

NWCR831

Mathew Rosenblum



<i>Nü kuan tzu</i> (1996)	(21:43)
1. I <i>Le Départ</i>	(3:40)
2. II <i>Automne Malade</i>	(2:40)
3. III Interlude 1	(3:02)
4. IV <i>12/11 Pop</i>	(2:09)
5. V <i>Stars are few</i>	(1:09)
6. VI Interlude 2	(2:06)
7. VII <i>Han Shao</i>	(2:00)

8. VIII Interlude 3	(1:58)
9. IX <i>Voyelles</i>	(2:59)
Kristin Norderval, soprano; Mary Nessinger, mezzo-soprano; Prism Players: Jayn Rosenfeld, flute/piccolo; Tim Smith, clarinet; Daniel Grabois, French horn; Ben Herrington, trombone; Dale Turk, bass-trombone; Dominic Donato & Michael Lipsey, percussion; Eric Moe, piano/sampler; Curtis Macomber, violin; Lois Martin, viola; Ted Mook, cello; Joe Bongiorno, double-bass; Bradley Lubman, conductor	
10. <i>Ancient Eyes</i> (1990)	(10:52)
Prism Players: Jayn Rosenfeld, flute; Tim Smith, clarinet; Ted Mook, cello; Dominic Donato, percussion; Eric Moe, piano/sampler; Bradley Lubman, conductor	
11. <i>Maggies</i> (1997)	(13:27)
Maggie Lane, voice; California E.A.R. Unit: Dorothy Stone, flute/alto flute; James Rohrig, clarinet/bass clarinet; Robin Lorentz, violin; Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello; Amy Knoles, percussion (vibes, woodblock); Arthur Jarvinen, percussion (drum set, glockenspiel); Stephen L. Mosko, conductor	

Total playing time: 46:15

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Notes

Mathew Rosenblum's music is a synthesis of diverse musical elements derived from classical, jazz, rock, and world-music traditions. Most notably, his current music combines two tuning systems, the normal twelve-note equal-tempered system, and a 21-note-to-the octave "just" system, designed to be used in conjunction with the twelve-note equal-tempered system. Together, the two tuning systems provide a wide variety of intervallic and harmonic possibilities. His music explores how seemingly independent musical voices and traditions may be woven together into a newly expressive whole.

In the stream of American music, Rosenblum's compositions float alongside those of Harry Partch, Ben Johnston, Ezra Sims, Dean Drummond, Henry Cowell, John Cage, and LaMonte Young. This tradition is characterized by a decidedly non-academic and non-European flavor, and figures prominently in today's American music. Rosenblum's music also poaches from the rock and jazz traditions, unselfconsciously incorporating these styles into larger scale works.

—Ted Mook

"In the past ten years, I've been drawn to hybrid musical styles in which widely varying cultures and traditions merge or even clash. The sheer sound and rhythm of language has also been a great source of inspiration for me, as well as how languages might combine or intersect. This fascination with

combinations or superimpositions also shows in my tuning system. But I'm also interested in the reconciliation of differences and that's what unites the three pieces on this disc. "*Nü kuan tzu* collects and fuses wildly contrasting stylistic, textual, and harmonic elements. Each of the nine movements presents distinctly different musical styles, from impressionistic, to microtonal, to pop. Ancient Chinese poems are combined with the Romantic French poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire and Arthur Rimbaud. Digitally-sampled texts are interwoven with live vocalists singing in French, Chinese, or a combinations of the two. Two separate tuning systems are also employed: the normal twelve-note equal-tempered system, and a 21-note-to-the-octave "just" system of my own design. The name *Nü kuan tzu* refers to a particular poetic meter from the Sung Dynasty of China. Approximately one half of the texts used in my piece are such "music poems" (*Tz'ü*) written by the poet and lyricist Wen T'ing-yün to existing "pop" tunes of the time. Careful attention was given to the tonal structure of the words in relation to the melody, and, most importantly, the phonic surface of the word-successions. The results are exquisite "sound poems", which have a wonderful, inherent, musicality to them. These poems have been carefully transliterated into the international phonetic alphabet in both the Mandarin and Ancient dialects. The contrasting French poems by Apollinaire and Rimbaud were also selected for their rich sonic content. At times,

notably in movements I and IX, the languages and poems are mixed together, emphasizing differences between the two languages and dialects; at other times, entire poems, both Chinese and French, unfold individually or simultaneously, sometimes spoken, sometimes sung. Movement VII, *Han Shao*, begins by delivering both the Mandarin and Ancient versions of this poem. *Nü kuan tzu* was commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, and completed in 1996.

"*Ancient Eyes* was written in the months directly before and after the birth of my daughter, Anna Eileen, on November 12, 1990. The piece reflects some of the thoughts and emotions I was experiencing at that time. I was particularly struck by Anna's newborn eyes which, opening for the first time, appeared to have a wonderful and mysterious glow. Anna's eyes reminded me of our link to the ancient past; and that we are all, in fact, part of a very profound continuum of time. This piece is most obviously influenced by mid-eastern music and the music of Debussy and Ravel, and is an offshoot of my previous work *Circadian Rhythms* (recorded on Mode records). *Ancient Eyes* was commissioned by the Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players.

"*Maggies* combines live instrumental music with sampled ambient sounds and pre-recorded texts by Donald Barthelme, Gordon Lish, and Roger Zahab. The inspiration of the piece was the rhythms and sounds of these texts, but especially as they are given contour and musical qualities by the chosen reader, Maggie Lane, my wife. The brief text by Donald Barthelme, positioned at the beginning of the piece, is taken from his book *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts*, and is the prelude to the rest of the work. The text by Roger Zahab, *Bales in Ayr*, is a parody of a section from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, and provides a very "open ended" recurring narrative throughout. The story by Gordon Lish strings together familiar clichés in a stream-of-consciousness manner, and is excerpted from *The Merry Chase*. This text is used in the middle and at the end of the piece, and provides a second pseudo-narrative. *Maggies* was originally conceived using short passages from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. After a year of trying to get permission from the Joyce estate to use the texts in this piece, the grandson of Mr. Joyce, Stephen James Joyce, refused, stating that his grandfather had very particular tastes in music, and that he would not have liked my music. He added, as well, that neither he, nor his wife, cared for my music, either! After relating this story to my dear friend Roger Zahab, Roger proclaimed that he had read *Finnegan's Wake* no less than three times, and offered to write a parody of the Joyce text for me. The resulting text is a gem of "Deliverative Porphyry", and I am extremely grateful.

"A note on my tuning system: in all the works on this disc, keyboard #1 (acoustic) is tuned normally, while keyboard #2 (digital) is altered in the following way: C#, D#, F# and G# are raised approximately 37 cents, and B-flat, B, C, E and F are lowered approximately 51 cents. The nine added notes form natural intervals with each other and with notes from the standard twelve-note system. The singers and the other instruments in the ensembles also use pitches from the twenty-one-note system. In each of the works, the standard and altered tunings are used independently and in combination."

—*Mathew Rosenblum*

Mathew Rosenblum was born in New York City in 1954. He earned advanced degrees in music composition at the New England Conservatory of Music and Princeton University. His music has been performed throughout the United States and Europe, including the 1990 ISCM World Music Days in Oslo,

De Ijsbreker in Amsterdam, the Sonic Boom Festival in New York City, and at the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento California, by ensembles including the California E.A.R. Unit, Newband, Earplay, the Dinosaur Annex Ensemble, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Chicago Contemporary Players, and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble.

Additional recordings have been made by Speculum Musicae, Newband, pianist Loretta Goldberg, and cellists Ted Mook and Michael Finckel, for the *Mode* and *Opus One* labels. Upcoming projects include a Concerto for Saxophone Quartet and Chamber Orchestra, commissioned by the Rascher Saxophone Quartet, and a work celebrating the new millennium, for chamber ensemble and pre-recorded text, commissioned by the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies at Claremont-McKenna College. Rosenblum is currently an associate professor of composition at the University of Pittsburgh, and is co-director of the *Music of the Edge* new-music series, also in Pittsburgh.

Prism Players is a flexible-sized ensemble, comprised of the finest freelance performers who specialize in new music in New York. The group is a subset of the Prism Chamber Orchestra, which was founded in 1983 by conductor-pianist-composer Robert Black. The group has won critical acclaim for inventive programming, and its many premieres of new works. Prism is dedicated to performing and recording works of living composers, providing a forum for innovative works and artists, and offering professional opportunities for developing young conductors, composers, and instrumentalists.

The **California E.A.R. Unit** is a Los Angeles-based and internationally-acclaimed ensemble dedicated to performance of contemporary repertoire, often including new technologies. Among their citations are: "The E.A.R. Unit performs with exuberance and razor sharp precision" (*New York Times*); "...excellents musiciens, d'un ensemble de très grand qualité (*La Province*, Brussels); "The exhilaration in their playing, as they plunge with glorious high spirits and dazzling skill, into the world's most daunting repertoire... should be reward enough for anybody" (*LA Style*). The California E.A.R. Unit's most recent recognition comes from its peers, with the 1999 Letter of Distinction from the American Music Center. The ensemble is now in its nineteenth season, and celebrating its thirteenth year as ensemble-in-residence at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This is the ensemble's debut recording for CRI.

Bradley Lubman has appeared with major orchestras and ensembles in America and abroad. He is assistant professor of conducting and ensembles at the Eastman School of Music, where he conducts the New Eastman Symphony, Eastman Philharmonia, Eastman School Symphony, and the Musica Nova Ensemble. As a composer, Mr. Lubman has been commissioned by such groups as the Percussion Group of The Hague (Rotterdam); Cygnus Ensemble; the Guild Trio; New Millennium Ensemble; and the Lawrence Philharmonic. His CRI recordings include music of Randall Woolf (CD 777) and Robert Maggio (CD 720), and with *Common Sense* (CD 731) and the *New Millennium* ensemble (CD 772).

Stephen L. Mosko is conductor of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and principal conductor of the Griffin Music Ensemble of Boston. He has been guest conductor on numerous occasions with the San Francisco Symphony and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His own compositions have been performed by the San Francisco Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Sacramento

Symphony, SONOR, California E.A.R. Unit, *Monday Evening Concerts*, and at the Ojai, Tanglewood, and *June in Buffalo* festivals. His awards include an NEA composer's fellowship, two BMI awards, and a Fromm Foundation award.

Kristin Nordeval, soprano, is trained in music composition and vocal performance. Her repertoire spans the baroque to the avant-garde. She has performed as an improviser and as a standard soloist with numerous new music ensembles, and has toured with her own compositions for tape, electronics and voice. Highlights from the past few seasons have included performances with the Oslo Sinfonietta and Netherlands Dance Theater 3; recitals in the United States and in Europe, ranging from Cage at the Guggenheim, to Grieg in Texas, to the complete Webern Lieder in Vienna.

Mary Nessinger, mezzo-soprano, has been heard throughout the United States and England, and is gaining attention for her critically acclaimed performances of some of this century's most dynamic works. Chamber music is her favorite medium, but she is equally at home on the opera and concert stage. In addition to works from the standard repertoire, Ms. Nessinger has devoted herself to the championing of new music, and has premiered music by Lee Hyla, Michael Ruszczyński, Simon Bainbridge, and Ezra Sims. She has appeared with the Baltimore, Grand Rapids, Jacksonville and London symphony orchestras, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Concordia Orchestra, and the newly formed Boston Modern Orchestra Project.

Production Notes

Executive Producer: Ted Mook; edited by Mathew Rosenblum; mastered by Dawn Fark, engineer, at Sony Music Studios, NYC. *Nü kuan tzu* and *Ancient Eyes*: recorded November 10-11, 1996, at Master Sound, Astoria, NYC; engineered by Ben Rizzi; produced by Ted Mook; co-produced by Lee Hyla. *Maggies*: recorded January 15, 1998, at Mad Hatter Recording Studios, Los Angeles, CA.; Larry Mau, engineer; mixed March 12, 1999, and April 3, 1999 at Soundscape Studio, Pittsburgh, PA.; Matt Harington, Bill Rossi, engineers; produced by Mathew Rosenblum; co-produced by Daniel Rothman
My sincerest thanks to Ted Mook, my dear friend and the producer of this CD, without whom this recording would not have happened; special thanks also to Brian Brandt, Huey Chen, Yves Citton, Jody Dalton, Sandra Elm, Lee Hyla, Maggie Lane, Jeanne Larson, Gordon Lish, Eric Moe, Daniel Rothman, Roger Zahab, and especially to Sara Rosenblum for her inspiration. –
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CRI Production Manager: Allison Wolf

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