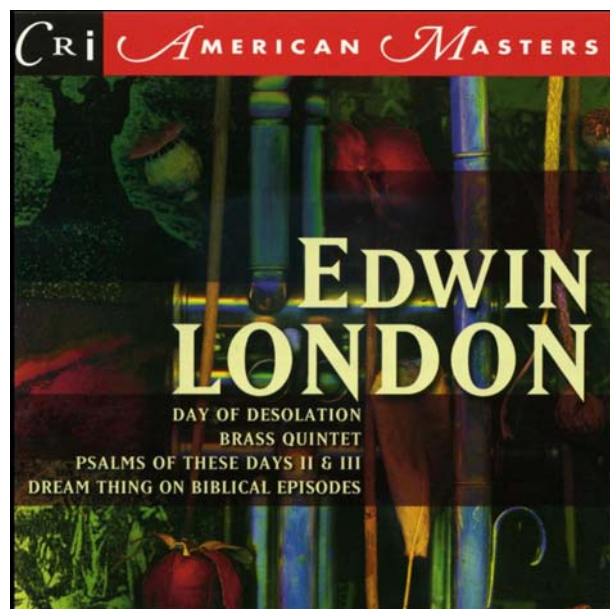


Edwin London



1. *Day of Desolation* (1970–71) (13:04)
University of Connecticut Concert Choir; John Poellein, conductor
Brass Quintet (1965) (12:54)
2. I. Allegro malinconico (6:17)
3. II. Molto adagio quasi sguaiato ma con dolce forza (6:37)
James Darling, trumpet; John Brndiar, trumpet;
Richard Solis, horn; James DeSano, trombone;
Ronald Bishop, tuba

4. *Psalm of These Days II* (1976–77) (9:59)
Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble:
Deborah Kavasch, soprano; Linda Vickerman,
mezzo-soprano; Edwin Harkins, tenor; Philip
Larsen, bass-baritone
Psalm of These Days III (1977) (15:44)
5. I. Why do the heathen rage and the
people imagine a vain thing? (3:10)
6. II. Let us break their band asunder
and cast away their cords from us. (6:39)
7. III. Serve the Lord with fear and
rejoice with trembling (5:55)
University of Illinois Contemporary
Chamber Players: John Fonville, flute;
Paul Martin Zonn, clarinet, vocal quartet;
Ray Sasaki, trumpet; James Staley,
trombone, vocal quartet; Daniel Perantoni,
tuba, vocal quartet; Don Baker,
percussion; Arthur Maddox, piano;
Guillermo Perich, viola; Thomas
Fredrickson, contrabass, vocal quartet;
Edwin London, conductor, vocal quartet
8. *Dream Thing On Biblical Episodes* (1970) (13:58)
Smith College Chamber Singers; Iva Dee Hiatt,
conductor

Total playing time: 65:39

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Notes

The period during which the five works on this disc were composed, 1965 to 1977, was perhaps the most productive of my creative life. Starting in 1961, I had wandered into a commonplace and somewhat churlish fascination with biblical text, not to alleviate sins committed it seemed, but rather to establish a connection with a situational referent that could be generally understood. For reasons not all that clear to me here in the year 2000, I am still engaged in setting biblical text. These works on sacred subject matter stand alongside a group of other contemporaneous works, ‘secular’ in nature, small to large, that are, at least in my view, complements to the ‘religious’ works.

These pieces also make me notice that counterpoint (a much maligned process for textural presentation in the twentieth century), however useful it sometimes is, has a way of obscuring the sung word. Thus, I chose to deal much of the time with thick polyphonic textures as, all the while, the text remained, one hoped, deliberately accessible in its obscurity. The audiences’ turning of text pages printed in programs became unnecessary; the audience was familiar not only with the subject but with its conceptual and traceable lexical root progression as well. No matter how far one departed, or strayed, as it were, from given biblical extract, a link with the acculturated congregation was maintained.

The clash between sacred intent and secular intentions has replicated itself in another observable dichotomy in my works: an ongoing creative friction (sometimes a rasping conflict!), between European-influenced tonal organization and structure versus the unruly practice of an abrasive, developmental, improvisatory jazz-like suggestiveness both in rhythm and ornamented melody and with theatrical implications. Brass Quintet (1965) is straightforwardly ‘serial’ in its layout and distribution of pitches but its rhythms are intuitively wrought from remembered mind models. The other works on the disc are similarly constituted.

—E.L. January 2000

And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will ye leave your glory?—Isaiah 10:3

Day of Desolation for a cappella chorus and bells, was started in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico in the autumn of 1970, directly after the completion of *Dream Thing On Biblical Episodes*. It was completed in the spring of 1971. The chorus is divided into many variable sub-groups and soloists markedly different from the common SATB configuration. Departing from his usual work habits and compositional procedures, London makes *Day of Desolation* more episodic in the manner of a piling up of fast-changing film sequences which

dart back and forth in a portrayal of the nature and atmosphere of desolation. Indeed the chorus is in many respects an interactive dramatic character with changing face—at the start an agitated “Bible Belt” congregation, with cantor and raving preacher, later a wailing/screaming assemblage,

and at resolution, a transfigured bell.

Near the end, the altos sing the original cantus firmus and text surrounded by counterpoints and trenchant counter-texts invented by the composer:

Sopranos	What can be done done	The plague which	If we realize
God helps those	To save the world	Does surround us	Now or never
who help themselves	Still alive	Can be cured	That love must be
So its been said	Though it soon	Be sure	The means by which
	could be dead?		We're led.
Tenors		Soon the bells will	We must make a fuss
Chaos seems to rule the world.		Tell tale toll	Lest we miss
	While we despair,	For us	The bus
C—H—A—O—S—	Fouls the air,		Of jus-
	Don't you care?	And	tice out of
Chaos chaos			Chaos
dominates this life			
Basses		No need	To hesitate.
Will ye do that	And why not do it now?	Dear friends	
Which shall be done?	It is so late.		

DING

DING DING DING DING DING DING
DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG DONG

Brass Quintet was written in 1965 at the MacDowell Colony. Being a French horn player and having experienced some memorable moments in the trenches of jazz and erudite ensembles, London wanted to compose a piece which would help him understand the processes—the twists and turns—that his own public performance experience had taken. He realized that, like the stress and strain of competitive athletics, brass playing often leads to physical exhaustion, but has wondrous satisfactions to offer as well. In effect then, Brass Quintet is dedicated to all those who have pressed (or jammed) cold metal to the flesh.

The following text appears in the score and is usually read aloud between movements during concert performances:

There is a series of central mysteries for which one explanation is as pleasantly plausible as another. The question might be asked, “Is the arm of a human being meant to throw a baseball at speeds of up to one hundred miles an hour?” One answer is yes, “Yes, for our national pastime is a game people play and therefore it is only natural to try to play the game as masterfully as possible.” Another answer is “No, for me the great strain on the sinews and nerve fibers leads to a set of pathological symptoms, a condition often referred to as the ‘sore arm syndrome.’ “A third answer might be, “Throwing a baseball is no more, nor less natural than any human activity, and given the need to play hard and well, why not permit the muscles under strain to have the necessary respite in which to revitalize?? Why not allow the life-giving surge of freshly pumped blood the opportunity to replenish the used up storehouse of the plasmic function??”

The last answer is one which appeals to me, particularly on the anniversary of my father’s birth. For I as am my father’s, and I am my sons’ father, the idea that there is a viable continuity, a chain of living, so to speak, which reinforces, reinvigorates and restrengthens the pleasant plausibility of human existence, and makes a metaphorical construct into a sensible reality, is a reassuring one. Though this occasion will soon pass out of our ken, at

least for this brief moment, let us contemplate the central mystery of renewal.

At the time of this recording, all of the performers were members of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Psalm of These Days is a cycle of five works for different configurations of voices and instrument, written between 1976 and 1980. *Psalm of These Days* owes a considerable amount to an impressionistic reading of William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the individual segments of the cycle, there is an attempt to portray various religious postures, attitudes, and characterizations in an objective and clinical manner, without necessarily abandoning the assumption of belief.

Psalm of These Days II was written in 1976–77 for the extraordinary talents of the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble of San Diego. This dedicated bunch had earlier presented the composer with a lexicon-catalogue of vocal sounds developed in their research sessions at the Center for Music Experiment (University of California at San Diego). The composition written for them is an attempt to make meaningful use of the group’s adventuresome character.

This segment of the cycle describes as a central guiding metaphor the effort being made by a computer, using the most rational of analytical procedures, to progress toward spiritual enlightenment. Using Psalm 131 as phonemic material, *Psalm of These Days II* acts as a bridge to *Psalm of These Days III*, also heard on this disc.

Psalm 131 (David professeth his humility)

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever.

In the third and centerpiece of the cycle, *Psalm of These Days III*, expert instrumentalists are called on to sing as well as to play.

It has been asserted that the condition most characteristic of the age in which we live is paranoia. Without the constraints traditionally imposed by institutional religion and/or the agencies of social organization, the use of guilt mechanisms to guard and guide the psyche's development has been effectively neutralized. As Brecht and Weill suggest in *Mahagonny*, something is missing in societies where anything goes and everything is allowed. In the absence of this something, 'voices' appear to occupy the vacuum created. These 'voices,' raging and mumbling, are the result of our own energies run amok in search of significance.

Psalm of These Days III uses lines from Psalm 2:

Mvmnt. I: Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?

Mvmnt. II: Let us break their band as under and cast away their cords from us.

Mvmnt. III: Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling

Dream Thing On Biblical Episodes is an extended work written in Mexico in 1970 immediately after the death of the composer's father and dedicated to his memory. It is scored for female chorus a cappella and several soloists. The compositional conceit was that each individual choral voice would have some solo exposure within the boundaries of the work.

Dream Thing is a technically demanding and rhythmically complicated essay. In several passages (one of which is in the opening section), there is an impression of several juxtaposed musical speeds—a sort of layered temporal effect. There are several improvisatory and strategically located special vocal effects: whispers, microtonal waverings, unusual approaches to certain consonances, a variety of vibratos, and some bluesy patches. The work concludes in a spirit of positive renewal, a fitting close to the profound inquires raised by the text:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done and there is no new thing under the sun—Ecclesiastes 1:9

OSANNA

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream—Jeremiah 23:28

Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh thy nakedness shall be uncovered—Isaiah 47:2

I have dreamed a dream and there is none that can interpret it—Genesis 41:15

The Lord doth make thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell—Numbers 5:21

I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me—Daniel 4:5

They pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and great toes—Judges 1:6

How long will ye vex my soul—Job 19:2

Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?—Isaiah 56:8

I am weary with holding in—Jeremiah 6:11

Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me know wisdom—Psalm 51:6

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him—Psalm 126:6

—Program notes by Ronald Byrnside and Milton Quince

Edwin London's music, sometimes literary or sacred, often theatrical, and at times humorous, is the product of his broad experience in diverse styles. London has been a major figure in the field of new music for over forty years. Described as a "champion of new American music" he has formed two highly acclaimed ensembles: Ineluctable Modality, a new music choral ensemble, in 1968, and the award winning Cleveland Chamber Symphony in 1980. As a composer, conductor, teacher, administrator, and persuasive advocate for the value of music as civilizing force, his influence has been extraordinary.

Born in Philadelphia in 1929, he began his career, with characteristic disregard for rigid musical categories, as a horn player in both symphony orchestra and the Oscar Pettiford jazz band. Everything London has done in his long career has reflected his ability to move easily between the worlds of "concert hall" and "popular" music—with occasional stops at places in between.

London majored in French horn at the Oberlin Conservatory (B.M., 1952) studying with Martin Morris, and received his Ph.D. in composition from the University of Iowa in 1961. His major teacher there was the composer-pedagogue Philip Greeley Clapp, whom he credits as a decisive influence on his own musical career. In the mid-1950s he studied under Gunther Schuller at the Manhattan School of Music. His teachers of composition include Darius Milhaud and Luigi Dallapiccola; he also studied conducting with Jonel Perlea and Izler Solomon.

In 1956–57 he was composer-conductor for the Toledo-/Antioch Shakespeare and Lyric Theater Festivals and later toured as a professional horn player and made musical arrangements for the Armando Trovajoli Orchestra in Rome. He taught at Smith College from 1960 to 1968 and then spent ten years on the faculty at the University of Illinois. He also served (1972–73) as visiting professor at the University of California at San Diego. In 1978 he was named chairman of the music department at Cleveland State University.

His programs with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony have reflected an openness to all sorts of varied musical styles. Far from grinding any single stylistic ax, they have included new music of all genres, from the most conservative to the most wildly avant-garde.

He has earned three times the ASCAP/John S. Edwards Award for "strongest commitment to American Music," as well as the Laurel Leaf Award from the American Composers Alliance and the American Music Center's Letter of Distinction for Service to American Music. As a composer, London is recipient of numerous awards, including those from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Ohio Arts Council, ASCAP, Meet The Composer consortium, and others.

London's well-known compositions include *In Heinrich's Shoes* (1985), *Portraits of Three Ladies (American)* (1967), *Death of Lincoln* (1973–88), *Jove's Nectar* (1995), *Peter Quince at the Clavier* (1987), and *Before the World Was Made* (1994).

Production Notes

Publishing:

All works published by Henmar Press except *Dream Thing On Biblical Episodes*, Gunmar Press (ASCAP)

Originally released on Ubres 302:

Day of Desolation: Recorded in concert, Piaristenkirche, Vienna, July 1973. Engineered by Franz Moffat.

Dream Thing On Biblical Episodes: Recorded in Rutgers Presbyterian Church, New York City. Engineered by Marc Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz, June 1972.

Originally released on CRI SD 470:

Brass Quintet: Recorded by George Siepol, Cleveland, August 1981. Additional engineering by William Cavanaugh. All of the performers are members of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Psalms of These Days II: Recorded by Paul Tydelski in San Diego, June 1981.

Both recordings were produced by Edwin London. These original recordings were made possible by a grant from the Graduate College of Cleveland State University.

Originally released on CRI SD 405:

Psalms of These Days III: Recorded by Jim Wimsatt and Rex Anderson in the Krannert Center, University of Illinois, July 1978. Produced by Carter Harman. This original recording was made possible by a grant from the University of Illinois.

Digitally mastered by Dawn Frank, engineer, at Sony Music Studios, NYC.