

NWCR885

# Eleanor Cory

## *Of Mere Being*



- Visions* for six players (1998) ..... (18:53)
- I. .... (6:14)
  - II. .... (6:18)
  - III. .... (6:12)
- St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble: Susan Rotholz, flute; William Blount, clarinet; William Purvis, French horn; Eriko Sato, violin; Louise Schulman, viola; Daire Fitzgerald, cello
- Play Within a Play* for piano (1996) ..... (13:45)  
Margaret Kampmeier, piano
  - Of Mere Being* for chorus and brass quintet (1987/rev. 1997) ..... (6:34)  
The New York Virtuoso Singers; Harold Rosenbaum, conductor; Jack Allen Sutte, trumpet; Kevin Cobb, trumpet; William Purvis, French horn; Giles Bernard, trombone; Raymond Stewart, tuba; Joan Peterson Krause, soprano solo
  - Interviews* for viola and piano (1996) ..... (10:21)  
Louise Schulman, viola; Margaret Kampmeier, piano
  - Bouquet* for eight players (1999) ..... (15:47)
  - I – Adagio ..... (6:33)
  - II – Grave ..... (4:05)
  - III – Vivace ..... (5:01)
- New York New Music Ensemble: Jayn Rosenfeld, flute; Jean Kopperud, clarinet; William Purvis, French horn; Kevin Cobb, trumpet; Frank Cassara, percussion; Steven Gosling, piano; Linda Quan, violin; Christopher Finckel, cello; Jeffrey Milarsky, conductor

Total playing time: 65:54

© & © 2001 Composers Recordings, Inc.  
© 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

## Notes

This is an era of pluralism, with many different musical languages vying for the attention of both creators and listeners. A composer today has no single “common language” bequeathed to her or him, but must choose between competing idioms, even if that choice simply means sticking with the style of one’s predecessors. The plethora of information, and the power of media to disperse it, makes it impossible to ignore the enlarged aesthetic field on which music plays today.

For some composers, the response is to hunker down, to choose a single expressive mode and hang tough. For others, eclecticism rules, in a cornucopia of quasi-random, postmodern profusion. And then there is a middle way (*not* middle-of-the-road), the way of synthesis. Composers of this ilk draw on multiple sources, but their aim is to meld them, to create a seamless blend of elements, where the music can glide continuously over an expressive/stylistic spectrum.

Eleanor Cory is such a synthesist. Her music is the result of intensive investigation of her options and the concomitant amassing of real technique to accomplish any expressive goal she sets. From work to work, despite their distinct personalities, certain common concerns and interests assert themselves. They include:

*A love of counterpoint.* Cory creates music from setting lines in motion. A musical idea is a thread for her, which weaves and

braids with other such ideas to create the tapestry of a piece. At times the lines can be angularly expressive, at others arpeggiated, and often, they coalesce into pulsating sixteenth-note textures of repeated notes.

*A grasp on a wide range of harmonic stances.* Cory’s roots are in the modernist classical tradition (a master of which, Charles Wuorinen, was one of her teachers), but these works show a natural feel for harmonic languages that range from the highly chromatic (often the starting point of these works), to the modal (both octatonic and church modes, as one hears in the solo piano work), to the diatonic, and to jazz harmony (for example, *Bouquet*). The composer also studied with a true American maverick, Meyer Kupferman, whose music blends jazz with serialist elements, so she is reinventing a worthy tradition here. .

*An impulse to blend languages and aesthetics.* This is the element of synthesis mentioned above. Even when a music arises with strong associations, like certain jazzy moments in these pieces, it may be a surprise, but it is a welcome one, well prepared. This music never feels like a pastiche of elements. One senses the connections between different languages, as they often share some element—motivic or harmonic—that links them beneath the surface.

Looking at the specific works on this disc, the title of the composer's 1996 *Play Within a Play* refers to the piece's motivating idea, which in turn guides its structure. The music consists of one style that introduces and concludes the piece (more "abstract," as Cory describes it), and "frames" a more spacious and consonant music, in theme and variations form. That enclosed section is analogous to the play which occurs within *Hamlet*, highly stylized, yet which by its conclusion has set the action in the drama in a new light. Similarly, the return of the framing musical materials feels different because of what has preceded them in the variations. Yet equally striking to the listener is how the music "within" the piece alludes so effortlessly and fluently to American jazz. The lyrical chorale of the theme and its pensive offshoots suggest Bill Evans, and the spiky runs of Bud Powell.

The 1997 *Of Mere Being* is notable for the sound of its forces, chorus with brass quintet. Cory treats the two as equal partners in dialogue, presenting a joint interpretation of the text by Wallace Stevens. The composer found certain aspects of the poem ripe for musical treatment and extension, such as in the section which creates an entire accompaniment out of the alternation of "happy/unhappy." Its great coup occurs about two thirds of the way through the piece, when brass and voices join in the same material, rapid tremolos between pairs of notes, creating a brilliant texture that evokes the shine of the bird's "fire-fangled feathers."

*Interviews* for viola and piano (1996) was conceived as a dialogue between the two instruments. The composer sees the opening gesture of the work as the viola attempting to interview the piano. The latter is standoffish; its response is self-contained, tentative, in a different gestural and harmonic realm. But over time the two instruments come more and more into mutual play, their themes and accompaniments more integrated, and their expressiveness more overt. There is a similar progression in the work's harmonic vocabulary. Its first full section is made up of racing lines, structured by the octatonic scale, one of the most symmetric of all musical structures. This is suddenly confronted by an extremely diatonic passage whose openness of sound is particularly American. From these two poles a synthesis gradually emerges, i.e. a more impressionistic, modal music, vaguely Debussian, grounded in the church modes, most notably the Phrygian (which evolves naturally from the octatonic with just a couple of intervallic shifts). The music grows in ardor, culminating in an impassioned viola cadenza, leading to a gentle coda which brings the interview to an end.

1998 and 1999 brought two large pieces into Cory's catalogue, *Visions* and *Bouquet*. The former is in three movements, and each is distinguished by a signature texture. The highly contrapuntal first movement develops a series of flowing lines into an increasingly intricate sonic fabric, so that the music becomes river-like. At the same time, a pulsating texture emerges which abstracts the harmonic basis of the contrapuntal materials into a dramatically throbbing climax. The second movement is dominated by a gently obsessive idea—a single repeated flute pitch, almost like the cry of a lone bird in the woods. The final movement is notable for its ingenious accompaniment, consisting of isolated notes whose asymmetric arrangement begins to create its own sort of quirky irregularity, *klangfarben* that swings. And in a gesture which draws a connection from the beginning of the work to its end, the pulsating texture of the first movement fills in the gaps of the pointillistic accompaniment to conclude the movement.

*Bouquet* shares with its counterpart a three-movement form, and some similarities of tone and gesture. It is more orchestral, though, in both its sound and argument. Cory has chosen a pair

of instruments from each of the basic instrumental groups: strings, winds, brass, and percussion (including piano). The work's title derives from the composer's interpretation (after the fact) of the first movement's form. Eleven motivic "seeds" engender lines which grow and blossom; they are bound together by the rippling arpeggios of the piano and percussion. The second movement is a nocturne, a dream landscape strewn with isolated shards of sound that slowly coalesce into more concerted passages by the end. And the third movement also grows by coalescence. What is first a patchwork of tiny, isolated, skittering fragments becomes ever more continuous, even overtly jazzy before being engulfed by the composer's trademark pulsation-texture at the end.

This is music with integrity, which searches for real expression, does not fear diversity, and does not pander. It is the fruit of an ongoing sustained journey of personal exploration, open-minded and rigorous.

—Robert Carl

**Eleanor Cory's** music has been recognized by awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, Yale University, and the MacDowell Colony. She has received an American Composers Alliance Recording Award, as well as prizes from the Hollybush and Kucyna International Competitions, the Music of Changes, Davenport and the New Jersey Guild of Composers Competitions.

Cory's music is recorded on CRI (*ACA Recording Award Winners* [CRI SD 459]), *The Music of Eleanor Cory & Edward Cohen* [CRI SD 542], *Eleanor Cory & Ellen Taaffe Zwilich—American Masters Series* [CRI CD 621]), as well as the Capstone, Soundspells, and Advance labels. Her publishers are C.F. Peters, the Association for the Promotion of New Music, Soundspells Productions, and the American Composers Alliance.

Performances and commissions of her work include those by the New Jersey Symphony (Hugh Wolf), Hudson Valley Philharmonic (JoAnn Falletta), Chamber Symphony of Princeton, Colonial Symphony, St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, League-ISCN, Washington Square Contemporary Music Series, Guild of Composers, Composers Concordance, Friends and Enemies of New Music, Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players, Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago (Ralph Shapey), New York Camerata, Quintet of the Americas, Gregg Smith Singers, Eastman Chorale, Alea III, Earplay, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Cygnus Ensemble, members of Speculum Musicae, and soloists Ursula Oppens, Aleck Karis, Margaret Kampmeier, Christopher Oldfather, Gregory Fulkerson, Jayn Rosenfeld, Sue Ann Kahn, Patricia Spencer, Chris Finckel, David Holzman, Louise Schulman, and Marcia Eckert.

Born 1943 in Englewood, New Jersey, Cory studied at Sarah Lawrence College, Harvard University, New England Conservatory, and Columbia University. Her composition teachers include Charles Wuorinen, Chou Wen-chung, Bülent Arel, and Meyer Kupferman. Cory teaches at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY, and has taught at Yale University, Baruch College, Manhattan School of Music, Sarah Lawrence College, Brooklyn College, and The New School for Social Research.

Pianist **Margaret Kampmeier** is active as a soloist, chamber musician, orchestral keyboardist, and teacher of piano. She has performed throughout the United States and in Canada, Mexico, Europe, and Asia, and has recorded for Centaur, CRI, Koch, Nonesuch, and Bridge Records. Kampmeier is a founding member of the Naumburg award-winning New Millennium

Ensemble and performs regularly with numerous other New York ensembles such as the Orchestra of St. Luke's and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. A dedicated educator, Kampmeier teaches at Princeton University, has presented forums on the music of women composers and contemporary techniques, and has performed numerous concerts for young people throughout the United States. Highlights of past seasons include performances with the Kronos Quartet at the Kennedy Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music, a concerto and solo recital for Saarland Radio in Germany, and numerous educational concerts sponsored by the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society. Kampmeier holds masters and doctoral degrees from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where she studied with pianist Gilbert Kalish. She earned her bachelor's degree at the Eastman School of Music.

A native of Rochester, New York, she resides in New York City with her husband, composer Ed Harsh and their son Andrew.

Violist **Louise Schulman** has been a member and principal violist of the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble since its inception in 1974 and has served as the Ensemble's associate music director for twenty seasons. She also performs on a variety of historical instruments. Her solo recordings include Telemann and Vivaldi concerti for both viola and viola d'amore. Schulman can be heard on many recordings for the Music Masters label. Performances and recordings with other ensembles include the Waverly Consort, Philomel, Folger Consort, Strathmere Ensemble, Armstrong Chamber Concerts, Long Island Baroque Ensemble, and Group for Contemporary Music, as well as appearances as principal violist with the Berkshire Opera and Little Orchestra Society. Since 1975, Schulman has been on the performing and coaching staff of the Composers Conference and Chamber Music Center. She plays on a viola made by Zanetto da Montichiario, ca. 1520.

For twenty-six years, the **New York New Music Ensemble** has set the standard for performance of contemporary chamber music. The *American Record Guide* has hailed their "virtuosity, theatricality, and commitment." Featured on eleven CDs to date, they have performed in venues from Avery Fisher Hall and the Kennedy Center to the Long Beach California SummerArts Festival. Recent programs include a retrospective Chamber Music of the Century and a sixtieth birthday celebration for Charles Wuorinen, who has written chamber works for the Ensemble.

Members in the Ensemble divide their time between new music (ISCM, Ensemble 21, Speculum Musicae); traditional and "early" music (the New York Philharmonic, the Manhattan String Quartet, the Handel and Haydn Society, the Princeton Chamber Symphony); and teaching (Vassar, Princeton, Juilliard, C.W. Post). They also perform as soloists with a large variety of organizations. This rich professional mixing con-

tributes to the players' individual and collective understanding of ensemble-playing, intonation, and interpretation, and their openness to all types of repertoire.

The **New York Virtuoso Singers** (NYVS) is a sixteen-member choral ensemble that performs music of all periods with emphasis on commissioning, performing, and recording the music of American composers. Founded by Harold Rosenbaum in 1988, the ensemble was the first guest chorus to perform in Tanglewood Music Center's annual Festival of Contemporary Music in 1993. NYVS has twice received the prestigious ASCAP-Chorus America "Award for Adventure-some Programming of Contemporary Music" and has been given Chorus America's "American Choral Works Performance Award." The ensemble has released several recordings, including CRI CD 615 *To Orpheus* and CRI CD 799 *The Music of Leo Kraft*. Their most recent effort, a CD containing Andrew Imbrie's *Requiem*, was a Grammy Award finalist. The NYVS have commissioned works by composers including Michael Gordon, David Winkler, George Tsontakis, and Tristan Keuris and have premiered works by Luciano Berio, John Harbison, Louis Andriessen, and Arvo Pärt.

Through his wide range of conducting activities, **Harold Rosenbaum** remains an influential force on the American choral music scene. He and his choirs have collaborated with the American Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Rosenbaum has trained choirs for Sir Charles Mackerras, Robert Spano, James Conlon, Lukas Foss, Leon Botstein, Anthony Aibel, George Rothman, and Peter Schickele. He is professor of music and director of choirs at SUNY Buffalo.

The **St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble**, acclaimed worldwide for its mastery of a diverse repertoire spanning the Baroque to the contemporary, is New York's preeminent chamber group. Founded in 1974, the Ensemble's programs include chamber works, music for chamber orchestra, chamber operas, and premiere performances of contemporary works. The Ensemble currently consists of twenty-one virtuoso artists who perform nationally and internationally. Each season the Chamber Ensemble performs three major series in New York: The Signature Series, presented at both Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall and at the Brooklyn Museum of Art; Second Helpings, performed at the Dia Center for the Arts in Chelsea; and Masters of the Baroque festival presented by New York's Congregation Emanu-El. Members of the Ensemble form the artistic nucleus of the larger Orchestra of St. Luke's and are engaged in all of the activities of Orchestra, including the annual series at Carnegie Hall, a summer residency at the Caramoor International Music Festival, St. Luke's arts education programs, touring and residencies, recordings, and special projects.

---

## Production Notes

All works published by the Association for the Promotion of New Music (BMI)

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman

Editing assistant: Jeanne Velonis

*Bouquet* recorded February 2, 2001, in Theater C of the Performing Arts Center, SUNY Purchase, New York. Assistant engineer: Jeanne Velonis

*Play Within a Play* and *Interviews* recorded October 23, 1999, in the Purchase College Conservatory of Music Recital Hall, Purchase, New York. Assistant engineer: Jeanne Velonis

*Of Mere Being* recorded November 11, 1997, at Calvary & St. George's Church, New York City. Assistant engineers: Jeanne Velonis and His-Ling Chiang

*Visions* recorded September 2, 198, in the Purchase College Conservatory of Music Recital Hall, Purchase, New York. Assistant engineer: Jeanne Velonis

Music score photographs by John J. Hill

This recording has been made possible through the generous support of the PSC- CUNY Research Foundation, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

CRI Executive director: John G. Schultz