

NICOLAI BEREZOWSKY

Christmas Festival Overture, Op.. 30 No. 2 (1943)

ULYSSES KAY Fantasy Variations (1963)

NORMAN DELLO JOIO

New York Profiles (1949)

*Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra*

*ARTHUR BENNETT LIPKIN conductor*

NICOLAI BEREZOWSKY (1900-1953) was born and trained in pre-Revolutionary Russia, where he studied singing, violin, and piano — graduating from the St. Petersburg Court Chapel in 1916. After a few years of playing violin in the opera orchestras of Saratov and Moscow, young Berezowsky took the decision to go to the West; and, once arrived in New York, in 1922, he became thoroughly established in American musical life as violinist (in the New York Philharmonic and the Coolidge String Quartet), as conductor, and as composer. Serge Koussevitzky in Boston was a staunch champion of Berezowsky's music, and his four symphonies were played both there and elsewhere by major American orchestras. Other major Berezowsky works include a Harp Concerto, a *Concerto Lirico* for 'cello and orchestra (premiered by Piatigorsky and Koussevitzky), concertos for violin, for viola, and for theremin; chamber works including a pair of string quartets and two woodwind quintets; and a large-scale cantata on the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh.

While the dominant stylistic traits of Berezowsky's larger works might be called between-the-wars Franco-Russian, with Prokofiev as a point of departure, he had a great gift for composing sparkling lighter pieces, and achieved a major popular success just a few months before his death with an operatic treatment for children of Jean de Brunhoff's famous *Babar the Elephant*..

Berezowsky's *Christmas Festival Overture* is another charming example of his writing in the lighter vein, being built on Ukrainian children's Christmas carols. Howard Barlow commissioned the music and premiered it with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony on December 23, 1943. Notes Berezowsky of his work, “The most famous of all Russian Christmas carols are the *koliadki* almost all of which come from the Ukraine. For this Overture I have used some of the *koliadki* that children sing as they go from house to house on Christmas Eve, singing and dancing.”

ULYSSES KAY (b. 1917) came from his native Tucson, Arizona, after graduating from the University of Arizona, to study at the Eastman School of Music. He also worked at the Tanglewood Berkshire Music Center, Yale, and Columbia University—and the roster of his teachers has included Bernard Rogers, Howard Hanson, Paul Hindemith, and Otto Luening.

Following completion of wartime service in the Navy, Mr. Kay over the following years garnered just about every fellowship and award available to an up-and-coming young

American composer—these including the Columbia University Alice M. Ditson Award, the Broadcast Music, Inc. Award, the Prix de Rome, a Fulbright Grant to Italy, and an American Academy/Institute of Arts and Letters grant. Since 1953, Mr. Kay has been editorial advisor on the staff of Broadcast Music, Inc.

Beginning with his Sinfonietta for Orchestra in 1939, Mr. Kay's catalog of compositions has swelled to more than sixty, the more notable being the overture *Of New Horizons* (1944), the Sinfonia in E (1950) (recorded on CRI 139), the Louisville-commissioned Serenade for Orchestra (1954) (recorded on Louisville LOU 548-8), *Trigon* for wind Orchestra 1961, the Fantasy Variations (1963) recorded here, the Third String Quartet (1961) and Brass Quartet (1950) (recorded on Folkways 3651), two operas — *The Boor* (1955, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation) and *The Juggler of Our Lady*, more than a dozen major works for solo voice and for chorus, — in particular the *Inscriptions from Whitman* (1964), a small but choice sheaf of piano pieces, three works for band, plus a sizeable list of film and television scores.

Among the other recorded works of Ulysses Kay are Umbrian Scene (1964) (Louisville LOU 651), Round Dance and Polka (1954) (CRI 119), Choral Triptych 1962 (Cambridge 1416/416), and two madrigals — *How Stands the Glass Around* and *What's in a Name* (CRI 102). Mr. Kay's Fantasy Variations were commissioned by Arthur Bennett Lipkin and premiered by the Portland, Maine, Symphony Orchestra under his direction on November 19, 1963. Writes Mr. Kay of the music and its genesis:

“Over the years musical ideas or materials occur to a composer as he works along from day to day. Most often these ideas are fragmentary motives, distinctive rhythms, or merely relationships between notes. In themselves the import of these ideas is negligible, but they are important for the composer, for they are the raw material out of which a composition grows.

“Just such an experience happened to me, beginning in 1958, with the materials used in my Fantasy Variations. The opening horn motive was jotted down then in my sketchbook, and other related ideas came to me from time to time. Though I had no idea what kind of piece these ideas might make, they stayed on my mind until Mr. Lipkin commissioned an orchestral piece from me. Then their purpose became clear, and I wrote the work between March and July of 1963.

“The piece consists of an introduction and thirteen variations, followed by the theme. Motivic ideas are stated in the introduction and fused for development in the succeeding variations. Then specific elements from this material are unified to form the theme, which, I feel, provides a noble and fitting conclusion to the work. The interplay of these musical materials is what led me to call the piece Fantasy Variations.”

NORMAN DELLO JOIO (b. 1913) grew up in New York, the son of Italian-born organist Casimiro Dello Joio, received his musical training at the Juilliard School of Music and at the Yale School of Music under Paul Hindemith. Over a nearly thirty-year period more than a hundred compositions have come from his pen, some of them among the most successful and brilliant works in the American concert repertoire. We need only recall the Variations, Chaconne, and Finale for Orchestra (1947) and the thematically-related Third Piano Sonata of the following year, the ballet *On Stage!* (1946), the choral-orchestral *Psalm of David* (1950), and *The Triumph of St. Joan Symphony*, used by Martha Graham as the basis for her dance production, *Seraphic Dialogue* (1951), and the *New York Profiles* on this disc.

As Edward Downes indicates in his April 1962 Musical Quarterly article, *The Music of Norman Dello Joio*, the chief conditioning factors underlying Dello Joio's musical language have been Gregorian Chant, to which he was inescapably exposed as a boy, his studies with Paul Hindemith, the jazz idiom which was all around him during his growing years, and the melodism of Giuseppe Verdi—like Gregorian Chant, an inescapable part of his heritage and up-bringing.

Among the other major Dello Joio works that should be mentioned in addition to those already noted are the two operas, *The Triumph of St. Joan* (1958 — final version) and the Ford Foundation-commissioned *Blood Moon* 1961, as well as the Fantasy and Variations for Piano and Orchestra (1961). Chief among the other Dello Joio works available on discs besides the one recorded here are the Fantasy and Variations (RCA Victor LSC/LM 2667), *Meditations on Ecclesiastes* for String Orchestra (1956)(CRI 110), Serenade for Orchestra (1948) (Desto 6413/4, 413/4) and Epigraph for Orchestra (Desto 6416/416), and Piano Sonata No. 3 (Concert-Disc 217/1217).

*New York Profiles* was commissioned by and dedicated to Augustus H. Searle, then Honorary Vice-President of the Musical Arts Society of La Jolla, California. The late Nikolai Sokoloff, conductor of the Musical Arts Society Orchestra of La Jolla, led the premiere on August 21, 1949 and recorded the score for the Alco label shortly thereafter. The present CRI disc directed by Arthur Bennett Lipkin marks the first recording since deletion of the Alco recording in the middle 1950's.

Gregorian Chant furnishes the basic thematic substance for *New York Profiles*. The opening movement—*The Cloisters*, evocative of the transplanted medieval monastery overlooking the Hudson River from the heights of Fort Tryon— makes use of the Mass *Orbis factor* melody employed for the *Kyrie* and *Ite missa est*. Bits of the chant combined with recollections of children's play songs are built into the sprightly caprice entitled *The Park*. The chorale-fantasy is a hymnic meditation on *The Tomb*—whose identity we discover by way of the moving quotation from *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* that closes the movement. Festal Dance—*Little Italy* makes for a brilliant finale, evocative of the San Gennaro festival on lower Manhattan's Mulberry Street. Here the Gregorian melody is used with great skill both as the basis for accompaniment figuration and as basic, thematic material,

NOTES PREPARED BY D. H.

ARTHUR BENNETT LIPKIN received his early (musical) training in London, England and at the age of eighteen became the youngest member of the famed Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski and Eugene Ormandy.

From 1950 (for a decade) Mr. Lipkin was music director and conductor of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra which he established and brought to a high level of perfection. He expanded the musical activities of the city to include a Civic Opera, a Civic Ballet and the annual International Festival of the Arts.

As musical director of the Portland Maine Symphony Mr. Lipkin initiated a program of major commissions from outstanding American composers. The Ulysses Kay Fantasy Variations on this disc was the first of this series of world premieres, followed by Daniel Pinkham's Suite—*Signs of the Zodiac*, and Walter Piston's *Pine Tree Fantasy*, etc.

THE OSLO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA has been represented on many occasions in the CRI catalog, not only under the direction of its regular conductor, Øivin Fjeldstad (Egge: Piano Concerto No. 2— CR1 184), but under such well known American guest conductors as Alfredo Antonini, George Barati, Igor Buketoff, Elie Siegmeister, and William Strickland. The present disc represents the first recording by the Oslo Philharmonic under Arthur Bennett Lipkin's baton.

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*