

ELIAS TANENBAUM

Variations for Orchestra

Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra
Akeo Watanabe, conductor

Brooklyn-born Elias Tanenbaum (1924) received his undergraduate education at the Juilliard School of Music, and later earned a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University. It was not until after college that he turned his serious attention to composition as a career. He then began private study with Dante Fiorillo, and subsequently worked with Bohuslav Martinů, Otto Luening and Wallingford Riegger.

His catalogue of compositions includes the *Andante and Allegro* for orchestra, the Symphony No. 1, two string quartets, a *Sonata* and *Sonatina* for piano, a *Trio* for flute, cello and contrabass, and other vocal and chamber works.

Tanenbaum currently resides and teaches in New Rochelle, N. Y.

The *Variations for Orchestra*, written during a MacDowell Colony Fellowship in 1958, is a set of six variations, each with a contrasting companion section. This work is organized on twelve-tone principles, with its row stated first vertically and then melodically, with slight permutations.

The first variation (*Moderato*) is characterized by an alternation of melodic fragments from voice to voice. Variation II, marked *Andante*, is relaxed and sustained, occasionally interrupted by instrumental brilliance. Considerable rhythmic drive propels the third variation, *Allegro molto*. As this section ends, the percussion, a dominant feature, drops out one by one, until a harp glissando (frequently used by Tanenbaum to herald moments of transitional significance) introduces Variation IV. This next variation (*Andante con moto*) opens with a flute solo. The prevailing mood is playful, a quality enhanced by the arrival of a saxophone in careful contrast to the solo flute. An imaginative use of metrical fluctuation and the notated *accelerando* – a favorite device of Tanenbaum's – create in this movement a rich element of excitement.

The string quartet dominates the texture of Variation V (*Poco più mosso*). Variation VI (*Allegro, Andante, Presto*) is dynamic and forceful, ending with a straightforward statement of the row and a dazzling tutti.

CHARLES WUORINEN

Symphony No. 3

Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra
Akeo Watanabe, conductor

New York-born Charles Wuorinen (1938) is a graduate of Columbia University, where his teachers included Vladimir Ussachevsky, Jack Beeson and Otto Luening. His large catalogue of works ranges from chamber compositions to music for tape.

Wuorinen's professional accomplishments are unusual in one so young. He has served on the staff of Columbia University's Music Department for two years, and has been recipient of numerous commissions and awards: the Lili Boulanger Memorial Award, a N.Y. Philharmonic Young Composers Award, the Bearns Prize (the first three-time winner), a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, an Alice M. Ditson Fellowship, and a recent citation from the Pacifica Foundation.

The diversification of his output is evidenced by three symphonies, the *Concertone* for brass quintet and orchestra, music for the theater and for solo instruments, and a wealth of chamber and vocal music. The *Sinfonia Sacra* utilizes electronic techniques, and was realized at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, where the composer is now occupied with the Mark-II RCA Synthesizer.

The Symphony No. 3, written in September of 1959, was given its premiere on November 11, 1959, by the Orchestra of America under the direction of Richard Korn; and performed again in January 1960 by the Tampere Symphony Orchestra (Finland), conducted by Eero Kosonen.

The work is divided into two movements, separated only by a short pause. Both movements begin similarly and the fundamental thematic and harmonic material is essentially the same, but the structure of each is different.

The composer describes Movement I as based on "a form of continuous variation principle." It is for the most part slow, and melodic fragmentation is its major characteristic. The second part is a "highly modified rondo," cast in a moderately fast ternary meter. Here rhythmic intensity is an outstanding quality.

In notes accompanying the first performance, the composer analyzed the germinal material as "a pitch sequence and a chord progression. The melodic and harmonic structure arises from these elements. Used first alternately, and later in combination, all aspects of the piece develop from this basic material."

The somber mood of the Symphony is summarized by a concluding slow section that contains a fragment of *La Déploration de Johannes Ockeghem*, by Josquin des Prés in memory of his teacher. The chorale treatment of this quotation adds to the Symphony's dominant characteristics of strength and sonority.

Notes by DON JENNINGS

The founder and permanent conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, Akeo Watanabe, has shown an exceptional musical talent from his earliest days. At the age of six he made his concert debut as pianist in a performance of Beethoven's *Second Concerto*; later he studied violin with considerable success, and still later became a graduate conducting student at the Tokyo School of Music. He is currently active as a chamber performer and conductor, having founded the Tokyo Chamber Music Society and leading, with distinction, such orchestras as the Tokyo City Symphony, the Tokyo Philharmonic and, more recently, the Japan Philharmonic, with which he appears on this record.

With a population slightly greater than that of New York City, Tokyo boasts five major symphony orchestras. The Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, founded by its permanent conductor Akeo Watanabe and Shigeo Mizuno, Director of the Nihon Cultural Broadcasting System, Inc., is one of the world's outstanding ensembles. In addition to its commissioning program of new Japanese works, the orchestra has introduced to its public an impressive number of first performances, both classical and contemporary.

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