

JOHN POZDRO
Third Symphony
Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra
Guy Fraser Harrison, conductor

WHAT IS INDIGENOUS to American music — a much debated issue—will be solved when its fabric is completely unraveled. From all the strands that have been combined with European harmonic tradition will come the definition of America's contribution to the international development of music. Our regional contributions will also emerge with greater clarity. This recording, a product of the Midwestern United States, will be a part of such an examination.

Musical activity in America rapidly reaches toward maturity. Of the new foci of cultural advancement outside metropolitan areas, Oklahoma City itself has taken a notable place. Two well-known examples, if recalled, suffice to show the achievement of this locale: the city's symphony orchestra, which in recent years has been heard on national broadcasts; and the University of Oklahoma Press, whose sphere of influence has spread to many lands. Nor is it insignificant that the second oldest orchestra in the United States is in neighboring St. Louis.

The music on this recording was commissioned and first performed by the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra, and conducted by its Music Director, Guy Fraser Harrison. Faith in the musical maturity of the Midwest could scarcely be better exemplified than in the commissioning of these composers, both of whom were born, educated for the most part, and have been professionally active in this area.

JOHN POZDRO was born in 1923 in Chicago, and there received his early musical training. Service in the Military Intelligence Division during World War II postponed his formal education for a while, but it was later resumed at Northwestern University, with the late Robert Mills Delaney. Graduate work at the Eastman School of Music, with Howard Hanson and Bernard Rogers, earned for him a Doctorate in Musical Composition. Since 1950, Dr. Pozdro has taught at the University of Kansas, and at present is Chairman of the Department of Music Theory. He is also Chairman of the University's Annual Symposium of Contemporary American Music—a national showplace for new music.

Prior to this Third Symphony, John Pozdro's successes have included the musical play, HELLO, KANSAS, commissioned and performed in observance of the Kansas Centennial, 1961; and, perhaps his best known and most performed work, the Second Symphony, which Howard Hanson premiered in Rochester.

Pozdro's Third Symphony eschews the finical and intimate for the breadth and power of the full orchestra. This is as much due to his deep-rooted Midwesternness as to his adherence to the rich traditions of harmonic practice. As the composer himself has so cogently stated: "In this symphony I have tried to realize a clarity and directness of expression akin to the ideals of the classical period. Accordingly, I have framed the four movements in forms and with a tonal scheme congruous with the workings of a 'classical symphony.' The first movement is dance-like, consisting of two sections, each of which is repeated. The third movement is reflective in nature with alternating themes building toward a brief but intense climax. The finale is a rondo with coda. The symphony is cyclic in that the second subject of the final movement is derived from the principal theme of the first movement."

Tempo indications are Largo (introduction); con spirito. Allegretto. Larghetto. Vivace. Pozdro's orchestra consists of pairs of flutes (one piccolo), oboes (one English horn), clarinets and bassoons; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba; percussion and strings. The premiere occurred on December 13, 1960.

In 1957 the Ford Foundation began a program in Humanities and the Arts. Among the initial grants was one designed to insure multiple regional performances of new symphonic scores. This grant was administered by the American Music Center, a clearing house for the advancement of serious American music here and abroad. Over a period of three years, each of six participating orchestras, coordinated by a national committee of the Center, commissioned one work annually and subsequently each orchestra performed its own commission as well as several of the others. Provision was also made for the recording of some of these works. The present recording has been produced in connection with that aspect of the grant.

SPENCER NORTON

Partita for Two Solo Pianos

and Orchestra

Sylvia Zaremba and Digby Bell, pianos

Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra

Guy Fraser Harrison, conductor

SPENCER NORTON, born in 1909 near Anadarko, Oklahoma, studied at the University of Oklahoma; in Milan, Italy, with Roberto Casiraghi, and, after teaching several years, received an M.A. from the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Norton was invited to join the faculty of the University of Oklahoma, and from 1947 to 1950 served as Director of the School of Music. Graduate work followed at Eastman, with Dr. Hanson, who later conducted many of Norton's first performances with the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra. One movement of his popular DANCE-SUITE was recorded by this orchestra. Other orchestras that have performed his music include the NBC, Chicago and Minneapolis Symphonies. Mr. Norton has received outstanding awards and grants.

The PARTITA FOR TWO SOLO PIANOS AND ORCHESTRA was first performed on February 2, 1960, by the duo-pianists, Whitemore and Lowe, with the Oklahoma City Symphony, Guy Fraser Harrison conducting. A repeat performance, with the same soloists, was given in 1961 in New York City, with the Orchestra of America, Richard Korn conducting.

In this music, Mr. Norton's compositional aims lean toward traditional forms, yet the basic ideas, imbued with present-day sounds, result in textures that are high-spirited and contemporary. The composer has written that "the PARTITA is an eighteenth century form which has undergone considerable revival during the neo-classic trend of the twentieth century. A number of modern examples for chamber groups have been written by such composers as Rieti and Creston, and at least one by Casella is for solo piano and orchestra. I believe, however, that (mine) is the first composition for two solo pianos and orchestra using this form. The first movement, hybrid in form, combines elements of time French overture (the traditional opening movement for this kind of composition), the Entree (a formal march), and the sonata-allegro. No attempt is made to reconstruct the historical style, and the form serves only to give a reminiscence of the period in which it flourished. The Corrente follows the old structure very closely, and, with its flowing melodic line in brisk triple meter, is a true example of this form. The Sarabande is another hybrid, being in fact at least half a Chaconne. It is constructed over a variant of one of the typical ground

basses used near the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Gavotte also follows the traditional form, and has a trio section in contrasting style. The Air, which serves as a brief melodic interlude, is not related to any dance form. The Toccata, which concludes the work, is in shortened sonata-allegro form, and serves principally for the display of keyboard and orchestral virtuosity. Repeated note figurations are prominent.”

The PARTITA is scored for woodwinds in pairs; four horns, two trumpets, three trombones; percussion; strings and two solo pianos. The movements are: Sinfonia; Corrente; Sarabande; Gavotte; Air and Toccata.

Notes by CARL SIGMON

GUY FRASER HARRISON was born in Guilford, Surrey, England, and is a graduate of the Royal College of Music in London. He came to America in 1920 by way of the Philippine Islands, where he served for six years as organist and choirmaster at Manila’s Cathedral of St. Mary and St. John.

In this country, he has built an active career as conductor, first for twenty-eight years with the Rochester Civic Orchestra, followed by a successful tenure with the Oklahoma City Symphony. For service to American music on his Oklahoma City Symphony-Mutual Network broadcasts, Dr. Harrison has received citations from both the National Music League and the National Association of American Composers and Conductors.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)