

## **WALLINGFORD RIEGGER:**

### ***Romanza – Music for Orchestra***

**Alfredo Antonini conducting the Orchestra of the  
“Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia-Roma”**

### ***Dance Rhythms***

**Alfredo Antonini conducting the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra**

THIS RELEASE is but further evidence of the growing and gratifying tendency of recent years to recognize Wallingford Riegger as one of the leading and most influential figures in twentieth century American composition, in fact as the dean of American composers. Herbert Elwell, music critic of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, said it in April, 1956: “I am coming more and more to the conclusion that it is Riegger who has been the real leader and pathfinder in contemporary American music . . . not only a master of his craft but in some ways a prophet and a seer.” In the same month, in *Musical America*, Robert Sabin wrote: “I firmly believe that his work will outlast that of many an American composer who has enjoyed far greater momentary fame.”

Riegger was born in Albany, Georgia, on April 29, 1885. Both his parents were amateur musicians and were determined to encourage their children in musical study. When the family moved to New York in 1900, the young Wallingford was enrolled at the Institute of Musical Art where he studied the cello and composition. Graduating from there in 1907 Riegger then went to Germany to study at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin with Max Bruch. In 1915-1916 he conducted opera in Würzburg and Königsberg and the following season he led the Blüthner Orchestra in Berlin. Since his return to the United States in 1917, he has been active in many phases of our musical life. As instructor he has taught at Drake University, Ithaca University, Institute of Musical Art, Teachers College of Columbia University, the New School for Social Research, the Metropolitan Music School in New York and Northwestern University. He has served in an advisory capacity in connection with New Music Recordings, New Music Publications and other similar organizations and he is a past President of the American section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. His own works have been heard in most of our principal cities as well as in many of the leading European musical capitals.

His earliest music which has survived dates from the years when he was teaching at Drake University (1918-1922) and reflects the conservative musical idiom in which he grew up. Peggy Glanville-Hicks points out that the “Study in Sonority” (1927) for ten violins (or any multiple of ten) seems to be the turning-point in Riegger’s output. The title alone gives an indication of the direction Riegger’s interests were taking. Too, after a detailed study of the music of Schönberg, Riegger was ready to use the twelve-tone system but in an independent, personal way which never made him its slave. In the 1930’s he became associated with the leaders of the Modern Dance movement and composed music for Tamiris, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey and Anna Sokolow, and in 1933 he served for a time as musical director of the dance division of the Federal Theatre Project. In the 1940’s he composed three symphonies, the Third, commissioned by the Alice M. Ditson Fund, winning the New York Music Critics’ Circle award as the best new symphonic work by an American composer introduced to New York during the 1947-48 season. Recently (1957) he completed his Fourth Symphony and he is about to begin his Fifth. In the words of Miss Glanville-Hicks, Riegger’s recent work shows “a strong, virile and wholly original use of dissonance and its governing laws that retains all the stability of his early classical inheritance while venturing far into new worlds of atonal, polytonal and polyrhythmic theory and practice.”

In December, 1953, Riegger completed a "Suite for Younger Orchestras," Opus 56, which was commissioned by and dedicated to the Dalton School in New York. The composer writes: "When I wrote these little pieces my objectives were that they should be melodious, short, varied, and above all, not too difficult for the players of the average school orchestra. Furthermore, they were written in such a way as to make it possible to perform them with any instrumental combination available." The fourth of the Suite's live movements, a Lullaby, was later expanded by the composer in a version for strings as his Opus 56a and renamed "Romanza" because the new version "would seem to hint at something other than childlike innocence."

Dating from about the same time as the "Suite for Younger Orchestras" Riegger's "Dance Rhythms" would seem to be a backward glance at the music he wrote for the dance groups with which he was associated in the '30's. After a 1955 performance in Cincinnati Eleanor Bell wrote in the *Cincinnati Post*: "As in nearly all of Mr. Riegger's works, there was a likable rough-and-readiness about the harmonic structure, and his rhythms had a distinctive flavor about them . . . Here the composer showed himself to be a gentleman of polish and style as well as agility in matters of instrumentation."

Like the other two works by Riegger included on this disc the "Music for Orchestra," Opus 50 (published in 1953) is a brief and stimulating work with imaginative flashes of color and rhythm.

#### **NORMAN CAZDEN:**

##### ***Three Ballads from the Catskills***

**Igor Buketoff conducting the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra**

NORMAN CAZDEN was born in New York City on September 23, 1914. He has studied at the Institute of Musical Art, Juilliard School of Music, Juilliard Graduate School, City College of New York and Harvard University. His chief mentors in composition have been Bernard Wagenaar at the Juilliard School and Walter Piston and Aaron Copland at Harvard. He received a Ph.D. in Musicology from Harvard in 1948. He has taught at Juilliard, Vassar College, the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, the University of Michigan and the University of Illinois. He now lives in Bridgeport, Connecticut, teaches and writes there and also in New York City.

Cazden's earliest published works are for piano solo, but in the last decade he has turned increasingly to orchestral composition. His interest in the folk music of New York State's Catskill Mountains is far from a casual one. He has spent many years traveling around the area and collecting its songs, which prove to be of unusual scope and beauty. He has written of his researches in the *New York Folklore Quarterly*, *Northern Junket*, and the *Journal of American Folklore*. His *Dances From Woodland* is a privately-printed collection of square-dances, tunes and calls and he is the collector and editor of the first comprehensive book of Catskill folk songs, *The Abelard Folksong Book*, published in the fall of 1957 by Abelard-Schuman Ltd., New York.

The *Three Ballads from the Catskills* for small orchestra is his Opus 52. It was completed in 1949 and scored originally for symphonic band. It was performed in 1948 at the Folk Festival of the Catskill Mountains in Phoenicia, New York; in 1950 by the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra at Ann Arbor; and in 1952 by the Springfield (Illinois) Symphony Orchestra. The scoring for small orchestra calls for flute, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, two trombones, tympani and strings.

Each of the three movements is based on a specific ballad tune and has a solo instrument:

- I. The Lass of Glenshee (viola solo).
- II. The Dens of Yarrow (cello solo).
- III. The Old Spotted Cow (violin solo).

Typical text stanzas from each ballad are printed in the score and are given here:

### **The Lass of Glenshee**

The lark may forget to sing in the morning,  
Bright Phoebe may forget to shine o'er the lea,  
But never will I, as long as I have my senses,  
Forget to be kind to the lass of Glenshee.

—*George Edwards*

### **The Dens of Yarrow**

Oh! mother dear, I had a dream,  
A dream of grief and sorrow:  
I dreamed I was gathering pretty heather bloom  
In the dewy, dewy dens of Yarrow.

—*George Edwards*

### **The Old Spotted Cow**

It is of a wealthy farmer, as you shall hear.  
A very wealthy farmer who lived in Yorkshire;  
He had horses, sheep and cattle, and many other things,  
And he had a man to work, and his name was John! —  
    Lol-di-dol, lol-di-dol,  
    Lol-di-doodle, doodle, dy-dee-o,  
    Whack! fall the ding, dang,  
    Doodle dinky day!

—*Etson Van Wagner*

## **JACOB AVSHALOMOV:**

### ***The Taking of T'ung Kuan***

**Igor Buketoff conducting the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra**

JACOB AVSHALOMOV was born on March 28, 1919, in Tsingtao, China. His father is the Siberian-born Russian-Jewish composer, Aaron Avshalomov, his mother a San Franciscan. Avshalomov's earliest musical studies, naturally enough, were with his father. In his youth he was active in many sports and during his 'teens he held the fancy-diving championship of North China. After working as a factory supervisor in Tientsin, Shanghai and Peiping for four years Avshalomov, in his spare time, assisted his father by working on scores and parts of his music. This confirmed him in his desire to make music his principal occupation, and when he arrived in the United States with his mother in December, 1937, he was resolved on the composer's travail. On the West Coast he studied for a brief but stimulating period with Ernst Toch; then he was in Portland, Oregon, for two years, at Reed College, playing in the Portland Junior Symphony Orchestra, and studying with Jacques GersHKovitch. Then came two years at the Eastman School of Music where Bernard Rogers made a profound impression upon him. During the war he served in Washington at the China desk of the O. S. S. and made the acquaintance of a double-compatriot, Vladimir Ussachevsky, who is also from China. From 1946 to 1954 he served on the music faculty of Columbia University and

conducted the university orchestra and chorus. He resigned from Columbia in June of 1954 to return to Portland as conductor of the Junior Symphony, a post which he still holds.

William Bergsma, in the *Bulletin of American Composers Alliance* (Volume V, Number 3), has written illuminatingly on “The Music of Jacob Avshalomov:” “Here, then, is the music of Avshalomov: lyric, harmonically rather uncomplicated, subtly and authentically aware of worlds which are not the usual ones; the vocal music – more than half his output – grasping the fascinating potentialities of the American language freely and with imagination. These are qualities native to him.”

“The Taking of T’ung Kuan” was composed in 1943, revised in 1947, and again revised in 1953. The title refers to the fall of T’ung Kuan Pass in 755 A.D., the year of the An-lu-shan Rebellion in China. The pass was vital to the defense of the ancient capital, Chang-an, where the court of the emperor Hsuan Tsung was located. During this period of the dawn of medieval European civilization, China had reached the noontide of her ripe culture; literature was the most highly developed of her arts and Li-Po her most respected poet. It was these lines from a poem by Li-Po which inspired Avshalomov:

“came the barbarian horde with the autumn;  
out went the army of the House of Han . . . ”

“The Taking of T’ung Kuan” was performed for the first time in November, 1953, in Detroit with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

In his article on Avshalomov, William Bergsma has written this illuminating analysis of the score: “The work, for large orchestra, starts violently with full winds and strings in a diminution of the main theme, which will be militantly proclaimed five bars later in four horns. The theme, a skipping quintuplet, outlines a kind of phrygian cadence. Underneath this shrilling, waiting for a held half-note, the trumpets and strings chatter in sixteenth notes, and the percussion (imaginative as ever in Avshalomov), with half-note triplets against twos or fives in quarters, increases the din. The battery at this point is suspended Chinese cymbal, assaulted with a tympani stick, bass drum rolled, and one drum of the tympani, hit in irregular alternation with a wooden stick and the regular tympani stick. This last is a very simple effect producing substantial wildness. The two percussion players between them employ ten different instruments in the course of this seven-minute piece, including claves as well as such stand-bys as tom-tom and tenor drums.

“The five-note theme, in various rhythmic changes, is a constant thing, saved from unbeatable monotony only by a careful change of mode at each re-appearance – first insisting on a tritone, next adding the upper two-scale tones to avoid it, next changing the mode so that the tritone appears in a new and unexpected relation to the phrase, which still keeps its characteristic melodic outline. It is skillful iteration; it has to be, because, a few melodic contrasts aside, it is the thematic meat of the piece.

“This brings out Avshalomov’s dramatic side. So constant a preoccupation with a small thematic morsel leads necessarily to a virtuoso use of scoring, together with constant new tempi and meters. The instruments are exploited with the kind of conscious virtuosity which can give each player something which is striking and idiomatic which is also easy to play.

“The most stunning of these varied tempo and meter changes is properly the last – *a tempo marziale*. 5/4, starting with bass-clarinets and B-Flat clarinet in fretful motion against held lower strings and cross-accented percussion. It builds, carefully held back, through strings, low brass, brilliant trumpets and trombones, growls again in low percussion and strings, building to an even shriller and more menacing version of the beginning, and ends with a resounding smash. It is a thrilling and effective piece. T’ung Kuan . . . has heroically fallen. Peace to its ashes.”

—Notes by MARTIN BOOKSPAN

(Original liner notes from *CRI LP jacket*)

