

ALVIN ETLER

Quintet for Brass Instruments (1964)

NEW YORK BRASS QUINTET Robert E. Nagel, Robert W. Heinrich TRUMPETS

— Barry Benjamin FRENCH HORN — John W. Swallow TROMBONE

— Harvey G. Phillips TUBA

IAIN HAMILTON

Nocturnes with Cadenzas (1963)

PAULINA RUVINSKA PIANO

Sextet (1962) for flute, two clarinets, violin, 'cello, and piano

CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE Arthur Weisberg CONDUCTOR

ALVIN ETLER (b. Battle Creek, Iowa, 1913) has been composing since the middle 1930's, when he completed the first phase of his musical training at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, subsequently playing oboe in the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. The success of his earlier compositions, as evidenced by performances at major contemporary music festivals and two Guggenheim Fellowships, led not only to the abandonment of an oboe-playing career, but to further study at Yale under Paul Hindemith. There were years of teaching at Yale, Cornell, the University of Illinois, and finally a professorship at Smith College—in the course of which, Mr. Etler tells us, “He works insistently to call forth the best in himself as a composer, avidly notes all current trends, occasionally creating one or two of his own.”

Mr. Etler speaks of himself as composer as being “hopefully as informed as possible by the steady stylistic beacon lights of the times and as little as possible by the flicker of passing fashion and nomenclature.”

Among the more than two-dozen works in the Etler catalog, nearly half call upon wind instruments in either solo or ensemble capacity; and perhaps the most successful of Mr. Etler's recent scores has been the Concerto for Wind Quintet and Orchestra, which was premiered by the New York Philharmonic in 1960 and subsequently recorded by the Louisville Orchestra (LOU 651). The Wind Quintet No. 1 (1955) has also been recorded by the New York Woodwind Quintet (Concert-Disc CS 216/CD 1216), while the Bassoon Sonata (1951) has been recorded by Columbia (MS 6421 /ML 5821).

Of the Quintet for Brass Instruments, Mr. Etler writes as follows:

“The music was composed in the spring of 1963 and first performed by the New York Brass Quintet. While a considerable portion of the compositional and instrumental practices are reasonably *au courant*, a post-compositional search for sub-sets, source-sets, and segmental invariances yielded somewhat less than satisfactorily conclusive results.

“The compositional method consisted first in a series of extended confrontations between the composer and some materials which had presented and recommended themselves. Object—mutually sympathetic understanding. There followed a much longer—and I might add, more harrowing--set of daily and nightly combats during which these diverse bits of musical material were invited, cajoled, and sometimes overtly forced to change, grow, follow each other, complement, top, and overlap each other—sometimes to the point of crowding one another out. The aim was to achieve a long (ca. 15 minutes) and consecutive series of sound-forms compatible with the powers of the instruments that would be called upon to reproduce them—sound-forms that would be initially striking and eventually satisfying to the cultivated ear, and ordered in such a way as to produce a total form that might be inadvertently remembered on the day after a twelfth hearing. When the struggles were abandoned at the end of five weeks, the composer and his materials were sufficiently convivial in their attitudes toward each other to arouse hope that it might become contagious for players and listeners as well.”

THE NEW YORK BRASS QUINTET, since its founding during the 1950's, has not only sparked awareness among schools and the general public regarding the existence of a vital chamber brass repertoire of old and new music, they have also looked to its availability in printed form through their own Mentor Music, Inc. publishing firm. Each member of the ensemble stands among the top rank of soloist-teachers in the New York area, and since 1964, the New York Brass Quintet has enjoyed the status of ensemble-in-residence at the Yale University School of Music. Other CRI discs featuring the New York Brass Quintet include Gunther Schuller's *Music for Brass Quintet* (CRI 144), Jacob Druckman's *Dark upon the Harp* (CRI 167), and Arnold Franchetti's *Three Italian Masques* (CRI 125).

IAIN HAMILTON (b. Glasgow, Scotland, 1922) has been since 1962 Mary Duke Biddle Professor of Music at Duke University and consequently has assumed a place of prominence on the American creative and academic scene comparable to that which he has enjoyed in England and his native Scotland since the 1950's when his early works caused him to be heralded as one of the white hopes of the post-Walton generation of British Isles composers. Between 1948 and 1958, Mr. Hamilton entered some thirty-eight opus numbers in his catalog covering such works as the Koussevitzky prize-winning *Symphony No. 2, Op. 10* (1950) to the *Concerto for Jazz Trumpet and Orchestra, Op. 37* (1958) and the *Scottish Dances, Op. 32* (1956). Since then, the opus numbers have been dispensed with, but the creative output has continued unabated. For during his years in America, Hamilton has composed both of the works recorded on this disc, *Arias for Chamber Orchestra* (1962), *Sonatas and Variants for Ten Winds* (1963), *Quintet for Brass* (1965), *Cantos for Orchestra* (1965), *Dialogues for Soprano and Five Players* (1965), *Concerto for Organ and Small Orchestra* (1965), the *The Chaining of Prometheus* for Concert Band (1963). All have received premieres at major musical centers or festivals, and among those representing major commissions, we should cite the *Cantos for Orchestra* written for the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Hamilton's works have been receiving ample attention from recording companies other than CRI, beginning in 1960 when the British Lyrita label issued the Piano Sonata, Op. 13 (1951). Two years later the Louisville Orchestra in this country did the Scottish Dances (LOU 625) and the Scottish National Orchestra followed suit a few months later on the Edinburgh-based Waverley label, which also did the Sinfonia for Two Orchestras (1959). Most recently, London-Argo has released the 'Cello Sonata (1958) and Three Pieces for Piano, Op. 30 (1955). Thus a remarkably wide gamut of Iain Hamilton's work has found its way to discs.

Writing of the *Nocturnes with Cadenzas* recorded here, Mr. Hamilton notes:

"This work was written for Paulina Ruvinska on the occasion of her New York Town Hall recital of February 1964. It is preceded in point of composition chronology by three other works for piano—an early Sonata (1951), the Three Pieces (1955), and a Piano Concerto (1960). The Nocturnes represent a further development of the piano style found in the concerto. There are four nocturnes which are separated by three cadenzas--the first and third cadenzas being rapid and brief, the second being longer and, in a sense, the core of the whole work.

"As in the Sextet written a year earlier, all seven sections of the *Nocturnes with Cadenzas* have close interrelationships and there are reworkings of certain basic material either in short blocks or in longer sections. In the central cadenza there is repeated rotation of the material. Much exploitation is made of the upper keyboard register, particularly in the opening Nocturne. In the third Nocturne, lyricism of texture predominates, as against the linear lyricism found in the other three."

Concerning the Sextet, Mr. Hamilton tells us:

"The work was commissioned by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation for the performing members of the Duke University faculty. It was written during early 1962 and was first performed at Duke under my direction in February 1963. The New York premiere was given at an International Society for Contemporary Music Concert in March 1964, with Arthur Weisberg conducting. It was subsequently taken into the repertoire of Mr. Weisberg's Contemporary Chamber Ensemble and played on tour.

"The music falls into five sections — *Prelude: Andante; Prestissimo; Interlude: Adagio; Prestissimo; Postlude: Lento*. The first, third, and fifth are related by way of the same basic material, as are the second and fourth. As with several other works of mine composed in recent years, this element of close interrelationship with continuous reworking of blocks of material separated by cadenza interpolations, is the structural basis for the work as a whole. The Sinfonia for Two Orchestras, the Piano Concerto, and the Cantos for Orchestra—all follow a similar line of development. The function of the cadenza episodes is twofold—to free the individual performers momentarily from the prevailing total polyphony, and by the same token, to throw the emphasis on individual virtuosity, thereby providing further contrast in texture. The cadenzas in the Sextet come to the fore chiefly in the second and fourth sections; but the final section eventually evolves toward a close which actually becomes a cadenza for piano."

ARTHUR WEISBERG and THE CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE have won a notable reputation during the 1960's for their brilliant performances of advanced contemporary music, ranging in point of time from that of such "old masters" as Ives and Varèse to that of such post-World War II luminaries as Boulez, Stockhausen, and the youngest generation of Americans. A virtuoso bassoonist himself, Arthur Weisberg is also on the conducting and teaching faculty of the Juilliard School of Music, where his major is devoted to "Performing Problems of Contemporary Music."

The seventeen members of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble are drawn from such outstanding groups as the New York Woodwind Quintet, the Beaux Arts and Claremont string quartets, the New York Brass Quintet, and the Manhattan Percussion Ensemble. Major concert appearances have included engagements at many major universities, the Library of Congress, and New York City's Town Hall. In 1965, Arthur Weisberg and the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble were appointed ensemble-in-residence to Rutgers University, and under the aegis of the Committee for International Composers Concerts, Ltd., has embarked on an extensive contemporary music series at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York. Their appearance on this disc is by arrangement with the Committee. Other CRI recordings by Arthur Weisberg and the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble include William Sydeman: Music for Flute, Viola, Guitar, and Percussion; Concerto da camera No. 2; Ramiro Cortes: Chamber Concerto (all on CRI 181); and the Easley Blackwood Chamber Symphony (CRI 144).

PAULINA RUVINSKA has performed extensively with major orchestras throughout the United States and Europe, winning particular praise for her Mozart interpretations. Her solo repertoire encompasses a wide range, from the classic and romantic roasters, through an extensive literature of French, Hispanic and modern Russian music, to the work of the advanced contemporary school. Besides the *Nocturnes with Cadenzas*, which were written for her, Miss Ruvinska has given American premieres of Iain Hamilton's Piano Sonata, Three Pieces, and 'Cello Sonata

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)