

ROGER GOEB:

S y m p h o n y N o . 3

Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra

In Roger Goeb and Ben Weber, we have two American composers of approximately the same age. Both are experts at the exploitation of instrumental color, whether bold or quiet; both are explorers and testers of the power of sound. Yet with all these elements in common, these two composers have taken very different directions, well illustrated here by the works which represent them.

Roger Goeb's Symphony is a significant one in the composer's career. For its first performance in April, 1952, by Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra on the Columbia University – CBS Festival of American Music, won for Goeb a host of fine critical notices which established him firmly on the musical scene. The late Robert Bagar, Virgil Thomson and Irving Kolodin all took special note of his orchestral skill and maturity. Kolodin observed: "I was particularly impressed by Goeb's sense of instrumental color, his facility in juxtaposing timbres and accents in a way that made new sounds of the familiar combinations in his Symphony No. 3. This is no matter, in the old sense, of orchestration or instrumentation: it is rather a keen sense of creating directly in terms of the elements involved . . ."

The Symphony is divided into three movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Andante*, and *Vivace*. It opens boldly with a stormy rhythmic motive which sets the agitated mood of the whole movement. This is somewhat relieved by a second theme taken by the oboe in a quiet, more atmospheric setting. But that brief pastoral tone of the oboe soon vanishes again into multiple rhythmic and melodic activity in all parts of the orchestra. The second movement gives us a quieter time. Here a shimmering timbre takes over and rhythm is subordinated. Gradually an almost drone-like motive repeats itself with small variations and developments throughout the movement. It is a restless quiet which is not quite stilled even by the solo oboe coming in lyrically at the end. The third movement is a highly syncopated dance-like affair where the lighter woodwinds contrast with the harsher, jagged brasses in an almost conversational way. It harks back to the first movement in its full exploitation of orchestral color, but its general mood is more playful.

Roger Goeb, who is married and is the father of two children, was born in Cherokee, Iowa on October 9, 1914. As a boy, he played a number of instruments, but he did not decide to make music his career until after he graduated from the University of Wisconsin with the Degree of Bachelor of Science and Agriculture. He studied composition with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and with Otto Luening in New York, and received his PhD. in music at the State University of Iowa in 1945. Goeb has won two Guggenheim Fellowships and has taught at the University of Oklahoma, the State University of Iowa, Bard College, the Juilliard School, Columbia University and Stanford. He has composed over fifty works, ranging from compositions for full orchestra, through a goodly number for chamber orchestra, to numerous chamber works, a great many of which are for woodwinds in various combinations.

B E N W E B E R :

Symphony on Poems of William Blake

Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra

Warren Galjour, baritone

This Symphony by the twelve-tone composer Ben Weber might be described as a work for chamber orchestra and baritone. The voice of the skilled Warren Galjour does not play a solo role (except perhaps in the second poem of the group) but is imbedded in the whole.

“In writing this work,” Ben Weber comments, “my greatest musical intention was to create through a quasi-symphonic structure a dramatic setting of four poems of Blake, chosen for their value as a cyclic expression of mystery, despair, madness and love reborn. They are arbitrarily chosen to fit in with the symphonic structure and were not so designed by Blake. I have used the same basic music material (i.e., the twelve-note row) in all four movements, and it was particularly interesting to me to derive variety and unity, passion and tranquility from this set. I have expressly avoided the use of strings in order that I have an effect not veiled, and the use of the solo cello is for the purpose of playing in general an obbligato to the vocal line.”

In the first poem, *To Autumn (Moderato assai)*, it is a rich texture that predominates. The deeper tones of the instruments twitter and swirl about the autumn words. In the second poem, *Never Seek to tell thy love (Lento assai)* compressed and mercilessly simple, the voice takes on its more traditional songlike role and the different woodwinds sometimes act as an obbligato, sometimes comment on what the voice has just sung. *Mad Song (Largo*

misterioso), recalling “King Lear”, opens with the deep agitation of the solo cello, merging into a total instrumental picture of unrelieved stark wildness.

In the last poem, *To Spring (Allegro moderato)*, there is a gentler, more whimsical approach, and marked rhythms move the poem forward, in contrast to the static richness of the first poem.

Like Roger Goeb, Ben Weber started out preparing himself for a non-musical career, in this case, medicine. But after a year of premedical training at the University of Illinois, he turned permanently to music. Largely self-taught, Weber has achieved high recognition for his work. He has been awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships, an Award and Citation from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, two awards from the Fromm Foundation and many commissions. The bulk of Weber’s output is in the field of chamber music, and his catalog also contains works for orchestra, piano, and miscellaneous combinations.

— Notes by J. Steiner

Poems By William Blake

TO AUTUMN

O Autumn, laden with fruit, and stained
With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit
Beneath my shady roof; there thou may’st rest,
And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe;
And all the daughters of the year shall dance!
Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

“The narrow bud opens her beauties to
The sun, and love runs in her thrilling veins;
Blossoms hang round the brows of morning, and
Flourish down the bright cheeks of modest eve,
Till clust’ring Summer breaks forth into singing,
And feather’d clouds strew flowers round her head.

The spirits of the air live on the smells
Of fruit; and joy, with pinions light, roves round
The gardens, or sits singing in the trees.”
Thus sang the jolly Autumn as he sat;
Then rose, girded himself, and o’er the bleak
Hills fled from our sight; but *left his golden load.* *

**These words are not included in Mr. Weber’s musical setting.*

Never seek to tell thy love
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears –
Ah, she doth depart.

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveler came by
Silently, invisibly –
O, was no deny.

MAD SONG

The wild winds weep
And the night is a-cold;
Come hither, Sleep,
And my griefs unfold:
But lo! the morning peeps
Over the eastern steps,
And the rustling birds of dawn
The earth do scorn.

Lo! to the vault

Of paved heaven,

With sorrow fraught

My notes are driven:

They strike the ear of night,

Make weep the eyes of day;

They make mad the roaring winds,

And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,

With howling woe

After night I do crowd,

And with night will go;

I turn my back to the east,

From whence comforts have increas'd;

For light cloth seize my brain

With frantic pain.

TO SPRING

O Thou with dewy locks, who lookest down

Thro' the clear windows of the morning, turn

Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,

Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring

The hills tell each other, and the list'ning

Vallies hear; all our longing eyes are turned

Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth,

And let thy holy feet visit our clime.

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumed garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls
Upon our love-sick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languished head,
Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee!

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