

ARNOLD FRANCHETTI:

Three Italian Masques

Concertino for Piano, Brass, Percussion and Bass

Raymond Hanson, piano
New York Brass Ensemble
**Robert Nagel, John Glasel and
Ted Weis, trumpets**
Keith Brown and David Uber, trombones
Stuart Sankey, bass
Ronald Gould, percussion
Samuel Baron, conductor

ARNOLD FRANCHETTI was born in Lucca, Italy in 1906 and was the son of Alberto Franchetti, a composer known in this country primarily for his operas *Christoforo Colombo* and *Germania*. His early training consisted of composition with his father and piano with his uncle Giorgio Franchetti, an architect and organist at S. Giorgio in Venice.

Franchetti interrupted his musical studies for several years to attend the University of Florence where he devoted his attention to physics and mathematics. He resumed the study of music in Munich and graduated from the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria in 1937 where he received the Lehman Prize for composition. A rapidly developing musical career was temporarily discontinued from 1937, with the advent of extreme European political turmoil and the Second World War, until 1947 when he came to the United States. In 1948 Franchetti joined the composition faculty of the Hartt College in Hartford, Connecticut and has remained there since. In this country alone his ambitious output of compositions include seven operas in English, several chamber works and many works for large orchestral ensembles.

The *Three Italian Masques* written in 1953, is based on a well-known Venetian puppet show. It is written in a free 12 tonal organization with the exception of the second movement or Serenade which is decidedly in a rigid Eb major tonality. The work is scored for three trumpets, two trombones, percussion, string bass and piano.

The movements are as follows:

1. **Variations (I-VIII):** Introduction of the masques; Arlecchino, the thief of love; Columbina, the frivolous wife; Pantalone, her jealous husband.
2. **Serenade:** Impassioned call of Arlecchino; serenade in the piazzetta.
3. **Imbroglia e baruffa:** Gossiping tongues alarm Pantalone who interrupts the Serenade and is soundly clubbed by Arlecchino; the quarrel subsides; Pantalone limps away . . . the piazzetta remains shimmering in the moonlight.

The humor this old and slightly immoral tale is derived from the fact that the cuckolded husband in addition to seeing his wife conquered by Harlequin must also pay for the broken dishes after a fight in a pub.

HUNTER JOHNSON:

Trio for Flute, Oboe and Piano

Julius Baker, flute

Robert Bloom, oboe

Douglas Nordli, piano

A NATIVE American, Hunter Johnson was born near Benson, North Carolina in 1906 and, following a career that has included two Guggenheim Fellowships (1941 and 1954), the Prix de Rome (1933), several commissions and this grant from the National and American Institutes of Arts and Letters (1958), he has returned to North Carolina and to a life that is completely devoted to composition.

In his second year at the University of North Carolina, where he majored in English composition and literature, Johnson decided to concentrate on music and, more specifically, the creative side of music. Following graduation from the Eastman School of Music in 1929, he was appointed as an instructor of music at the University of Michigan. While there he composed the *Prelude for Orchestra* and the *Symphony No. 1*, which were largely responsible for his receipt of the aforementioned Rome Prize. In 1940 a commission from Martha Graham resulted in his well known work *Letter to the World*, a dance based on the legends surrounding the poet Emily Dickinson, and a second commission for *Deaths and Entrances*. These two works are still in the Graham repertory and a suite from *Letter to the World* has been performed widely.

Johnson became an associate professor of music at the University of Manitoba in Canada in 1944 and an assistant professor at Cornell University in 1948. It was the winning of a second Guggenheim Fellowship that decided Johnson to concentrate on composition exclusively.

The *Trio for Flute, Oboe and Piano* was composed in 1954 during the period of Johnson's second Guggenheim Fellowship and was first performed at the University of Illinois in May, 1956 as part of a concert of the composer's works. The composer's description of the work is as follows:

“Style: not unrelated to works of Ives, Harris, Copland and others of this so-called indigenous American school.

“Form: the first movement is in fairly conventional sonata form, with the usual first and second thematic groups, followed by a middle section consisting mostly of a lyric theme derived from the opening subject matter, followed in turn by the recapitulation and coda. The final section of the coda is a slow fantasia-like section based on material stated earlier in the movement.

“The slow movement is a concentrated development of the opening theme, which consists of two bars in the piano answered by four bars in the winds. The entire movement is derived from this initial theme, sometimes by more or less conventional variation procedures, again by theme

transformation and derivation of what are, in a sense, new ideas, but distinctly related to their source material.

“The last movement is a vigorous scherzo-finale consisting of four distinct sections: exposition with contrasting thematic groups, so-called development, reprise and coda. The coda, like the close of the first movement, contains a short lyrical fantasy based on previous material, but ends fast and loud.”

Notes by D. Jennings

THE American Academy and its parent organization, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, are honorary societies with a distinguished membership of creative artists. They are chartered by act of Congress, and devoted to the furtherance of the arts in the United States.

Through joint committees of selection, these societies every year award fifteen grants of one thousand dollars each to young artists in recognition of distinction and promise. Three of these grants go annually to composers.

In the spring, an exhibition of the works of award winners in painting and sculpture is held at the Academy building. In 1956, it was decided to inaugurate a series with the similar purpose of calling attention to the works of award winners in music.

This release, presented with the collaboration of Composers Recordings, Inc., introduces to the public works by Arnold Franchetti and Hunter Johnson, 1958 award winners.

—DOUGLAS MOORE

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)