

JOHN CORIGLIANO, JR.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1963)

**JOHN CORIGLIANO, Sr. violin—RALPH VOTAPEK piano**

GERALD STRANG

Concerto for 'cello with woodwinds and piano (1951)

**GABOR REJTO 'cello — ARCHIE WADE flute — NORMAN BENNO oboe**

**JOHN NEUFELD clarinet — DON CHRISTLIEB bassoon — GERALD STRANG conductor**

JOHN CORIGLIANO, JR. (b. New York City, 1938) attended Columbia University, graduating *cum laude* in 1959. A composition pupil of Otto Luening, Paul Creston and the late Vittorio Giannini, he gained initial recognition through Gian Carlo Menotti's Spoleto, Italy Festival of Two Worlds where his *Kaleidoscope* for two pianos was premiered in 1961. That same year, Hugh Ross conducted a chorus and orchestra in New York in the first performance of *Fern Hill*, Corigliano's setting of the Dylan Thomas poem for chorus, mezzo-soprano and orchestra. The Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood was the scene, in 1962, of the premiere of a setting of Stephen Spender's poem *What I Expected Was . . .* for chorus, brass and percussion, and, in 1964, the *Violin Sonata* recorded here, was premiered at the Spoleto Festival. A song cycle to poems of William Hoffman, *The Cloisters*, received a first performance in Town Hall in 1965, and, in 1966, the San Francisco Symphony premiered the composer's *Elegy for Orchestra*. (All the above works are published by G. Schirmer, Inc.) A newly completed orchestral overture, numerous smaller works (mostly chamber and vocal) and incidental music to nearly a dozen plays complete the Corigliano catalog at present. In progress is a piano concerto commissioned for the 1967-8 season by the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra and a vocal-chamber work commissioned by LADO for the New York Chamber Soloists.

Corigliano Jr. has devoted his non-composing hours to writing and musical direction in the broadcasting fields, having been Music Director of New York's WBAI-FM for several years, and, previous to that, a programmer and writer for WQXR and assistant director for the CBS-TV New York Philharmonic Young People's Concerts. At present, he heads his own organization, *Music for the Theatre*.

The *Violin Sonata* was unanimously chosen by judges Walter Piston, Samuel Barber, Gian Carlo Menotti, Gardner Read and Charles Wadsworth from the over 100 entries in the 1964 Spoleto-Festival Competition for the Creative Arts (sponsored by Boston University). This was the first time in the history of the competition that an award was given.

The world premiere of Mr. Corigliano's *Violin Sonata* took place at the 1964 Spoleto Festival with violinist Yoko Matsuda and pianist Charles Wadsworth. Roman Totenberg and Carol Rand gave the American premiere in March, 1965, and shortly after that, the composer's father and then concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, John Corigliano, Sr., performed the work in New York with pianist Ralph Votapek.

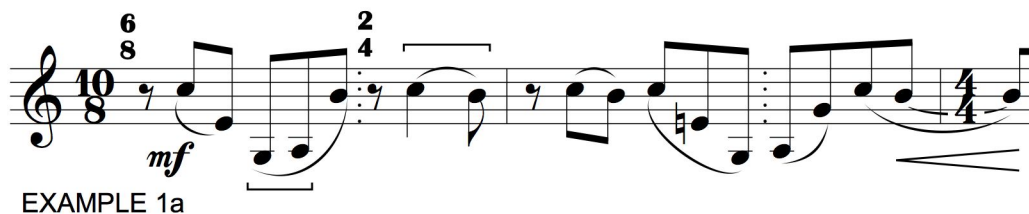
The New York Times critic characterized the Sonata as “. . . an engaging, extroverted work with plenty of technical skill (which is not rare in today's music) and personality (which is) behind it . . .” and went on to say that “Mr. Corigliano has the audacity and the skill to take an old musical joke like the perpetual-motion finale and restate it in modern terms without sounding simple-minded and without losing the point ... he has an important future.”

Of the work itself, Mr. Corigliano tells us:

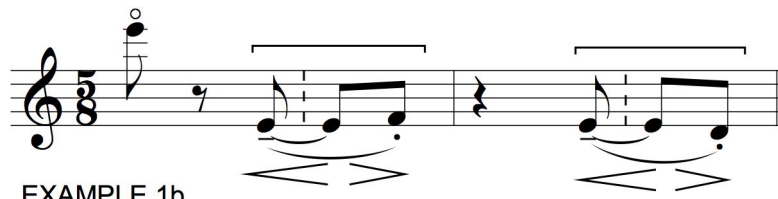
“The Sonata, written during 1962-3, is for the most part a tonal work although it incorporates non-tonal and poly-tonal sections within it as well as other 20th century harmonic, rhythmic and constructional techniques. The listener will recognize the work as a product of an American writer although this is more the result of an American writing music than writing 'American' music—a second-nature, unconscious action on the composer's part. Rhythmically, the work is extremely varied. Meters change in almost every measure, and independent rhythmic patterns in each instrument are common. The *Violin Sonata* was originally entitled *Duo*, and therefore obviously treats both instruments as co-partners. Virtuosity is of great importance in adding color and energy to the work which is basically an optimistic statement, but the virtuosity is always motivated by musical means. To cite an example: the last movement rondo includes in it a virtuosic polyrhythmic and polytonal perpetual motion whose thematic material and accompaniment figures are composed of three distinct elements derived from materials stated in the beginning of the movement. The 16th-note perpetual motion theme is originally a counterpoint to the movement's initial theme. Against this are set two figures—an augmentation of the movement's primary theme. and, in combination with that, a 5/8 rhythmic ostinato utilized originally to accompany a totally different earlier passage. All three elements combine to form a new virtuoso perpetual motion theme which is, of course, subjected to further development and elaboration.”

The Sonata is in four movements—*Allegro*, *Andantino*, *Lento* and *Allegro*—tonally centered around C, D, G minor and D respectively. Use of the interval of a second (and its inversion, the seventh) serves to unite all four movements motivically, melodically and harmonically.

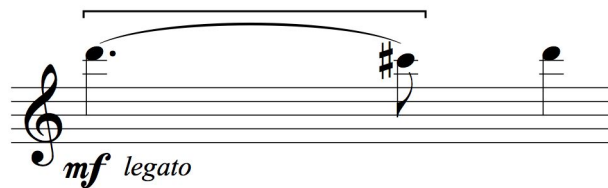
The first movement is short and basically non-developmental. A lively theme



introduced by a brief fanfare-like passage, is set mosaic-fashion against the movement's other elements. Secondal intervals introduced in the opening theme are expanded into other brief motives



EXAMPLE 1b



EXAMPLE 1c

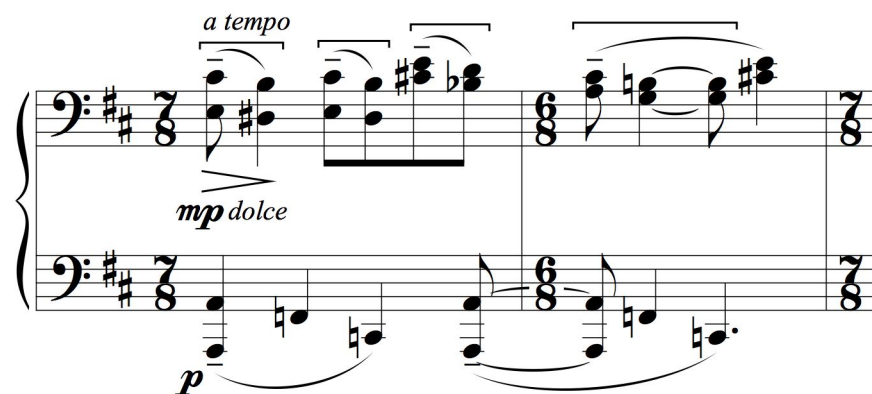
which result in material utilized for the opening theme of the second movement.

The *Andantino* is in a modified sonata form, and begins with a statement of the opening theme



EXAMPLE 2

derived from the earlier elements (1c). A variant of this first theme serves as second theme



EXAMPLE 3

and both are combined to form yet a third theme. Out of these elements grow the two expressive peaks of the movement which concludes as gently as it began.

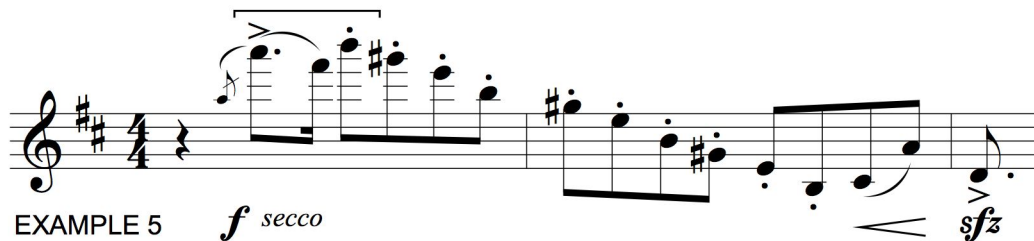
The third movement is cast as an arch-form recitative and cadenza. A short dramatic piano solo introduces the violin recitative which uses material from the second interval



EXAMPLE 4

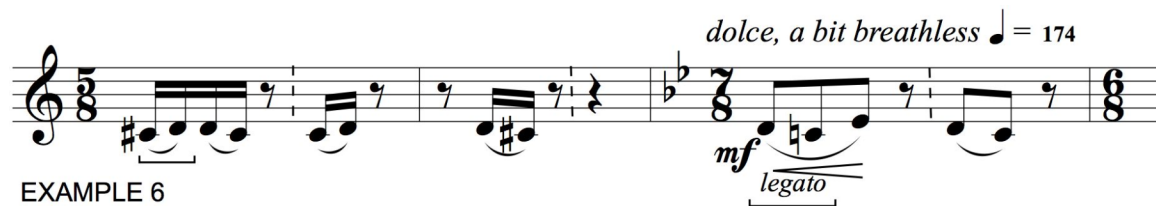
and grows in intensity into the cadenza episode, which then brings the tension of line and dynamics to an even higher peak. When the movement's emotion has been spent, the piano quietly re-enters, concluding the movement with three hushed echoes of the two-note secondal motto.

The final movement is a modified rondo which begins with a lively theme



EXAMPLE 5

based on triads a second apart. This shortly gives way to a series of violin glissandi played against a 5/8 ostinato. The perpetual motion episode described earlier follows, and leads to a breathless new theme



EXAMPLE 6

The original statement returns and another build-up ensues, this time culminating in a piano cadenza and a repeat of the perpetual motion in extended form. A virtuosic coda follows, and after a brief recollection of the fanfare that opened the sonata, the movement rushes to its conclusion in a frenetic cascade of seconds.

GERALD STRANG (b. Claresholm,, Alberta, Canada, 1908) is a seasoned veteran of the “advanced contemporary music” wars, whose work was taken up in the early 1930's by the late Henry Cowell for his famed New Music Editions series (he was himself managing editor from 1935-40). Presently Professor of Music and Chairman of the Music Department at California State College in Long Beach, Dr. Strang has lived and worked in the U.S. (chiefly on the West coast) since the early 1920's and has taught at the University of California, and the University of Southern California. His composition studies have been with Charles Koechlin, Arnold Schoenberg, and Ernst Toch; and his musicological interests have embraced a variety of studies, including the production of a dissertation on *Dissonance Treatment in the English Madrigals*. During World War II, Dr. Strang worked in the engineering department of Douglas Aircraft, and in the years since then he has done much work in the field of building acoustics and has been a consultant to the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Beginning in 1931 with *Mirrororrism* for piano---a study in inversion technique which Nicholas Slonimsky has described as “rationalist music,” Dr. Strang has since produced some two-dozen compositions, including a pair of symphonies (1942 and 1947), a Sonatina for Clarinet Alone (1931-32—recorded in the 1930's by fellow-composer Robert McBride on the New Music label), Percussion Music for Three Players (1935—currently available on Period S 743), a choral setting of Three Excerpts from Walt Whitman (1950), a Divertimento for Four Instruments (1948), a Violin Sonata (1949), Concerto Grosso (1950), the 'Cello Concerto recorded here (1951), and Variations for Four Instruments.

Dr. Strang's most recent works are conceived solely for computer-derived electronic tape combines, these being Composition 2 and 3 (1963), Composition 4 and Experand (1965), and Composition 5 (1966).

Speaking of his decision to move in this direction, Dr. Strang observes,

“In the ten years from 1953 to 1963, I wrote very little—nothing of major scope. It was a period of personal difficulties and major aesthetic readjustment. I was not attracted to the extremes of determinism or of indeterminism so strongly espoused in the fifties. And I felt less and less convinced of the validity of the conventional pitch series dividing the octave into twelve tones.

“Since 1963, I have been working almost exclusively with computer sound synthesis and compositional techniques. It has become quite clear that our traditional pitch system is dispensible. Since it is frozen into our traditional instruments, they must be given up with the twelve tones-per-octave. The rhythmic limitations of group performance are equally dispensible.

“The explorations opened up by computer techniques promise to occupy me so fully in the future that I have no plans to write further music for human performance on acoustical instruments.”

Concerning the music recorded here, Dr. Strang notes:

“The Concerto for 'Cello with woodwinds and piano was written during the summer of 1951 and completed in August. The first performance was at a concert of the Evenings on the Roof series, at that time still managed by Peter Yates. The concert took place on February 11, 1952 at West Hollywood

Auditorium. The soloist was Kurt Reher, who is now first 'cellist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. It was performed then, and on subsequent occasions by George Neikrug and Gabor Rejto without conductor. Though I did conduct the recording and immediately preceding performance, I prefer to think of the work as chamber music.

"The Concerto is the culminating work of a post-war series embracing the Three Excerpts from Walt Whitman (for a cappella choir), the Concerto Grosso, the Divertimento, and Variations for Four Instruments, as well as some smaller works. Technically, these works share a preoccupation with quartal sonorities; the use of twelve-tone rows for melodic purposes only; compact, concentrated structures; and non-tonal material which does not sound 'atonal.'

"All the prominent melodic material of the Concerto consists of straightforward transformations of twelve-tone series, stated twice at the initial 'cello entry. The 'cello never departs from this row, except in a few measures where it assumes an accompanying role and the thematic material is picked up by another instrument.

"The vertical sonorities and the melodic material of the supporting instruments are only loosely related to the row. The preponderance, in the row, of perfect fourths and fifths and seconds suggests quartal sonorities.

"Formally, the Concerto is a single uninterrupted movement which is built much like Schoenberg's First Kammermusik. It is a kind of expanded sonata *allegro*, with portions of the development taking on the character of *scherzo* and *adagio*,

"In a less technical sense, the Concerto allows the 'cello to sing against the contrasting sounds of the woodwinds, with all other strings eliminated."

#### NOTES PREPARED BY D.H.

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JOHN CORIGLIANO, Sr., father of composer Corigliano, Jr. needs no introduction to those who have attended concerts or heard broadcasts and recordings of the New York Philharmonic since 1935. This New York-born pupil of Leopold Auer was chosen by Arturo Toscanini to be the orchestra's new concertmaster. During the following thirty-one years, Mr. Corigliano not only proved himself indispensable to succeeding maestri such as John Barbirolli, Arthur Rodzinski, Dimitri Mitropoulos and Leonard Bernstein, but he has played dozens of concerti, familiar and unusual, with the Philharmonic, in addition to innumerable solo and recital engagements across the country.

RALPH VOTAPEK, Milwaukee-born, Juilliard-trained (Rosina Lhevinne and Robert Goldsand) concert virtuoso came into international prominence in 1962 upon winning the \$10,000.00 Van Cliburn International Competition. In the years that followed, young Votapek has played across the country with most of the major orchestras and in recital.

GABOR REJTO, Budapest-born and resident in the U. S. since 1939, is among the most gifted of the many brilliant performing musicians who make their homes on the West Coast. As chamber musician, he has been associated with the Lener and Gordon string quartets, and is 'cellist of the Alma Trio which currently records for the Decca Label. He has headed the 'cello and chamber music departments at the Eastman School of Music, has been chairman of the string department of the School of Music at the University of Southern California, and gives master classes at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara

*(Original notes from CRI LP jacket)*