

**SAMUEL L. M. BARLOW**

**Mon Ami Pierrot — Overture (1934)**

**Cortège from Ballo Sardo (1950)**

**Circus Overture (1960)**

**LAMOUREUX ORCHESTRA Robert Cornman, conductor**

**AVERY CLAFLIN**

**Concerto for Piano and Orchestra**

**“Concerto giocoso” (1956-57)**

**GÍSLI MAGNÚSSON**

**ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA William Strickland, conductor**

**SAMUEL L. M. BARLOW** (b. New York City, 1892), in the years following academic and musical study at Harvard shortly before World War I, has divided the greater part of his energetic life between the composition and performance of music and battling for liberal educational and political causes. In both the fields of music and of international cultural exchange and politics, Barlow has been active as a writer as well.

His musical studies after Harvard were at the Institute of Musical Art in New York City, as well as with Isidor Philipp in Paris (piano) and with Ottorino Respighi in Rome (orchestration). By 1928 his first major symphonic performance was realized, when Fritz Reiner premiered Barlow's symphonic Poem, *Alba*, with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; and in 1931, he was soloist in his own Piano Concerto with Eugene Goossens conducting the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Other major works from Mr. Barlow's pen, other than those recorded here have included the incidental music for the Lunts' 1937 Broadway production of Giradoux's *Amphitryon 38*, the orchestral works *Leda*, *Sousa ad Parnassum*, and the *Biedermeier* Waltzes, as well as several works for string quartet and songs with chamber instrumental accompaniment.

The three Barlow scores presented on this disc display three facets of Barlow's colorful and highly accessible musical language. Of the Overture to *Mon Ami Pierrot*, Mr. Barlow says, “In 1934, Sacha Guitry asked me for music to a libretto concerning Lully (who probably wrote the celebrated tune to *Au Clair de la lune* sometime in the late seventeenth century). Guitry asked that ‘no note should offend Lully’, which eliminated all modern harmony of course — somewhat like commissioning a new canto for *The Canterbury Tales*. The problem was to write a ‘classical piece’ with freshness and verve. The result was the first (and only) opera by an American given at the Opéra-comique.”

“Between 1940 and 1950,” says Barlow of his *Ballo Sardo*, “I worked on a ballet based on a Sardinian legend. The story is frankly romantic, and so is the music. *Cortège* is the finale: a grotesque funeral march for Baron Orso, villain of the piece, who had been changed into a fly (you must believe this). The crowd gets out of hand, is recalled to order by the Bishop (oboe solo), and all ends happily.”

The *Circus Overture* (1960), Mr. Barlow describes as “a festival overture, where if you must, you can picture sad clowns, the lovely tight-rope lady, the parade, perhaps the elephants. But the three or four musical themes are tightly woven into the general texture. If the Overture to *Mon Ami Pierrot* may be called classical and *Cortège* romantic, *Circus* is as modern as this composer is likely to go.”

**EVERY CLAFLIN** (b. Keene, N. H., 1898) shares with Samuel L. M. Barlow a love for the finest in French culture and a deep concern for the well-being of musical culture in America, Mr. Claflin’s activities in the latter sphere have taken the form of indefatigable work and good counsel for a variety of organizations devoted to the cause of the contemporary composer, among them the American Composers Alliance and the Contemporary Music Society.

In company with such men as Charles Ives and John Alden Carpenter, Mr. Claflin has divided his time between business and musical composition. His studies at Harvard, which included concentration on compositional technique under the tutelage of Dr. Archibald T. Davison, were interrupted by World War I; for he went to France to serve as an ambulance driver. War wounds at Verdun spelled the end of ambitions to become a concert pianist. So after finishing his Harvard studies, he went to work in New York as a messenger for the French American Banking Corporation, of which he was President at the time of his retirement in 1954.

During the course of an interview for *The New Yorker* magazine that followed hard upon the success of his 1955 income tax madrigal *Lament for April 15* (CRI 102), Claflin paraphrased a famous remark of Ives in saying, “I think my banking career has helped me as a musician and vice-versa. . . . A banker’s orderliness helps in composing, and my composer’s imagination may have given me a bit of a jump on other bankers.”

Beginning with his 1921 opera on Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Mr. Claflin has composed a wide variety of music in an equally wide variety of moods and media. If *La Grande Bretèche* after Balzac’s famous story (recorded on CRI 108) represents Claflin’s serious side, then his gay side is amply represented on CRI discs by pieces like *Teen Scenes* (CRI 119), *Fishhouse Punch* (CRI 107) and the already mentioned *Lament for April 15*. Mr. Claflin’s catalog also includes a *Moby Dick* Suite, a pair of symphonies, the opera *Hester Prynne* after Hawthorne, and a number of chamber works. At this writing, he is hard at work on an operatic version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

The Piano Concerto was written by Mr. Claflin at his upstate New York summer home during 1956-57. The *Andantino* slow movement is dated October 30, 1956, the *Allegro con brio* first movement is noted as finished on May 31, 1957, while the finale (*Largo: allegro*) is dated July 8, 1957, with revision completed on August 19, 1961. Taken in the frame of reference provided by composer’s immediately communicative musical language, the Concerto as a whole offers a well-proportioned sampling of both his gay and serious expression.

Apropos his own inclination to write readily communicative music while being involved in the promotion of much contemporary composition of a far different stripe, Mr. Claflin observes, “It can be said that a nation’s arts are a reflection of its society. But an outsider, listening to a program of our contemporary music, could easily jump to the conclusion that we were a brooding, critical, tragic, rebellious race with a high I.Q. Despite our fair share of ulcers and neuroses, those adjectives do not really characterize us aptly or fairly. We are also friendly, cheerful, fun loving — if sometimes superficial in many areas.

“These are aspects that came to mind in the course of composing this Concerto. Thus the music is readily accessible, requiring neither elaborate program notes nor intense intellectual concentration.

“And why shouldn’t our serious music be merry once in awhile? Precedents for it in other lands are legion.”

GÍSLI MAGNÚSSON is one of a number of gifted concert artists who have come to the fore in Iceland since World War II. Following studies in Reykjavik, he was for four years at the Zurich Conservatory, and then worked with Carlo Zecchi in Rome, after which he made his official concert debut at Reykjavik in 1951. Since then he was concertized extensively throughout Scandinavia and continental Europe.

WILLIAM STRICKLAND, in the course of his nearly twenty-five years of orchestral and choral conducting activity, has made recordings in an astonishingly wide variety of locales — not only in the usual centers of Vienna and New York, but in Oslo, Göteborg, Reykjavik, and Tokyo as well. The present disc is the third in the CRI catalog featuring the Iceland Symphony Orchestra under Mr. Strickland’s direction, the others being of Charles Ives’ *Thanksgiving* (CRI 177), as well as of Henry Cowell’s *Icelandic Symphony*, Jón Leifs, *Iceland Overture*, and Isolfsson’s *Passacaglia* (CRI 179).

ROBERT CORNMAN, conductor of the Lamoureux Orchestra of Paris for the S. L. M. Barlow works on this disc, has been well known as composer, piano soloist, and accompanist. In the latter role, he has recorded seven of the Prokofiev piano sonatas (available on the London label during the 1950’s), and has recently been engaged in a comprehensive disc survey of the piano music of Scriabin.

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*