

**HENRY COWELL:**

**MUSIC 1957**

**Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra**  
**Akeo Watanabe, conducting**

HENRY COWELL, born 1897 in Menlo Park, California, is an outstanding figure in American music, known for continued experimentation in sound throughout his life and for his unusually prolific output that includes fourteen Symphonies. His music covers a wide field in both expression and technique, ranging from the controversial “tone-cluster” days of the 20’s and early 30’s to the touching simplicity of his American inspired *Hymn and Fuguing Tunes*, the first of which was written for band in 1943. Today Cowell continues to compose steadily every morning, and is as unorthodox as ever. “Every composition,” he told a *Time* reporter on his return from a world tour in 1957, “is a fresh experiment, a mixture of the familiar and the new. I have more ideas now than I can ever use.”

*Music 1957* was composed in Tokyo during the composer’s residence of several months in Japan. It was commissioned by Antal Dorati, who wished to include a new Cowell composition on his programs during his Middle Eastern tour with the Minneapolis Symphony that year. It had its first performance at the Athens Festival in Greece, where it was enthusiastically received, and was performed at subsequent concerts of the Minneapolis tour which included Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Pakistan, and India. The ten-minute work might be described as an improvisational overture in which Cowell follows his course of combining “the familiar and the new.” Melodic episodes of a simple folk character, mainly Celtic in atmosphere, alternate with exotic passages of extraordinary delicacy and originality. Special coloristic effects result from a subtle use of the celesta and the inclusion among the percussion instruments of bells, five anvils, and five tom-toms. The work has great rhythmic vitality, especially in the latter half of the piece, which is largely based on a metric unit of four and one-half beats.

**ROBERT KELLY:**

**SYMPHONY No. 2**

**I. Intense and Energetic**

**II. Calm**

**III. Festive**

**IV. Dirge**

**Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra**  
**Akeo Watanabe, conducting**

ROBERT KELLY was born in 1916 in Clarksburg, West Virginia. He studied violin at the Juilliard School of Music and the Cincinnati College of Music. His major training in composition was with Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute and with Herbert Ellwell at the Eastman School of Music. He has written chamber music in many categories, choral works and opera, as well as two symphonies, of which the second is presented in this recording. He has been teaching composition at the University of Illinois School of Music since 1946, where he holds the rank of Associate Professor. His textbook, *Theme and Variations; A Study of Linear Twelve Tone Composition*, was published in 1958 by Wm. Brown Co., Dubuque, Iowa. Kelly's *Symphony No. 2* was finished October 2, 1958, and is a colorful and dramatic work of broad dimensions. It derives its motivation from a passage in Genesis;

*While the earth remains,  
Seedtime and harvest, . . .  
Summer and winter, . . .  
Shall not cease.*

The four movements of the symphony bear the headings, 1. *Intense and Energetic (seedtime)*, 2. *Calm (summer)*, 3. *Festive (harvest)*, 4. *Dirge (winter)*. A program note furnished by the composer supplies the emotional key to the work. "As the seed is nurtured by the elements, similarly this symphony takes shape and develops. In the first movement is the force of expansion reaching a climax where violence and turmoil are transformed into beauty and splendor. The second and third movements are the result of this growth. In the final movement is the force of contraction, symbolizing death, and return to the seed."

The symphony is brilliantly and boldly orchestrated, with especially fine writing for the brass. Despite a program that could easily make for pictorialism the work stands solidly on its musical values. The first movement is impressive in its gradual growth and accumulation of strength, expanding from a germinal motif for cellos alone:



A warm pastoral atmosphere prevails in the following movement, while in the festive third the symphony reaches its peak. The *Dirge*, which begins with a plangent outburst from the brass, marks a slow decline of force, and the cyclic nature of the work is completed as the opening germinal motif is heard at the end, played as at the beginning, by the cellos alone:



AKEO WATANABE, born to a Japanese clergyman and a Finnish vocalist in 1919, has displayed an exceptional musical talent since his early days. At the age of six he demonstrated a remarkable degree of proficiency at the piano in a performance of Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto and two years later he took up the violin under the tutelage of Saburo Sumi. In 1934 he entered the Tokyo School of Music (now the Tokyo University of Arts) where he majored in violin under Koko Ando and Alexander Moghilevski. After completing the undergraduate course with honor and winning the Koda Prize, he entered the school's graduate program as the conducting student of Helmut Felmer and Manfred Gurlitt. He has been a regular conductor of the school's orchestra since those days.

In 1942 he began his activity as a chamber music performer and formed the Tokyo Chamber Music Society with such leading Japanese Artists as Hideo Saito, Mari Iwamoto, Toshiya Eto and others. He continued to study conducting during this time with Josef Rosenstock and in 1945, at the conclusion of the war, he made his professional conducting debut as one of the three directors of the Tokyo City Symphony Orchestra. In 1947 he was appointed the permanent conductor of the Tokyo Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. At this time he also began to teach and joined the faculty of the Tokyo University of Arts in 1949. During the initial stages of his tenure as conductor and teacher, Watanabe came to the United States for two years where he undertook study in advanced conducting with Jean Morel at the Juilliard School of Music. Following his return to Japan he left the Tokyo Philharmonic and continued to devote his time and energy to his newly acquired post as head of the Division of Conducting at the Tokyo University of Arts.

In cooperation with the Nihon Cultural Broadcasting System Inc. and with the encouragement of its outstanding director Shigeo Mizuno, Watanabe, in 1956, was able to create the orchestra of his dream, the Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and has served since that time as one of its executive directors and its permanent conductor.

In 1958, the government of Finland awarded him the Order of the Finnish Lion, Knight of First Class for his service to Finnish music in Japan.

WITH a population slightly greater than that of New York City, Tokyo, Japan boasts five major orchestras as well as a number of lesser ones: amateur and institutional. The newest of these, the Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, founded by its permanent conductor Akeo Watanabe and Shigeo Mizuno, Director of the Nihon Cultural Broadcasting System Inc., has made substantial strides during its three years of existence in becoming one of the world's outstanding orchestras. The number of first performances done by the group is already quite remarkable. In addition to its commission program for works by Japanese composers, the Japan Philharmonic has introduced to its public a steadily increasing number of works both foreign and Japanese, classical and contemporary.

Notes by Colin McPhee

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*