

ELLIS KOHS**SYMPHONY No. 1**

The Vienna Orchestra

F. CHARLES ADLER, Conducting

TOM SCOTT**BINORIE VARIATIONS HORNPIPE and CHANTEY**

The Vienna Orchestra

F. CHARLES ADLER, Conducting

Ellis Kohs was born in Chicago in 1916, and studied at the Institute of Musical Art, Harvard University, and at the University of Chicago where he received his Masters Degree. A pupil of Bernard Wagenaar and Walter Piston in composition, he held the Juilliard Fellowship and the Ditson Post War Fellowship. He has taught at the University of Wisconsin and is at present on the faculty of the University of Southern California.

The Symphony No. 1 marks an important stage in the young composer's evolution. In it one finds the curious tension and drama characteristic of this writer, and which seem to stem from the contrapuntal chromaticism that has ever been a part of Kohs' music. This writing method is here expanded to a new magnitude, both expressively and technically.

The style and structure owe little to current formulas, though the texture is predominantly dissonant, with only occasional tonal centers. Yet within his dissonance there is a method flow and harmonic logic everywhere apparent; in the second movement, and in parts of the third there is too a growing power in the matter of organic development, which marks a big advance on his earlier pieces.

Tom Scott, whose Hornpipe and Chantey (1943) and Binorie Variations (1953) are here recorded, is a lavishly gifted lyric composer, and his very personal style – which never moves too far away from the bone of folksong – is an immediately appealing one to audiences.

Scott (b. Kentucky, 1912, d. New York 1961) was a music major from the University there, and hitchhiked weekly from Lexington to Louisville in order to take lessons in piano with Dwight Anderson. This mode of travel seemed characteristic of Tom's earlier years, for he subsequently thumbed a ride to New York to work in composition with Harrison Kerr. More composition lessons with George Antheil, and singing lessons too were part of the picture in the years around 1940, and Scott's fine bass-baritone voice soon landed him a job in the Fred Waring chorus from whence he graduated into the dual career of expert arranger of folk music and concert balladeer.

Scott would tell you whimsically that he had never been able to make a decision in crucial moments of his life; yet in retrospect, at each crossroad, the die has been consistently cast toward the harder, longer road of serious music and the symphonic career.

The lucrative dates as popular balladeer at the Rainbow Room and the Cotillion Room, or the even more enviable career as top-flight arranger were ultimately cast aside in favor of the unpredictable, solitary pursuit of a personal esthetic and a personal expression.

Like most romantic-lyric composers of the present day, Tom Scott did not find the standardized modern techniques quite suited to his own materials, and was faced with the imposing problem of finding his own organic principle or form.

This he did not completely solve, yet in the two works on this disc – ten years apart in date, one sees the evolution from the conventional flourish of external orchestral virtuosity to a finer-boned concept of idea and its instrumentation as simultaneous thought.

The Binorie Variations (named after a Scottish ballad) having been taken from a film score (“Summer Sequence,” produced by Joseph Slevin) naturally lack the tautness of an abstract musical form; yet there is a condensation of thematic ideas that is an important sign post on this composer’s road.

— P. GLANVILLE-HICKS

(Original notes from CRI LP jacket)