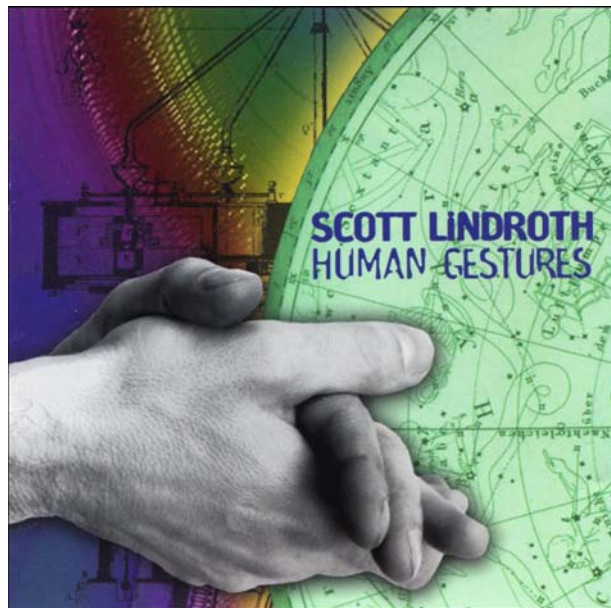


NWCR808

Scott Lindroth

Human Gestures



1. *Light* (1993) (14:53)
D'Anna Fortunato, mezzo-soprano; Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble: Diane Heffner, clarinet, bass clarinet; Cyrus Stevens, violin; Michael Curry, cello; Donald Berman, piano, celesta; James Russell Smith, percussion; Scott Wheeler, conductor
- String Quartet (1997) (18:27)
2. I. Lento (6:42)
3. II. Fluid, quietly urgent (11:44)
Ciompi String Quartet: Eric Pritchard, violin; Hsiao-Mei Ku; Jonathan Bagg, viola; Frederic Raimi, cello
4. *Terza Rima* (1995) (13:14)
Libby Van Cleve, oboe with electronics
5. Duo for Violins (1990) (11:52)
Curtis Macomber, Veronica Macchia-Kadlubkiewicz, violins

Total playing time: 58:38

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Notes

“Remember the hands, how weightlessly they rest, though there is power in the torsos.”

– Rainer Maria Rilke

The pieces on this recording span a period of eight years and represent my provisional answers to questions that have continually preoccupied me as a composer: What is the nature of musical intuition and intellection? Can the expressive gesture be mechanized, and what is gained or lost by doing so? What does the musical past mean to me, and in what ways does it inform my work?

The Duo for Violins, the earliest piece on this recording, was composed and premiered in 1990. The music has echoes of the Italian Baroque with its characteristic patterned figuration, though I sought to bring an expressive urgency to this figuration that is perhaps more reminiscent of Janacek than Corelli. There is also an extramusical influence: a passage from the second *Duino Elegy* by Rainer Maria Rilke (as translated by Stephen Mitchell and reprinted herein) was much on my mind as I composed.

Much of the music has the feeling of reaching beyond our grasp, of losing what we only just attained. The two violins play together as a single instrument with close hockets and relentless rhythmic activity. The extended coda, with its quiet oscillation between G-minor and A-flat minor triads, suggests our contemplation of “images that soothe. ...”

Light is a setting of an excerpt from *Visions* by Hildegard von Bingen, which describes the manifestation of Christ emerging from the glow of fire and sapphire lights. The repetition of the images of light and fire suggests an almost hallucinatory quality. I attempted to capture this in music that ranges from frenzied violence to simple diatonicism.

In live performance, the musicians are separated on stage into two or three groups, with each group playing music that is distinct from the others. During the piece, individual musicians move from one group to another. For example, the piece begins with the bass clarinet, cello, and mezzo-soprano off to the left, the piano and xylophone in the center, and a solo violin off to the right. Later, the bass clarinetist takes up the B-flat clarinet and moves to the center with the piano and xylophone. The mezzo-soprano alternately acts as another instrument (singing vocalise) or assumes a solo position when singing the text. With each new configuration of the ensemble, the music abruptly changes character, thus contributing to a growing sense of disorientation. The final section recasts the opening music as an extended resolution of the energy that has accumulated, ending with the solo violin playing an unadorned version of a theme that has run through the entire work. *Light* was composed in 1993 and premiered by Present Music in January 1994.

Terza Rima represents something of a departure for me in its use of electronic sound as an accompaniment to a solo oboe. Perhaps the unfamiliarity of this medium led me to compose a different kind of music, something more spacious and rather less strenuous than my earlier work. “Terza rima” is the rhyme scheme (aba, bcb, cdc, ded, ...) employed by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*. It occurred to me that musical phrases might be circulated in a way that echoes this rhyme scheme, giving me a way to move deeper into the music while always recalling something that had happened earlier. The lyrical, melodic utterances of the oboe are set off by sparkling synthesized textures played live using the software MAX with a Yamaha TG77 synthesizer and an LXP-15 effects processor. I owe a large debt of gratitude to Libby Van Cleve for the time, encouragement, and musicianship she contributed to the composition and performance of this piece.

Terza Rima was composed in 1995 and premiered that year at Wesleyan University.

The most recent work on this recording is the String Quartet, composed for and premiered by the Ciompi Quartet at Duke University in 1997. I never imagined that writing a string quartet would give rise to concerns about the weight of history that are often associated with string quartet composition. To my chagrin, these concerns hit me with full force as I worked on this piece. Many composers use the string quartet as a medium in which they can ambitiously define their unique musical personalities. If anything, I sought to avoid such a declaration. I wanted to compose music that sounded familiar, music that didn't try to define a unique, individual voice. I was interested in providing the musicians with the opportunity to play a new piece as they might play a piece by more familiar composers who did all the groundbreaking work, whether in the distant or recent past. At the same time, I didn't want to elevate this stance to the level of an aesthetic call to arms. The idea was simply to step away from myself and my musical habits, rather than to assert them.

Of course, many of my musical tics come through despite my best intentions! The second movement is as relentless as anything I've done, though I suspect there is a more affable quality to this music than there is in the other instrumental works on this recording. The first movement represents a bigger departure—a simple aria for the first violin framed by an expressive chorale—though it is odd to speak of a “departure” with regard to music that is more conventional-sounding than anything else on this recording.

Thinking back on these pieces, I derive a certain satisfaction that they all turned out quite differently than I had imagined at the outset. In fact, the experience of composing them was anything but reassuring to me. As I wrote above, they are provisional solutions, and I can only hope that other solutions will be found as I continue to compose and think about music.

— *Scott Lindroth*

Scott Lindroth (*b* Cincinnati, OH, 16 Jan 1958) studied composition at the Eastman School of Music and the Yale School of Music with Joseph Schwantner, Samuel Adler, and Jacob Druckman. He currently lives in Durham, North Carolina, where he teaches at Duke University.

Lindroth's compositions have been widely performed in the United States and Europe by orchestras and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, the California E.A.R. Unit, Dinosaur Annex, Thamryis, Earplay, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, among many others.

Lindroth has been the recipient of many awards for his music, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Revson Foundation, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the American Academy in Rome, and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Lindroth's *Relations to Rigor* for sextet and tape is available NWNW on “Bang On A Can *Live*, Vol. 1” in the CRI Emergency Music series (CD 628).

Texts

Duo for Violins

Weren't you astonished by the caution of human gestures on Attic gravestones? Wasn't love and departure placed so gently on shoulders that it seemed to be made of a different substance than in our world?

Remember the hands,
how weightlessly they rest, though there is power in the torsos.

These self-mastered figures know: “We can go this far, this is ours, to touch one another this lightly; the gods can press down harder upon us. But that is the gods' affair.”

If only we too could discover a pure, contained, human place, our own strip of fruit-bearing soil between river and rock. For our own heart always exceeds us, as theirs did. And we can no longer follow it, gazing into images that soothe it or into the godlike bodies where, measured more greatly, it achieves a greater repose.

— *Rainer Maria Rilke*
(translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Light

Then I saw a most splendid light, the whole of which burnt in a most beautiful shining fire. And in that light was the figure of a man of a sapphire color. And that most splendid light pours over the whole of that shining fire, and the shining fire pours over all that splendid light. But that splendid light pours forth all that shining fire and the splendid shining light of the fire and the whole of the figure of the man, making one light existing in one strength and one power. I heard that living light saying to me, “This is the meaning of the mysteries of God, that it may be understood what the fullness may be, who by that most wonderful strength planted all the rivers of the world.” For if the Lord is wanting in his own strength, what then would his work be? Certainly vain, for in a perfect work is seen who was its maker. I see this most splendid light which is without beginning and to whom nothing can be wanting. And in that figure of a man of a sapphire color is declared the son before all time, incarnate in the world, in time.

— *Hildegard von Bingen*

Scott Lindroth received a 1996 Academy Award in music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which has made possible the recording of String Quartet. Four such

awards are given annually by the Academy to honor and encourage composers and help them continue their creative work.

Production Notes

Light: Recorded by Frank Cunningham on January 25, 1998; produced by Jack Vees.

String Quartet: Recorded by Donald Merz at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Durham, NC, on June 8, 1998; produced by Scott Lindroth.

Terza Rima: Recorded by David Budries at Sonic Solutions in Hartford, CT, on August 11, 1996; produced by Scott Lindroth.

Duo for Violins: Recorded at the auditorium of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City, December 4, 1998; produced by Scott Lindroth; Adam Abeshouse, engineer.

CD mastered by Robert Wolff, engineer, Sony Music Studios, NYC.

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CRI production manager: Allison Wolf

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