

**HERMAN BERLINSKI**

*Symphonic Visions for Orchestra*

**RICHARD KORN, conducting The Ashai Orchestra of Tokyo**

Sinfonia No. I                      *Andante Molto Pesante*

“They crush Thy people, O Lord . . .  
And they say: ‘The Lord will not see’.”  
PSALM 94

Sinfonia No. II                      *Adagio Molto Espressivo*

“I beheld the earth,  
And, lo it was waste and void  
And the heavens, and they had no light.”  
JEREMIAH

Sinfonia No. III                      *Con Impeto - Tempo di Marcia*

“We have heard a voice of trembling,  
Of fear, and not of peace.”  
JEREMIAH

Sinfonia No. IV                      *Adagio Molto Sostenuto*

“For lo the winter is past  
The rain is over and gone  
The flower appears on the earth,  
The time of singing is come.”  
SONG OF SONGS

HERMAN BERLINSKI is a composer with a philosophy. He is not among those creative workers who view the arts as a phenomenon removed from the world of social and spiritual values. Rather, in the course of his musical career, he has managed to experience most of the predominant, although sometimes contradictory, manifestations of twentieth century music and to orient them to a conscious core of personal, philosophical beliefs. Regarding these beliefs and their relationship to his work, the Symphonic Visions, Berlinski has this to say:

“Music is communication and communion.

“There are many kinds of communication and communion: the message from father to son; from leader to nation; from prophet to people; from the lonesome to whomever wants to listen; from the worried soul to other worried ones.

“This is the century of mass destruction, of gas chambers, and the atomic bomb. Fear, sleeplessness, and melancholy have become the trademarks of our “displaced minds.” Some people try to flee into the realm of hectic excitement or irresponsibility – others, among them many creative artists, act toward themselves in no other way than does the psychiatrist toward his patient. The projection of our own fears and worries, displaying and sharing them with those next to us, seems to alleviate our own suffering, making us realize that, although we are individuals, we are also part of a mass of people with similar emotions.

“The inclusion of sorrow and fear in the field of musical expression does not mean that one has to assume a continuously prophetic attitude with its implicit warning of approaching doom. Facing and including in music the realities surrounding us leaves us just at the point where the patient has told the doctor why and what he fears, which in itself will not cure him.

“In the realistic portrayal of a world in disorder, the artist, at least, must have a vision of order. His art will otherwise become as chaotic as the world around and within himself. But the urge for mental organization and for order cannot be satisfied by any complicated, philosophical equation. The

answers must be simple and they must be unsophisticated, because truth and simplicity seem to be closely related in our minds.

“The Bible has again become an island of safety which, while it often remains deserted and unused, offers a constant source of shelter. It provides a vantage point from which the surrounding world presents itself in a new and orderly fashion. The senseless becomes acceptable, and despair is supplanted by hope and the vision of peace.

“No straight answers are given by the Bible. The Bible gives more. It gives us visions, and the acceptance of them is an art of faith; as such, beyond logical explanation.

“To recreate such visions and to transmit them through the medium of sound is the goal of many people. Very few achieve it. But setting the goal is in itself an act of faith. Without this, the composer of the *Symphonic Visions* would find no good purpose in his creative efforts.”

Berlinski's preoccupation with the Bible is apparent throughout the *Symphonic Visions* for Orchestra. Each section of the score is preceded with an apposite passage from the Bible. The first movement, *Sinfonia No. I*, is characterized by crushing strokes from the full orchestra, relating to the quotation: “They crush Thy people, O Lord ...” *Sinfonia No. II* limits its orchestral resources to strings, woodwinds (generally solo) and timpani. The opening mood is evocative of desolation, following the words: “I beheld the earth, and, lo it was waste and void *Sinfonia No. III* emphasizes the turbulent implications of a passage from Jeremiah: “We have heard a voice . . . of fear, and not of peace.” Its thematic material is announced by a trumpet fanfare and, subsequently, solo tuba. *Sinfonia No. IV* is more peaceful in nature, as befits the words: “For lo the winter is past/ The rain is over and gone/ The flower appears on the earth . . .” Opening portions are scored lightly, with strings predominating; gradually, the movement works up to a climax for full orchestra.

*about the composer*

HERMAN BERLINSKI was born in Leipzig on August 18, 1910. His parents were of Polish origin. His studies were pursued at the Leipzig Conservatory, where he worked with Siegfried Karg-Elert. At the Ecole Normale de Musique (Paris), he studied with Nadia Boulanger, and during that period, he was associated with the group called "La jeune France", which included Daniel Lesur and Olivier Messiaen. In the United States, he has studied at the Seminary College of Jewish Music (New York), and his compositions since arrival in this country have been marked by religious influences, many of them deriving their content from devotional biblical sources and others being composed directly for the Hebrew Liturgy.

**EDWIN GERCHEFSKI**

*Saugatuck Suite*

**F. CHARLES ADLER, conducting The Vienna Orchestra**

THE SAUGATUCK SUITE has undergone a number of transformations since it was first performed in London as a set of preludes for piano. The orchestral version (under the title "Save the Saugatuck" Symphony) was subsequently played over the CBS network by Howard Barlow. A band arrangement of the last Prelude won the 1939 New York World's Fair band music competition and later was named Guadalcanal Fantasy by the Marine Corps and featured over two networks on the U.S. Marine Corps' birthday celebration. On September 12, 1938, the following article appeared in TIME Magazine:

"With the Wabash running a close second, the most musically celebrated of U.S. rivers is probably the misnamed Swanee. But during the past year suburban Connecticut's sluggish Saugatuck has meandered into the national consciousness. Last March the arty town of Westport, on its banks, got into an argument with itself about whether or not to become "the U.S. Salzburg" (TIME, March 28). And last year Bridgeport Hydraulic Co., which supplies water to a large part of southwestern Connecticut, proposed to dam the Saugatuck, throwing it completely out of kilter. Local patriots rose to the defense of their river, with "Save the Saugatuck" their watchword. To defend groves threatened by the utility's axmen, women residents of the valley threatened to lash themselves to the trees. While Writers Stuart Chase and Deems Taylor protested, Fiddler Jaseha Heifetz gave a "Save the Saugatuck" concert, devoted its proceeds ID the cause.

Among the most fervent saviors of the Saugatuck is busy-headed Composer Edwin Gerschefski, who lives with his wife at Meriden, Conn., hard by the threatened river. Broadcast last week on Conductor Howard Barlow's CBS "Everybody's Music" program was Composer Gerschefski's contribution to the great Connecticut cause: a "Save the Saugatuck" Symphony. Subtitles of the flashily orchestrated symphony's four rather noisy, movements: 1) Natural Ruggedness; 2) Robot Controlled Precision without Escape; 3) Natural Flow; 4) Dynamite Accomplished Perversion and Artificiality of Every Description".

*about the composer*

EDWIN GERSCHEFSKI, American pianist and composer, is Dean of the Converse College School of Music. Born June 10, 1909, his training was accomplished both in Europe and in the United States. Upon graduation from Yale University in 1931 (Ph. B. and Mus. B.) he became the first recipient of the Charles H. Ditson fellowship for study abroad. He spent two years in London studying piano with Tobias Matthay and composition with Paul Corder at the Royal Academy. In 1935 he returned to Europe for study with Artur Schnabel at Lake Como, and upon his return to America he worked with Joseph Schillinger, teacher of George Gershwin and Oscar Levant.

**ESTHER WILLIAMSON BALLOU**

*Prelude and Allegro*

For Piano and String Orchestra

**F. CHARLES ADLER, conducting The Vienna Orchestra**

THE PRELUDE AND ALLEGRO, rather than beginning with its solo instrument, opens with an extended introductory statement, contrapuntal in nature, for strings alone. The style is diatonic, with touches of passing dissonance. At a mid-point in the Prelude, the solo piano enters with a chordal melody, unaccompanied by the strings. After a brief extension of this section into a triplet figuration, the strings enter antiphonally once more. A brief cadenza-like passage for piano leads directly to the Allegro.

In this movement, the character of the music becomes more angular and spirited. The piano at first continues to play antiphonally. Then, joining forces with the orchestra, it assumes a concertante character, opposing quick, running passages to the more fluid accompaniment of the strings. Throughout the Allegro, the rhythms are maintained in their mood of light-heartedness. At its end, while the strings restate the movement's opening material, the piano ornaments the texture with octave and trill passages. These continue to the end.

*about the composer*

ESTHER WILLIAMSON BALLOU was born in Elmira, New York. She attended Bennington College, Mills College, and the Juilliard graduate school; her degrees include both B.A. and M.A. Upon completion of her work at Juilliard, she was appointed to the faculty of that school, in which capacity she served for several years. Her teachers in composition were Otto Luening, Bernard Wagenaar, and Wallingford Riegger. For two years, she held a MacDowell Colony fellowship and, at the Bennington Composers' Conference, she was a staff member for a period of four years. At present, she is teaching in the Catholic University College Preparatory Department and Bethesda Music and Arts.

—Notes by Lester Trimble

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*