

Salvatore Martirano

O, O, O, O, THAT

SHAKESPEHERIAN RAG

(1958) for Mixed Chorus

and Instrumental Ensemble

*PRINCETON CHAMBER SINGERS*

*Arthur Bloom* CLARINET, *Fred Mills* TRUMPET,

*Raymond Beckenstein* SAXOPHONE, *James Thompson* TROMBONE,

*David Walter* BASS, *Max Neuhaus* PERCUSSION

*THOMAS HILBISH*, CONDUCTOR

In the mind of Salvatore Martirano there is a cogent musico-dramatic reason to associate the Loss of Love's Labour with the Waste ravaging the Land. In his choral settings, *O, O, O, O, That Shakespeherian Rag*, he proceeds directly from Shakespearian texts, qualifies them with the title from T. S. Eliot ("It's so elegant, so intelligent"), adds a profound understanding of the Verdi-Boito Shakespearian endeavor, and assembles a group of instruments (clarinet in A-doubling E-flat, alto saxophone, trumpet, tenor-bass trombone, double-bass, piano, percussion) which would not be strangers to Birdland. (What does the composer mean in bar 64 of *Winter* when he writes in the score, "twelve for Bird?" Is he referring to the owl of the text or does the demiurgic alto saxophone sound conjure up a vision of Charlie Parker, a brooding bird in the snow?) The result of this amalgam of influences is a compelling reexposition for our recklessly desolate, despairing jazz age of the relevance of a Shakespeare.

In the *Rag* we witness an unrelenting four-part melodrama into the Wasteland of modern times. Specifically Love's Labour is Lost during the unfolding of a retributionary story based on a somewhat tarnished golden rule: the adulterer, who in doing unto others, ultimately finds himself to be a cuckold, done unto. At the beginning, behind the seemingly cozy imagery of *Winter*, for mixed chorus (sung by Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost* V-2) the staring owl (a Shakespearian symbol for the adulterer) nightly sings his diabolical note. The ominous gossipy whispers of the chorus portend, within an atmosphere of seeming red and raw merriment, that a sin of commission has occurred.

The second setting is a *Lullaby* for women alone (sung by Titania's Fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II-2), wherein one can sense the discomfiture of a guilty insomniac, as sleep eludes. In a haunted twilight zone of snakes, newts, spiders, and snails alarmingly alive, there is a musical rendering of exquisite and tortured fantasies, back to back.

By the time we reach the third setting, *Warning* for men only (sung by Ariel in *The Tempest* II-1), sleep has come and with it a decisive turn of the screw. If one hears in the snores of the tenors and basses a reference to *Wozzeck* this should not surprise, for there most certainly is an allusion to this most well known cuckold of the 20th century musical stage. But a less apparent and more relevant allusion is to Beethoven's Opus 31, No. 2 ("read Shakespeare's *Tempest*"), what with the use of the arpeggiated piano, the structural *fermate*, juxtaposition of tempi and the subtle dependence on the pitch class D. And so it is that "opened-eyed conspiracy" prepares the way for the denouement.

In the final setting *Spring* for mixed chorus (sung by Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost* V-2), the world is less "mud-luscious" than "fear in a handful of dust." The cruel month of April has seen another complete turn of the wheel: the cuckoo mocks married men. All married men: in the coda of the composition as if suddenly moving from black and white to technicolor, the English word 'fear' gives way in the womens' voices to a universal concatenation of 'fears' (*paura, furcht, peur*) sounding against a violent counterpoint of mens' voices flutter-throating a horrendous, lamenting, soulful, therapeutic, salivate *O, O, O, O*.

In toto we are confronted with a vivid scenario of music and words. The musical material, dodecaphonic in concept, never loses the mark of the personality behind it, while the scoring cunningly provides an index of structural collaboration and corroboration. There is no needless effort made to cross reference the Elizabethan idiom. Making the assumption that these specific texts are well known (Elson's *Shakespeare in Music* testifies that none of them are alien to setting), the composer believes it would be banal and tasteless to superficially mirror their regular metrical structures. Nevertheless there is at all times a definite connection with the form of the poem. For example, in *Spring*, the length in time of each line is the same proportionally as in the poem. However the length or duration of those syllables which seem to express the essence of the poem are exaggerated in either longer or shorter measure within each line and in different places in different lines.

Salvatore Martirano, born under the sign of Capricorn in Yonkers, N. Y. (1927), has studied with Herbert Elwell, Bernard Rogers, and Luigi Dallapiccola. "The recipient of many grants and awards for music composition (this particular work was commissioned by the League of Composers and the I.S.C.M. in memory of Marion Bauer), he presently resides in San Francisco. Those familiar with his earlier vocal music, a student opera, the *Chansons Innocentes* for soprano (on texts by E. E. Cummings), and a large scale *a cappella* Mass (Sal M's Solemn Psalm), know his deeply absorbing penetration into the problems of the human voice and the expression of musical ideas. *O, O, O, O, That Shakespeherian Rag* is a brilliant offering of a composer from whom we have come to expect a great deal.

NOTES BY EDWIN LONDON

**George Rochberg**

**STRING QUARTET NO. 2**

**with Soprano (1961)**

***PHILADELPHIA STRING QUARTET***

***with JANICE HARSANYI SOPRANO***

***Veda Reynolds and Irwin Eisenberg VIOLINS***

***Alan Iglitzin VIOLA, Charles Brennand 'CELLO***

George Rochberg has emerged over the score of years since World War II as one of the most powerful of American creators in the large-scale symphonic forms, a fact that has been given its most significant testimony to-date in the form of a New York Philharmonic recording by Columbia of his Symphony No. 2, this in fulfillment of the terms of the Naumburg Recording Award granted the work in 1961.

Born, 1918, in Paterson, New Jersey, and brought up in adjoining Passaic, Rochberg undertook serious musical study at the Mannes College of Music in New York; but this was interrupted by war service; and was resumed subsequently at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Upon graduation, he became a faculty member of that institution, and in 1950-51 was recipient of both a Fulbright Grant and a Fellowship to the American Academy in Rome. During the middle 1950's he was Music Editor for the Theodore Presser music publishing firm in Philadelphia, and he currently heads the Music Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, he has produced a steady stream of substantial creative work, including two symphonies, two string quartets, *Night Music* for Orchestra, and *David, The Psalmist* for Tenor and Orchestra.

Concerning his String Quartet No. 2, Mr. Rochberg has kindly provided us with the following commentary:

The Second String Quartet (with soprano) was completed in late August 1961. Commissioned by the Contemporary Chamber Music Society of Philadelphia, it was first performed privately on March 23, 1962; then exactly one week later it was given its first public performance at the University of Pennsylvania by the same performers who have recorded it here: the Philadelphia String Quartet (then the Stringart Quartet) with Janice Harsanyi, soprano.

Originally I planned to call the work something like "Fantasias and Arabesques for String Quartet" because the two terms, "fantasia" and "arabesque", describe best the main gestural characteristics of the music. They also suggest, in a general way, the free (but never arbitrary) manner in which the structural pattern, moving between the two, evolves, resulting in the final shape of the music.

The work as a whole is in two large parts: first, purely instrumental; second, vocal-instrumental with two arioso for the soprano separated by a "quasi cadenza" for the string quartet. This "quasi cadenza" emerges from the end of the first arioso and leads directly into the second arioso. The text is drawn from the opening and closing stanzas of Rainer Maria Rilke's *9th Duino Elegy* in an English version translated by Harry Behn.

There are two purely technical features which are necessary to mention: 1) the use of tempo simultaneity and 2) the relation of the voice to the quartet. I say "necessary" because it is impossible to separate the "what" of a work from its "how". If composers speak too much these days about the "how" of their music it may be either because there is no "what" to discuss, however generally and vaguely, or because the "what" is so hard to pin down in words that it eludes one completely. Whatever the case may be, one of the fundamental conceptions of my Second Quartet, affecting its "what" profoundly, is the notion of tempo simultaneity, first introduced into contemporary music by Charles Ives. Two basic speeds (associated with either a "fantasia" or "arabesque" quality) plus their doubles — ♩ = 108 / ♩ = 54; ♩ = 72 / ♩ = 144 — are employed throughout the work. Combinations of these speeds, for ex. 108 and 72, 54 and 144, result in the intensification of the expressive structure, creating at the same time a play with the possibilities of order-disorder; but a play which, I want to stress, is wholly within my control and not left to hazard or chance - or the performers. Since I believe that tempo is an expressive gesture like any of the other, though different, possibilities of expressive gesture which exist in music, there is for me no separation between the technical solution of tempo simultaneity and its expressive intent. The intent creates the problem; the solution of the problem achieves the intent. In the "quasi cadenza" section lying between the two arioso, the four tempi are presented together for a time, finally giving way to the fastest speed (♩ = 144) which continues to all but the very last vocal statement ("Immeasurable being wells in my heart") with which the work ends. As to the relation of the voice to the quartet, I hope I have achieved a kind of free rendering where there is no interference of formal design with the

emotional curve of the text. To accomplish this I made the voice a partner, not the leader, in the musical proceedings. Though the soprano's lines are newly conceived, the quartet first draws on the early part of the work and later on the vocal part as well for its share in the vocal-instrumental partnership. Thus I attempted a structure in which the voice is independent of the quartet and vice versa. This made possible writing instrumental passages in their own terms without sacrificing them to the voice. Also it made possible an open situation in which voice and instruments could go together; or one could drop out while the other continued; or one entered freely after the other had begun, thus dispensing entirely with the paraphernalia of introduction, interludes, bridges, transitions, etc.

Finally, it is possible to suggest that the work exists on two levels, the one abstract, the other concrete. The first part of the quartet, purely instrumental, surely tends toward the abstract; and intentionally so. So far as "subject matter" goes — definable themes, rhythms, etc. — there is none in the usual sense. What takes place is, instead, a purposeful play with order — disorder, a movement between fantasia and arabesque, and tempi combinations which are deeply involved in both. With the entry of the voice, the music moves into the realm of the concrete. There is "subject matter" both in terms of words and music. The voice reclaims the music from the abstract and indeterminate, brings it back fully within the sphere of what is most deeply and intensely human — a concern with the questions of existence itself.

THOMAS HILBISH, conductor of the Princeton Chamber Singers, is currently Visiting Lecturer at Princeton University, as well as Visiting Instructor in conducting at the Westminster Choir College and Head of the Music Department at the Princeton High School.

JANICE HARSANYI, gifted American-born soprano, has long enjoyed a reputation among her professional colleagues as a remarkably versatile interpreter of both the classic and the most demanding modern styles. Much of her success in the latter area, Miss Harsanyi attributes to her thorough grounding as violinist, with particular emphasis on the chamber music literature.

THE PHILADELPHIA STRING QUARTET presently enjoys Artist-in-Residence status at the University of Pennsylvania. Active as a performing group since 1949, the players of the Philadelphia String Quartet divide their time between living up to the demands of membership in the famed Philadelphia Orchestra and preparing the performances of contemporary chamber music for which they have received widespread acclaim far beyond the environs of their own Contemporary Chamber Music Society of Philadelphia, which commissioned the Rochberg work recorded here.

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*In the spring, an exhibition of the works of award winners in painting and sculpture is held at the Academy building. In 1956, it was decided to inaugurate a series with the similar purpose of calling attention to the works of award winners in music.*

*This release, presented with the collaboration of Composers Recordings, Inc., introduces to the public works by Salvatore Martirano and George Rochberg, 1960 and 1962 award winners.*

-DOUGLAS MOORE

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*

