

CARL RUGGLES

ORGANUM (1945)

Japan Philharmonic, Akeo Watanabe, conductor

DOUGLAS MOORE

IN MEMORIAM (1944)

Japan Philharmonic, William Strickland, conductor

ROBERT WARD

SYMPHONY No. 2 (1947)

Japan Philharmonic, William Strickland, conductor

CARL RUGGLES (1876-1971) was a leading representative of two dynamic traditions: the tradition of 19th century intellectual New England that had given birth to authors from Hawthorne to James; and the tradition of rebellious American composers that exploded between the early 1900s and the middle 1930s.

Like his musical colleagues, Charles Ives, John Becker, Wallingford Riegger, Henry Cowell and Ruth Crawford Seeger, Ruggles wrote music that was specifically intended to “free” American music from what was considered “decadent” European influence. Partly as a result of their rugged determination, much of their music during this period was craggy and uncompromising. That it also had passages of great eloquence and melting beauty was often overlooked in the uproar that usually greeted performances of their works.

Ruggles himself is today enjoying a new popularity, and he is mentioned as the successor to Charles Ives, although the two men were contemporaries. During his lifetime, however, Ruggles was only a part-time composer (he spent as much time over his paintings), and much of this was spent in revising and expanding the few orchestral pieces he had finished (*Men and Mountains* is on CRI SD 254). Except for these revisions, he composed no large-scale works between 1932 and 1945, when he finished *ORGANUM* and when it was played by the Miami Symphony.

ORGANUM is brief, succinct but rich in orchestral sonority. It is not a serial work, but makes use of serial techniques such as running the main theme in retrograde during the second of its three main sections.

DOUGLAS MOORE (1893-1969), although practically a contemporary of the New England composers, was oriented towards the European tradition as joyfully as Ruggles was away from it. He studied with an earlier generation of American composers, including Horatio Parker at Yale, and with the Swiss-born Ernest Bloch, with Vincent d'Indy and with Nadia Boulanger. His musical style is melodious and rounded – quite the opposite of craggy – and his orchestration is coolly classic.

Moore was a renowned and popular educator, lecturer and author of musical books, and was MacDowell Professor of Music at Columbia University and, from 1946 to 1955, president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. His music won a wide audience. His operas were particularly successful, the most famous being *The Devil and Daniel Webster* and *The Ballad of Baby Doe*; but much of his large body of orchestral and chamber music has also been popular (his *Farm Journal* was on CRI's first record and a re-release of his *Clarinet Quintet* is on CRI SD 295).

About IN MEMORIAM, the composer wrote:

“It is dedicated to those who die young, and speaks of the bitterness of youth cut down in its prime and the irreconcilable loss to us. The first and last parts consist of a dirge of mounting intensity; the middle section is a soliloquy in which youth is imagined as speaking with longing for those things now lost.”

ROBERT WARD (b. Cleveland, 1917) has sailed a middling course down the mainstream of American music, being a master of the large orchestra and classical form. A product of the Eastman and (after the second World War) Juilliard schools, he lists among his composition teachers Bernard Rogers, Howard Hanson, Frederick Jacobi and Aaron Copland. He acquired his practical experience as conductor of the Seventh Division Army Band in the Pacific Theater, and as composer of an Army revue, *The Life of Riley*. He is also an able and diversified administrator, having served as president of the American Composers Alliance, as executive vice president and managing editor of Galaxy Music Corp. and Highgate Press, and since 1965, as president of the North Carolina School of the Arts. Among his most notable compositions is his opera, *The Crucible*, based on Arthur Miller's play. Ward completed his Second Symphony in 1947 while living in Nyack, N.Y. It was premiered by Hans Kindler and the National Symphony Orchestra. In the Symphony, though the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms are definitely of the past few decades, and have a strong American flavor, the structural principles employed can for the most part be found in music written before Beethoven. The first movement combines the traditional fugue and sonata forms. The slow movement is a freely developed aria which depends on variation and increasing lyric tension, rather than contrast, to build its structure. This line of tension heightens or relaxes in an ascending and expanding wave and finally subsides in a quiet coda. The Finale is a rondo with no particular complications.

The entire work is simple tonally, even by classical standards, though not the harmony and rhythm, which clearly relate the music to the time and place of its composition.

With a population slightly greater than that of New York City, Tokyo, Japan boasts five major symphony orchestras as well as a number of lesser ones. The newest of these, the Japan

Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, was founded by its permanent conductor Akeo Watanabe and Shigeo Mizuno, Director of the Nippon Cultural Broadcasting Systems, Inc. The number of first performances done by the group is quite remarkable. In addition to its commission program for works by Japanese composers, the Japan Philharmonic has introduced a steadily increasing number of works both foreign and Japanese, classical and contemporary.

WILLIAM STRICKLAND's professional beginnings are rooted in the music of the church and especially the organ. He has devoted most of his mature musical life to the commissioning and performance of contemporary music. Strickland's work with the venerable New York Oratorio Society has brought him considerable recognition as a choral conductor, in addition to which he has served as founder-conductor of the NYA Little Orchestra, conductor of the Nashville Symphony and "gusted" extensively in Europe, North America and the Far East. He has conducted the music on no fewer than 25 recordings for CRI.

AKEO WATANABE, the founder and permanent conductor of the Japan Philharmonic, has shown since his earliest days, an exceptional musical talent. At the age of six he mastered the piano sufficiently to make his concert debut in a performance of Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto. Later he switched to the violin with considerable success and still later became a graduate conducting student at the Tokyo School of Music. Since 1942 he has been active as chamber performer and conductor, having formed the Tokyo Chamber Music Society and led such orchestras as the Tokyo City Symphony, the Tokyo Philharmonic and more recently, the one used in this series, the Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

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