

**CRI-143**

**William Flanagan**

*A Concert Ode*

Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo

William Strickland, conductor

**Irwin Heilner**

*Chinese Songs*

Mitsuko Maki, soprano

Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo

William Strickland, conductor

**Daniel Pinkham**

*Concertante No. 1*

Robert Brink, violin

Claude Jean Chiasson, harpsichord

Edward Low, celesta

Izler Solomon, conductor

**Arthur Berger**

*Serenade Concertante*

The Brandeis Festival Orchestra

Izler Solomon, conductor

DETRACTORS OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC have perhaps most strongly bemoaned the absence of lyric qualities. This recording, contemporary in every way, is filled to the brim with melody. Melodies so convincing and true that their detractors—of any persuasion—will be few. A recording that might serve, for this reason alone, as an introduction to new American music.

This recording also shows the assault, by four composers, on the problem of tonal versus the non-tonal in music. From the actual sounds it is clear that a groundwork of tonality is maintained. The degree of chromaticism varies, but, most importantly, the crucial problem is faced and obviously solved in an individual manner.

To emphasize the melodic aspect of these four compositions serves the more to contrast their individual differences. Flanagan's melody is broad and wistful; Heilner's is an especially pure form, yet strongly evoking the Chinese; Pinkham's is both elegant and sensuous; and Berger's calls up the verities and complexities of an earlier age. These are persuasive differences. When they (or others) are recognized, the listener is well on the road to the understanding of contemporary musical subtleties.

William Flanagan's *A Concert Ode* is frequently performed, and there is little wonder. The melody starts in the first bar and scarcely lets up until the end of the work. With the full orchestra at his command, he presents a large climax, in the short introduction, which proceeds straightaway to the body of the work: an abbreviated sonata form (*Allegro maestoso*). Subject II soon appears, introduced by the oboe and continued by the other winds. The development again calls for the full resources of the orchestra, and its climax leads directly to the recapitulation. A coda and the return of the introduction closes the work.

A neat device may be observed in his use of the introductory material. The same material is used with opposite functions. As an opening, it swells into a climax; as a closing it softens and dies away. The entire *Ode* repays close attention.

In the songs of Irwin Heilner we encounter a simplicity that is all too deceiving, though its harmonic moves are reduced to the simplest. As with lieder, the moods suddenly change, and the demands on the listener therefore are many. Bass drones and rhythms, and melodic decoration, all evoke the Chinese. Exposed wind parts and the openness of the scoring have a similar function. The solo voice closely follows the text (printed below), and song-forms predominate throughout. Rehearings will further show these solid but epigrammatic qualities.

SIDE TWO produces additional contrasts. A small group of instruments, exchanged for the full orchestra, affords an opportunity for testing a musical fact. Which size group is more satisfactory? Musically, of course, there is no difference, as these compositions excellently prove.

Contrapuntal textures, on side two, assume a predominance hinted at in the *Ode*. The truths of musical construction and sonority embodied in these techniques are a legacy from the past. When used, their continuing validity is assured if the contemporary quality prevails, as it does here. Chamber combinations are capable of exploiting these principles to the fullest.

Daniel Pinkham's choice of instruments could scarcely be more exotic. The celesta and harpsichord are disarmingly so, yet the atmosphere of our time is present everywhere.

Like Flanagan, Pinkham uses an introduction. But observe the interesting differences - two types of introduction, both equally valid to the ear, in context. In Pinkham's, we find the basic ideas of the entire work. Several other basic types could be cited.

The first section of the *Concertante No. 1* is an accompanied violin solo (*Cantilena: Andante*), in large song-form, A-B-a (the repeated "a" is shortened). Dissonance is exposed and dynamic, with a rhythmic lilt that ends only too quickly. And the second movement is a contrast (*Burlesca: Allegro sciolto*). The proof of the contrast lies in one of the most wonderful of all musical phenomena. Each unfolding bar of the *Burlesca* at the same time re-defines and reshapes the movement preceding. If one is unfamiliar with this observation, be assured that it is worth a trial. The form, additive and open, is strikingly improvisatory. The violin is impassioned and its assertions bump squarely into the melodies and accompanying figures. *Burlesca?* I think so. The seeds that were planted in the introduction have germinated and the work is resultingly unified.

But of all this music the *Serenade Concertante*, by Arthur Berger, is the most strongly contrapuntal. Every voice and section assumes multiple meaning. A mosaic of meaning that only too easily can be labeled "intellectual." Could any listener fail to stumble over such a tag? Yet, if slowed to the point of examination, its harmonic material will be as clear as Heilner's. After all, three primary harmonies account for all sounds, from Bach to Bartok, in exact analogy to the three primary colors, which account for all other colors!

The contrapuntal aspects of the Pinkham work are sensuous; those of Berger, rhythmic, asymmetric and buoyant. They show also the control of a sophisticate and the terseness of a fact. Notice how he avoids the melodic sounds, do-re-mi. Instead, his melodies bounce about, and, in so doing, highlight the rhythmic activity. The form is particularly sweet. I will share the pleasure of discovery with everyone.

IT IS striking that music tended, in the past, to be synonymous with the contemporary, and frequently it was the only music performed. Their music embodied the characteristics of their age, as the music of our time embodies the characteristics of our time. The music of today, as then, is one of our languages. Yet it is too seldom heard. How did this happen? What has gone wrong? Can we afford this lack of contact? If the vastness of contemporary music can be hinted at in this space, its riches, without question, await the seeker.

Biographical dictionaries contain information on these mature and recognized composers. A too little known magazine, *The BULLETIN* (of the American Composers Alliance), has printed full-length articles on three of them. In addition, a host of articles is available in other magazines and books, that concern not only these men but the problems confronting the music of today.

All of the performers are well-known for their espousal of new music . . . and this includes the Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo. The fine Japanese soprano, Mitsuko Maki, introduced here to American audiences, has attained to similar acclaim as her colleagues on this recording.

*Notes by* CARL SIGMON

**Irwin Heilner**  
*Chinese Songs*

**CHU YEH**  
Chu Yeh has lived for forty years,  
Has tasted music, beauty, life, and love;  
His mind has fed on the leaves  
Of the world's best thought.  
Now a Japanese corporal  
Who has captured Chu Yeh  
Advises his lieutenant:  
"I shall shoot him?"  
The lieutenant shrugs and turns away.

—Milton Ost

### **THE LONG ROADS**

Turning my chariot I yoke my horses and go.  
On and on down the long roads.  
The autumn winds shake the hundred grasses.  
On ev'ry side, how desolate and bare!  
The things I meet are all new things,  
Their strangeness hastens the coming of old age.  
Prosperity and decay each have their season.  
Success is bitter when it is slow in coming.  
Man's life is not metal or stone,  
He cannot far prolong the days of his fate.  
Suddenly he follows in the way of things that change.  
—Anonymous, First Century B.C.

### **LO-YANG**

A beautiful place is the town of Lo-yang:  
The big streets are full of spring light.  
The lads go driving out with harps in their hands:  
The mulberry girls go out  
To the fields with their baskets.  
Golden whips glint at the horses' flanks,  
Gauze sleeves brush the green boughs.  
Racing dawn, the carriages come home,  
And the girls with their high baskets full of fruit.  
—Emperor Ch'ien Wen-ti, Sixth Century

### **REGRET**

When I was young I learnt fencing  
And was better at it than Crooked Castle.  
My spirit was high as the rolling clouds  
And my fame resounded beyond the World.  
I took my sword to the desert sands,  
I drank my horse at the Nine Moors.  
My flags and banners flapped in the wind,  
And nothing was heard but the song of my drums.  
War and its travels have made me sad,  
And a fierce anger burns within me:  
It's thinking of how I've wasted my time  
That makes this fury tear my heart.

—Yüan Chi, 210-263 A.D.

*(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP jacket)*

