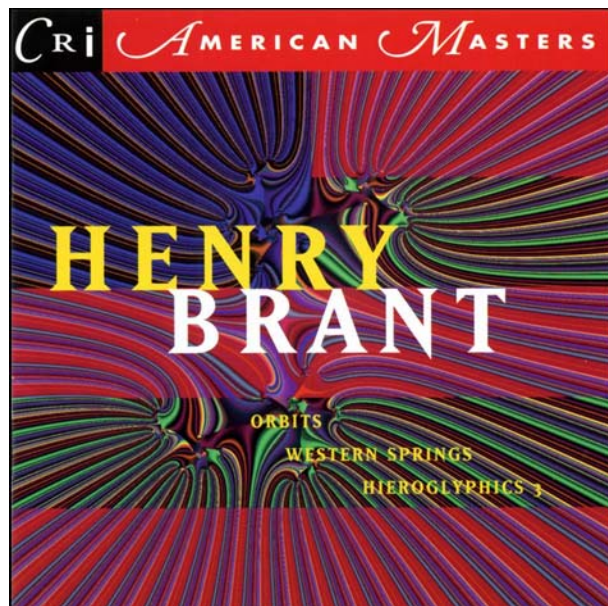


Henry Brant



- Orbits* (1979) (20:49)
 A Spatial Symphonic Ritual for 80 Trombones, Organ and Sopranino Voice; Bay Bones Trombone Choir and assisting artists; (Will Sudmeier and Billy Robinson, directors); Henry Brant, organ; Amy Snyder, voice; Gerhard Samuel, conductor
- Hieroglyphics 3* (1958) (11:08)
 Jacob Glick, viola solo; Catherine Satterlee, mezzo-soprano; Henry Brant, organ; Phyllis Martin Pearson, vibraphone & piano, Marianne Finckel, harpsichord, Louis Calabro, timpani & chimes
- Western Springs* (1984) (37:58)
 A Spatial Assembly for 2 Orchestras, 2 Choruses and 2 Jazz Combos; La Jolla Symphony & Chorus.; Henry Brant, Thomas Nee, orchestral conductors; David Chase & Amy Snyder, choral conductors; Jazz ensembles prepared by James Cheatham

Total Playing Time: 70:11

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Notes

Henry Brant, the pioneer explorer and practitioner of twentieth-century American spatial music, was born in Montreal in 1913 of American parents and began to compose at the age of eight. In 1929 he moved to New York where for the next twenty years he composed and conducted for radio, films, ballet and jazz groups, at the same time composing experimentally for the concert hall. From 1947 to 1955 he taught orchestration and conducted ensembles at the Juilliard School and Columbia University. At Bennington College, from 1957 to 1980, he taught composition; and every year he presented premieres of orchestral and choral works by living composers. Since 1981 Brant has made his home in Santa Barbara, California.

In 1950 Brant began to write spatial music of a particular kind in which the planned positioning of the performers throughout the hall, as well as on stage, is an essential factor in the composing scheme. This procedure, which limits and defines the contrasted music assigned to each performing group, takes as its point of departure the ideas of Charles Ives. Brant's principal works since 1950 are all spatial; his catalogue now comprises nearly 100 such works, each for a different instrumentation, each requiring a different spatial deployment in the hall and with maximum distances between groups prescribed in every case. All of Brant's spatial works have been commissioned.

Over the past two decades, Brant's spatial music has explored ever wider areas and larger performing forces: *Orbits* (1979) for 80 trombones and organ; *Meteor Farm* (1982), a multicultural work for expanded orchestra, two choirs, jazz band, gamelan ensemble, African drummers/singers and South Indian soloists (each group retaining unaltered its

traditional music); and *Fire on the Amstel* (1984) for four boatloads of twenty-five flutes each, four jazz drummers, four church carillons, three brass bands and four street organs—a three-hour aquatic procession through the canals in the center of Amsterdam. These and many subsequent large works deal with environmental subjects, as does *Desert Forests* (1985) for multiple orchestral groups; and *Northern Lights Over the Twin Cities* (1986), which deployed two choirs, orchestra, jazz band, large wind ensemble, large percussion ensemble, five pianos, bagpipe band and five solo singers throughout a sports arena in St. Paul, Minnesota. Brant's expanded *Millennium 2* (1988) calls for a thirty-five-piece brass orchestra, jazz combo, percussion ensemble, gospel choir, gamelan ensemble, bluegrass group, boy's choir, three pianos, organ and ten vocal soloists.

In 1994 Henry Brant completed *A Concord Symphony* his orchestration of Ives's *Concord Sonata*, a project begun in 1958. He conducted its premiere in Ottawa in June 1995. This was followed by *Dormant Craters*, for percussion orchestra, which he introduced at an outdoor premiere in Lincoln Center, New York in August 1995. Brant's most recent large work is *Mergers*, a symphonic narrative for five orchestral groups, organ and two singers, requiring five conductors.

From 1985:

As long as I can remember I have liked hand-organs, out-of-tune pianos, music boxes, brass bands, player pianos, church organs, merry-go-round music and calliopes. During the Depression years I made the first-hand acquaintance of uncommercialized Harlem jazz styles, and of regional and rural practices such as *Sacred Harp* shape note music and the schools of bluegrass performance, then still not standardized

or stereotyped. All these idioms, and indeed all intact formal and informal music of non-Western cultures upon which the meat axes of a mercilessly diluting and strait-jacketing Westernism have not yet fallen, represent to me life-giving sonic environments in which the senses can be nourished and fulfilled. I avoid and fear electronic music and even electronic amplification because of the irreversible damage they may be able to inflict on the nervous system. Anything else? My own studies were at first undertaken under the guidance of famous masters, some academic, some avant-garde, and I myself was a teacher for thirty years. I concluded that the classroom is not the best place to learn composing; practical know-how is better grasped in working on actual paid composing jobs, or in apprenticing to a master actively engaged on commissioned work with performance deadlines. What next? As I venture to foresee it, an urgent top priority for the music of the coming millennium will be a collapsible, transportable concert hall, totally adjustable in its interior arrangements.

—Henry Brant

Notes from the LP releases:

From 1980: *Orbits*

Berlioz is said to have exclaimed "No instrument can lift you from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven as can the trombone." Perhaps this was after hearing the sinister unisons of pedal tones on eight trombones in his *Requiem*, notes previously unknown or thought impossible by trombonists. But, what might Berlioz have thought of a complete orchestra of trombones, eighty strong, playing at times in eighty real parts, and spanning a better than five octave gamut, comprising soprano, alto, tenor, bass and contrabass trombones?

This is what Henry Brant has undertaken in his *Orbits*, and the present CRI recording was made during the first performance on February 11, 1979, described in the following account of the concert in *Time* magazine's issue of March 5, 1979.

"The scene at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco was vaguely surreal. In the pews was an audience of 1500, sedate as any church-goers. Ranged about them in a huge semicircle was a gleaming array of 80 trombonists, as if a parade had lost its way and sought sanctuary.

"But when the music began, the sound was a far cry from Sousa. Separated by staccato commentaries from the cathedral's pipe organ, densely dissonant sonorities clashed and blended over the listeners' heads. Full-throated blasses, splintery muted phrases, the crooning tones of the soprano trombone, the rumble of its contrabass relative—all seemed to accelerate in a circular motion, spinning into the cathedral's 190-foot cupola like an earthly echo of the music of the spheres."

Veteran Avant-Gardist Brant has long believed space is as important an element in composition as pitch or time values. In such works as *Prevailing Winds* (1974), for woodwind quintet, or the orchestral piece *Antiphony One* (1953), which requires five conductors, he deployed musicians all over the boxes, balconies and aisles of the hall instead of clustering them solely on stage. Greater complexity and expressiveness are his aim. "It's easier on the nervous system to have the music spaced," he says. "because you don't get it in a compact blast—you get it fragmented from different sources."

The premiere of *Orbits* was one of his most ambitious formations yet. Many of the performers belonged to a busy San Francisco trombone choir called the Bay Bones whose founders, Will Sudmeier and Billy Robinson, organized the cathedral concert. Reinforcements included the entire

trombone sections of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony and the Oakland Symphony. One musician came all the way from Florida. Brant's music is fairly frequently played by major ensembles, but he has no illusions about the practicality of a work for eighty trombones. "I think no further than the first performance," he says. "Probably when Berlioz wrote his *Requiem*, which needs four brass bands it didn't appear practicable either. But he wrote it and got it played."

In recent years Brant, who teaches at Bennington College in Vermont, has sought even wider spaces for his music than concert halls afford, by going outdoors. In 1972 his *Immortal Combat* positioned instrumental groups on various balconies and plazas at Manhattan's Lincoln Center. Traffic noise and a thunderstorm made the results "ludicrous." Brant admits. Undaunted, he merely drew the moral that any bold experimenter would have. "The thunderclap," he says, "showed me the scale that sound would have to be on, to be heard."

From 1971: *Hieroglyphics 3*

In its original version, *Hieroglyphics 3*, required the viola soloist to play from three widely separated positions in a dark hall, accompanied by unrelated and distant timpani, chimes, celesta, piano and harp; it was first performed by Walter Trampler at the Library of Congress in Washington in 1958. The present 1970 reworking substitutes harpsichord for harp, and vibraphone for celesta and adds an improvising voice and an improvising pipe organ. The improvised parts are not "aleatoric" but planned and controlled. All the other parts are fully notated and played exactly as written but without rhythmic coordination.

From 1985: *Western Springs*

The subtitle is *A Spatial Assembly for 2 Orchestras, 2 Choruses and 2 Jazz Combos*. Performing forces total well over 200 participants: each orchestra includes thirty strings, eight woodwinds, seven brass, three percussion and piano, each of the two choirs needs a minimum of twenty-five women and twenty-five men, and each jazz combo consists of a drummer, four saxophones, one trumpet and one trombone. Because four different simultaneous tempi are required throughout, each orchestra and chorus has its own conductor. The two jazz combos are instrumental adjuncts of the two choruses, each drummer following his respective chorus conductor. Each chorus/jazz aggregate is situated in a back corner of the hall and each orchestra at an extreme side of the stage, grouped in such a way that there is a space of at least sixty feet between them. The four conductors communicate with each other both by specific visual signals and by sound-cues that are part of the orchestration. Much of the time the jazz musicians have fully notated parts, but for some passages, specific kinds of improvisation are called for.

The work is in two main sections. The text, prepared by the composer, provides cursory descriptions of hot springs and geysers in five Western states—Oregon, California, Nevada, Wyoming and Idaho—presenting such data as the locations of the springs, their temperatures, flow rates and chemical contents, identification of underlying geological strata, and measurements of the heights and frequencies of the geysers.

Western Springs was first performed by the performers on this recording, on February 18 and 19, 1984, in Mandeville Auditorium on the campus of the University of California, San Diego. Instrumentalists and singers were reassembled on September 15 and 16 again in the Auditorium, to make the present recording. Each orchestra and each chorus/jazz combo was first recorded by itself, in stereo, in the empty hall; the

tracks were later edited and mixed for two-speaker playback. Since Orchestra I and Chorus I are always assigned to one speaker, and Orchestra II and Chorus II to another, it is recommended that the two speakers be separated as much as possible to give the best approximation of the vivid antiphonal separations experienced during the actual performance.

Western Springs is dedicated to Thomas Nee. It was composed for a commission by the La Jolla Orchestra and Chorus Association.

—Henry Brant

Western Springs is yet another arrestingly distinctive piece in the extraordinary parade of mature works that span a broad gamut over the repertory of Henry Brant compositions. From contemplative masterpieces like *On the Nature of Things* to the austere moving *American Requiem to Kingdom Come*, indeed a powerful monument. Henry Brant continues to enrich the vast diversity of our music-making today.

Completed in January 1984, *Western Springs* is a vintage Brantian spacework composed for two orchestras, two choruses and two jazz combos. These performing forces are placed at the four corners of the hall in a characteristic way. One can only try to imagine the truly unique spatial elements in this work when listening to a recording, however stereo it may be. To have been there is to know that the "grammar of spatial composition" as practiced by this master of the art gives voice to architectural subtleties of direction, distance and location. *Western Springs* brings us a genuine sonic distillation of the contemporary American experience. From ghost choirs of the broken camps to coal-blue horizon lines; to the yelling champs of greed and get: then beyond on the Panamint slang of the Westward Ho! - (Oh Stovepipe Wells indeed)—like a terrific jam of Mummers honking way out of Death's Valley it spawns a vigorous plenitude. May Henry keep talkin' this lingo long and true...

—Eric Stokes

The following is excerpted from Kurt Stone's article on Brant in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*:

For Western Springs:

Bay Bones Trombone Choir and assisting artists:

Andy Thomas
Anne Witherall
Arthur Radford
Barbara Sigler
Billy E. Robinson
Brad Wilcox
Bradley Peterson
Brian Taylor
Chris Laughbon
Chuck Bennett
Dan Bonnin
Dan Livesay
Dan Marcus
Dan Zanutto
Daniel Roy
David Lafferty
David Martell
David Wilson

David Promessi
Deborah O'Brien
Denise Klawinter
Derek Wadman
Don Burton
Don Willems
Don Young
Donald Benham
Donald Kennelly
Tom Mueller
Doug Minor
Ernie Rideout
Eugene Isaeff
Frank Rehak
Fred Acomb
Fritz Heilbron
Gary Hunt
Gary Williams

Brant's early published music shows marked contrasts in style from work to work and a pronounced interest in unusual timbral combinations. *Angels and Devils* (1931, revised in 1956 and 1979) is a concerto for flute with ten members of the flute family. Brant has continued to explore timbre in such works as *Origins* (1952) a percussion symphony, and *Orbits* (1979), which requires 80 trombones in individual parts. A far-reaching innovation came in 1953 with the performance of *Antiphony I* for five widely separated orchestral groups positioned in the auditorium and on stage. This example of "spatial music" predated Stockhausen's *Gruppen* by five years. Unlike Stockhausen, however, Brant followed and expanded Ives's concepts of stylistic contrast and spatial separation. In *Antiphony I* and almost all of Brant's subsequent spatial works each group is assigned music quite unrelated in timbre, texture, and style to that of other groups. Rhythmic coordination is maintained within each ensemble, often by conductors, but in order to allow for possible time lags in the hall. Brant has devised procedures to permit overall non-coordination within controlled limits. These and similar techniques are employed in *The Grand Universal Circus* (1956) which presents simultaneous contrasted musical and dramatic events throughout the entire theatre era, and *Voyage Four* (1963), a "total antiphony" in which musicians are located on the back and side walls and under the auditorium floor, as well as on stage.

Brant wrote that in 1950 he had "come to feel that single-style music could no longer evoke the new stresses, layered insanities, and multi-directional assaults of contemporary life on the spirit." His use of space became central to his conception of a polystylistic music, and his experiments have convinced him that space exerts specific influences on harmony, polyphony, texture, and timbre. He regards space as music's "fourth dimension," (the other three being pitch, measurement of time, and timbre)...Although Brant continues to experiment with new combinations of acoustic timbres, he does not use electronic materials or permit amplification in his music.

Gordon Moore
Jack Sudmeier
James Patterson
James W. Price
Jean Williams
Jeff Moressi
Jeffrey Mitchell
Jerry Olson
John Buschiazzo
John Kinney
John Maltester
John Roesli
Joseph Earl
K. Bartlett Waide
Ken Winette
Kenneth Wirt
Kevin Bradley
Kevin Krull

Kevin Linscott
Kim Krohn
Kurt Patzner
Leonard Nelson
Maria Thomson
Mark Lawrence
Mike Engstrom
Mike Hudson
Mitchell Ross
Ned Meredith
Patricia Crossen
Patrick Spurling
Paul Chauvin
Philop Zahorsky
Ricardo G. Rivera
Richard Leland
Robert Campbell
Robert Hioki

Robert Knapp
Roger Heartsner
Rudy Aria
Socorro Hernandez

Stanley Brunner
Stanley E. Easter
Stephen Colson
Stephen McNally

Steve Tyler
Steve Wilson
Steven Mortensen
Steven Witser

Tom Ashworth
Wilbur Sudmeier

Jazz Combo I:

Christopher Klick, soprano saxophone
Art Fisher, alto saxophone
Walt Gillespie, tenor saxophone
Steve Irby, baritone saxophone
John de Carli, trumpet
Steve Knopoff, trombone
Rick Glascock, drums

Jazz Combo II:

Ed Morris, soprano saxophone
Julie Miwa, alto saxophone
Ladd El Wardani, tenor saxophone
Mimi Dominguez, baritone saxophone
Bryant Allard, trumpet
Marvin Nakajama, trombone
Bret Sanders, drums

Production Notes

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

Western Springs: From CRI SD 512, released 1985.

Recorded in Mandeville Auditorium of the University of California, San Diego,
September 15 and 16, 1984.

Produced, digitally recorded and edited by Bob Shumaker.

This original recording was made possible through the generosity of Betty Freeman, Tom Buckner, M/A-COM Linkabit, the Copley Foundation and the University of California, San Diego, Dept. of Music.

Orbits: From CRI SD 422, released 1980.

Produced by Carter Harman.

Recorded by Toni Gnazzo in St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, February, 1979.

This original recording was made possible through the generosity of Betty Freeman and Bay Bones.

Hieroglyphics 3: From CR! SD 260, originally released 1971.

Produced by Carter Harman.

Recorded by Ervin Auchter.

This original recording was made possible through the generous support from the Woolley Fund of Bennington College and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

All works published by Carl Fischer. (ASCAP)

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