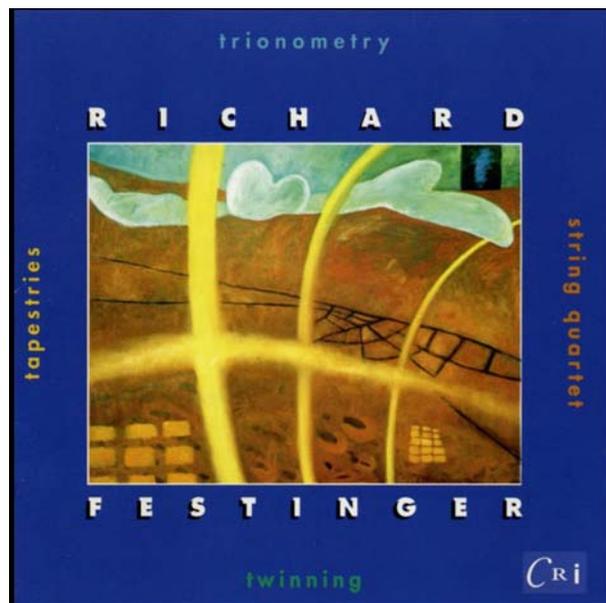


NWCR832

Richard Festinger

Tapestries and other works



1. *Tapestries* for violin, cello and piano (1997) (15:14)
The Laurel Trio: Sunghae Anna Lim, violin,
Amy Levine Tsang, cello, Dena Levine, piano

- Trionometry* for flute, clarinet/bass
clarinet and piano (1996) (15:24)
2. *A la Breve* (5:45)
 3. *Andantino* (6:02)
 4. *Allegro* (3:37)
- Earplay: Janet Kutulas, flute, Peter Josheff,
clarinet, Karen Rosenak, Piano
- String Quartet* (1994) (21:27)
5. *Adagio; più mosso* (8:28)
 6. *A la breve* (7:01)
 7. *Allegro ritmico* (5:58)
- The Alexander String Quartet: Ge-Fang
Yang, Frederick Lifnitz, violins, Paul
Yarbrough, viola, Sandy Wilson, cello
- Twinning* for violin and piano (1994) (11:50)
8. *Allegro energico* (2:57)
 9. *Adagio* (4:55)
 10. *10. Presto sfrenato* (3:58)
- Curtis Macomber, violin, Karen Rosenak, piano

Total playing time: 63:55

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Notes

Tapestries, co-commissioned by the Laurel Trio and the Koussevitsky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, was written in 1997. The three movements are played without pause. Their trajectory, very broadly, is one of potent but tumultuous energy, tempered by reflection and released anew. The first movement, skittish and unpredictable, features glissandos in the strings that send both instruments to the outer reaches of their ranges. In the slow movement, the glissandos recur—this time in unison—a kind of communal sigh. This is veiled and troubled music; the delicate arabesques of the piano only add to the disquiet. The finale is full of verve, frenetic and virtuosic: spiky sixteenth-note passages, often in unison between the right hand of the piano and the violin, gradually take over the music, pushing it towards a dramatic conclusion.

Trionometry was commissioned by The Emyrean Ensemble, based at the University of California at Davis, who premiered it in 1996. The composer explains that he was attracted by the timbral possibilities of the Ensemble's combination of flute, bass clarinet, and piano, "particularly when the flute and bass clarinet are widely separated in register." Throughout *Trionometry*, and especially in the central slow movement, that sound-idea condenses into a kind of "mirror" imitation between the two winds, where an upward ripple in the flute line corresponds to a downward one in the clarinet, and vice versa. The three movements of *Trionometry* are linked by a short ritornello, which opens the first and second movements and reappears, transformed, to end the last. The outer movements are nervously energetic, full of syncopation and brilliant passage-work for all three instruments. Between them, the slow and still middle movement is a kind of idyll. Its graceful

pairing of flute and clarinet almost suggests an object and its reflection moving together over water.

The String Quartet was written for the Alexander Quartet in 1994. The composer writes: "When asked by the Alexander Quartet to compose a work for them, my first thoughts were of their superb renditions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and their refined and elegant style in the tradition of great quartet playing. I sought to write a quartet that would take full advantage of this marvelous ability, born of the classical style, to move and emote almost as a single mind. Yet even while admiring this classicism, it is essential for me that every new work should strive to push beyond the constraints of the tradition of which it is born, to find a new voice which is, nevertheless, universal in its resonances."

The quartet is a piece very consciously situated in the rich history of the genre—distant echoes of the classical composers Festinger cites appear through the quartet, especially in the more scherzando music, and also commingle with echoes of more assertive ones of Bartók and (especially) of Berg's *Lyric Suite*—but unusual in the emphasis it places on the idea of the ensemble as "almost... a single mind." Innumerable "orchestrational" touches in the texture demand that two or more players abruptly become a kind of composite instrument. Two widely-spaced lines suddenly veer into the middle of the texture, converging on a close interval. A viola line, arco, is doubled by the cello playing the same line pizzicato (or vice versa). The finale's feisty stream of sixteenth notes migrates naturally, practically imperceptively, from player to player, the transitions all but inaudible.

The piece begins with a slow introduction (Adagio) that almost deserves to be called a separate movement, as it is

nearly as long as the first movement proper. It is muted and mysterious music, colored by harmonics, ponticello, and tremolo, but much of the music in this opening turns up later in quite different character. The Allegro that follows (marked *più mosso*) is a muscular romp for the quartet, full of sudden shifts of gear, and calling on the players much of the time to speak in rhythmic unison.

The second movement (Alla breve) consists of a theme and five variations. The theme is not a succession of pitches or rhythms or harmonies, but a complex of all three. The succeeding five variations take up and juggle materials from the theme in unpredictable ways. The material becomes progressively more intricate and playful, until the last variation is almost a distillation of its model. A vigorous rondo finale rounds off the piece—a virtuoso etude in syncopation ending in a triumphant flourish.

Twining, for violin and piano, also dates from 1994. It was commissioned by the California Association of Professional Music Teachers, and subsequently took second place in the Music Teachers' National Association's annual composition competition. The composer explains the title as merely reflecting the equality of the two parts, but there also is something akin to the growth of "twinned" crystals in the way much of the piece proceeds—the violin and piano beginning from unison pitches, then branching out into their own trajectories of growth.

The first movement is syncopated, mercurial, and terse; the second contemplative but uneasy, all sudden whirring and sudden stillness. To conclude there is a vivacious movement (once again) in rondo form, whose theme returns now in original form, now in inversion; some of the episodes artfully recall music from the opening movement.

— Michelle Dulak

Richard Festinger (b 1948) studied composition and conducting at the University of California in Berkeley under Andrew Imbrie, earning a Ph.D. in composition in 1983. Before turning to composing, he led his own groups as a jazz performer. In 1978–80 he studied in Paris as recipient of the George Ladd Prize. Since 1985 he has been a research affiliate of Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics.

Richard Festinger's music has been performed in the United States, Europe and Asia. His works have been commissioned by Parnassus, Earplay, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Alexander String Quartet, the University of California, the Left Coast Ensemble, the City Winds, and Alter-Ego. He has received awards from the Jerome Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia University. In 1993 he received the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The **Alexander String Quartet** captured international attention in 1985 as the first American quartet to win the London International String Quartet Competition, receiving both the jury's highest award and the Audience Prize. Each year the quartet's concerts include engagements at major concert halls throughout North America and Europe, including appearances at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum and Merkin Hall in New York, and the Library of Congress and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. Since 1989 they have been the directors of the Morrison Chamber Music Center's instructional program at San Francisco State University, and ensemble-in residence with San Francisco Performances. The Alexander Quartet is

committed to the creation and performance of contemporary music, and to date has commissioned nearly two dozen works, including Richard Festinger's String Quartet.

Founded in 1994, the **Laurel Trio** has garnered recognition as one of America's most exciting young chamber ensembles. A year after its formation, the trio won the Nathan Wedeen Management Award at the 1995 Concert Artists Guild Competition, followed by its New York debut in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall; they were also chosen as piano trio in residence at the Tanglewood Music Festival. Throughout the 1995–96 season, the Laurel Trio was heard weekly on WQXR radio in New York, where they served as the station's resident artists. The ensemble recently toured California, serving as artists-in-residence with the La Jolla Chamber Music Society, performing in San Francisco, and participating in the Festival of New American Music in Scaramento. In the summers, the trio can be heard at the Portland Chamber Music Festival in Maine, and the Laurel Festival of the Arts in Pennsylvania.

Since its founding in 1985, **Earplay** has earned a national reputation for its performances of new American music, and has established itself as among the top few contemporary music ensembles in Northern California. The ensemble presents a subscription concert series each season at San Francisco's Center for the Arts at Yerba Buena Gardens. In addition, Earplay performs at venues throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, and other parts of both Northern and Southern California. In 1996 Earplay was designated resident New Music Ensemble at San Francisco State University. Earplay maintains an active commissioning program, and since its inception has commissioned and/or premiered more than 100 works by American composers.

Curtis Macomber, violin, is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where he was a student of Joseph Fuchs and a winner of the Morris Loeb and Walter Naumburg Prizes. He was first violinist of the New World String Quartet from 1982 to 1993, and made fourteen major recordings with the Quartet. He was artist-in-residence at Harvard University, and has appeared numerous times on Public Radio and Television in the U.S. and Great Britain. A founding member of the Ives Piano Trio and a member of the Speculum Musicae ensemble since 1991, he has appeared in all the major concert halls of New York as well as at the Kennedy Center and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. He has appeared with many major American chamber and new music ensembles, including the Group for Contemporary Music and the New York New Music ensemble, and in chamber music series across the U.S. and Europe. Among his many recordings is an acclaimed collection of contemporary works for solo violin, *Songs of Solitude*, released on CRI in 1996 (CR706).

Pianist **Karen Rosenak** is a founding member of the San Francisco-based new-music ensemble Earplay, with whom she performed from 1985 to 1997. She earned a DMA at Stanford University, where she studied early piano with Margaret Fabrizio and modern piano with Nathan Schwartz. She has appeared as a soloist with the Berkeley and Oakland East Bay Symphonies, and has performed with the Berkeley Early Music Festival, the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, the Center for New Music and Technology, the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, the Empyrean Ensemble at the University of California in Davis, Composers Inc., Alea II, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Ms. Rosenak has taught at San Francisco State University, Stanford University, the University of California at Davis and Mills College, and is currently on the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley.

Production Notes

Tapestries was recorded on June 17, 1998, at SUNY Purchase Performing Arts Center.
Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman.

Trigonometry was recorded on June 13, 1997, at the Unitarian Church of Berkeley, California.
Engineer: Paul Stubblebine. Producer: Lolly Lewis.

String Quartet was recorded on June 1 and 2, 1998, at Saint Stephen's Church, Belvedere, CA.
Engineer: Robert Shumaker. Producer: Richard Festinger.

Twining was recorded on August 2, 1997, at Bay Records, Berkeley, CA.
Engineer: Paul Stubblebine. Producer: Lolly Lewis.

All works published by C.F. Peters (ASCAP).

Executive Director for CRI: Joseph R. Dalton.

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