

ANDREW IMBRIE

Legend for Orchestra

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

Enrique Jordá, conductor

Andrew Imbrie was born in New York City (1921) but spent most of his early years in Princeton, New Jersey. His musical instincts were evident in early childhood, but it was not until the mid-Thirties that he turned to the study of serious composition. Imbrie completed his undergraduate studies at Princeton University, where he was a student of Roger Sessions for a ten-year period, beginning in 1937. A Master of Arts Degree from the University of California (Berkeley) resulted in a faculty appointment that was postponed one year to enable Imbrie to accept the *Prix de Rome*. He returned and has now become a full professor.

Imbrie's achievements include the New York Music Critics' Circle Award (1943-44), an Alice M. Ditson Fellowship (Columbia University, 1946), a grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1950), two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Boston Symphony Orchestra Merit Award and a Naumberg Recording Award for his *Violin Concerto*.

Commissions have increased the variety of his catalogue; specifically, the *Ballad in D* for orchestra, the *Violin Concerto*, the *Little Concerto* for piano (four hands) and orchestra, three string quartets, a *Serenade* for flute, viola and piano, a *Trio* for violin, cello and piano, and other choral and orchestral compositions.

The title *Legend* is without programmatic intent. The work's principle idea is contained in a long melody for English horn, that begins after a short introduction. The same melody recurs twice near the end of the piece, scored for solo cello and later for the entire cello section. Although most of the melodic material is freely derived from this melody, there is a contrasting section (*Allegro*) and two harp cadenzas. The compositional materials of the piece determine its structural design. For example, the necessity for a formal balance between two levels is indicated in the contrast of interweaving motivic fragments and the sustained central melody. Also, the timbre of the harp solo directly affects the continually shifting tonal designs that precede and follow it.

In describing the middle section, the composer refers to "kaleidoscopic and evanescent colors," "syncopations and notated *accelerandi*" and some "frequent changes of direction." The high point of the entire work occurs in one of the few orchestral *tutti*, followed by a sudden *pianissimo* and the return of the original theme in *Tempo Primo*. The piece begins and ends quietly.

Commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, *Legend* was written in 1959 and first performed on December 9, 1959. It is dedicated to Enrique Jordá and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

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.

CHARLES CUSHING

Cereus, Poem, for Orchestra

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

Enrique Jordá, conductor

“O nuit! ô rafraîchissantes ténèbres! vous êtes pour moi le signal d’une fête intérieure . . .” (O night, O refreshing darkness! To me you are the signal for a festival of the spirit). These lines from Baudelaire’s *Petits Poèmes en Prose* ornament the title page of the score of Charles Cushing’s *Cereus*. The quote is not merely a casual affectation, but rather a carefully chosen motto that sums up the essence of this “Poem for Orchestra.”

Cereus, scored for full orchestra, is impressionistic in style. Cushing’s assurance stems from his belief that “*Cereus* is made with contrapuntal resources and with clean-cut, exigent rhythms of a sort that is utterly foreign to the technique of impressionist music.” His handling of the impressionistic idiom is both contemporary and original.

Critic Alfred Frankenstein wrote that “. . . this work ought to go far, for Cushing believes in pleasing people with music, and he goes about it with a great artist’s subtlety, originality and point. For an orchestral nocturne of comparable richness, unity and variety, one will have to go to Debussy himself; the analogy is unusual today when impressionism is almost a term of abuse, at least in university circles. But *Cereus* demonstrates that impressionism revisited can also be impressionism revitalized.”

In answer (or perhaps, in agreement) Cushing has said: “If this music pleases people, I am delighted, but my concern is to state the musical patterns with utmost clarity and with greatest economy of means, and to carry each design-factor to its inevitable conclusion. If this has been accomplished without strain to the listener, well . . . so much the better!” The kind of piece the composer has *tried* to write is the same as the piece that he has created.

That this piece satisfies the composer’s belief in “lyricism (which does not exclude contrapuntal writing) and rhythmic intricacy (which can be both delicate and strong) and idiomatic writing – that is, lines and rhythms suited to the nature and requirements of the various single, specific instruments” is unquestionable. That it successfully recreates the composer’s feeling for nighttime – “a wonderful quiet time to write, study and read” will be evident at first hearing.

Cereus, composed in the summer of 1960, was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and first performed by them on January 4, 1961, under the direction of Maestro Jordá, to whom the work is dedicated.

Charles Cushing was born in Oakland, California in 1905 and earned his A.B. and M.A. degrees from the University of California. Following receipt of the George Ladd "Prix de Paris" (for achievement in composition) he attended the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris and studied privately with Nadia Boulanger. In 1952 he was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French Government.

The breadth of his musical experience is considerable and it has significantly contributed to his stature as an artist. He has performed as an orchestral and chamber violinist and violist; founded and conducted the University of California Concert Band; has served as director of choral, orchestral, theatrical and operatic groups; and has frequently contributed to the Composers' Forum of San Francisco.

His catalogue of compositions is equally broad and varied, encompassing two string quartets, two sonatas for violin and piano, a *Lyric Set* for flute, soprano solo and viola, the *Eclogues* and a *Fantasy* for wind instruments, a *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* (commissioned and recorded by the Composers' Forum), choral works, and music for the theater.

Notes by DON JENNINGS

ENRIQUE JORDÁ was born in San Sebastian, Spain, in 1911. He studied composition with Paul Le Flem and organ with Marcel Dupré in Paris, after abandoning an earlier pursuit, a medical career. Degrees in Philosophy and Letters preceded his debut as a conductor with the Paris Symphony Orchestra in 1938. He also appeared with the Brussels Symphony Orchestra in the same year. Jordá returned to Spain as permanent conductor of the Madrid Symphony, shortly after the outbreak of World War II. His numerous awards include two of Spain's highest honors, the "Order of Alfonso Xth, El Sabio (The Wise)," and the "Conde de Cartagena" prize of the Spanish Academy of Fine Arts. He has guest-conducted throughout the European continent and is presently conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)