

1. George Crumb: *Night Music I* (1963) (18:35)
 Louise Toth, soprano
 Paul Parmelee, piano and celesta
 David Burge, percussion I
 Thomas MacCluskey, percussion II
2. Robert Erickson: Chamber Concerto (1960) (21:00)
 Hartt Chamber Players
 Ralph Shapey, conductor

George Crumb was born in 1929 in Charleston, West Virginia, and began his musical studies with his father. His mature musical training took place under Ross Lee Finney and in Germany under a Fulbright Fellowship. He has received a Rockefeller Grant, under which he worked at Buffalo's Center for the Creative and Performing Arts during 1964, the same year he received a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation. In 1967 he received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Institute of Arts and Letters. His music has been performed by leading symphony orchestras. George Crumb now teaches composition at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Night Music I was composed during the spring of 1963, when Crumb was living in Boulder, Colorado. He recalls that he had started it as a purely instrumental composition, but that it only came into focus when he decided to include two verses by the modern Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca. It is scored for soprano, piano-celesta, and percussion.

The composition is in seven movements, called nocturnes (*notturmi*). The third and fifth nocturnes contain the poems, and the composer describes them as "buttress points" in the arch of the whole musical structure. Both poetic settings are enhanced by Crumb's use of a highly colored chromaticism and unusual juxtapositions of timbre, register, and rhythmic patterns. The first poem, "La Luna Asoma" ("The Moon Rises"), is labeled "lyrical, fantastic," the second, "Gacela de la Terrible Presencia" ("Gacela of the Terrible Presence"), "shadowy, hesitant, almost without movement."

The sound-world of *Night Music I* is part of Crumb's increasingly personal idiom. It makes use of a wide variety of sounds produced by direct manipulation of the strings of the piano. Perhaps the most hauntingly beautiful sound is that of a water-gong glissando, which is used as an eerie framework for "La Luna Asoma." The effect must be heard to be appreciated. Perhaps it is just as well that it cannot be seen by listeners to this record; it is produced by lowering the vibrating gong slowly into (or raising it slowly out of) a tub of water, an operation that has moved live audiences to inappropriate giggles.

Robert Erickson was born in 1917 in Marquette, Michigan, into a family that made music regularly and frequently. By the age of seven he was playing piano, by nine the violin, by fifteen he was beginning to compose, and by twenty he had given up playing in favor of composing.

Erickson's compositional style immediately started passing through several phases. His early production was the student's traditional counterpoint, but he favored an atonal style which led him to studies with Ernst Krenek starting in 1936. Despite the fact that Krenek was known as a twelve-tone composer, Erickson says that the distinguishing characteristic of his own style of those years was rather of rigorous, imitational counterpoint. This phase was brought to an end when he wrote a book, *The Structure of Music: A Listener's Guide to Melody and Counterpoint* (Noonday Press, 1955), which, he feels, purged him of his contrapuntal obsession.

After another rather traditional phase, Erickson again moved into the atonal area, but now with a preoccupation about shifting rhythms in an attempt to achieve “organized but unmechanized ebbing, racing, fluid, rhythmical entity.” His concept of rhythm, he says, “reflects motions more biological than mechanical, like the motions of the body or the flight of birds.”

The most recent of Erickson’s musical preoccupations is improvisation, which he limits and controls by a framework of fully-composed accompaniment. He feels, in general, that he is more of an intuitive than an intellectual composer; his use of controlled improvisation extends into the hands of the players themselves.

Erickson received his B.A. and M.A. in music at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota, under Krenek; he studied with Roger Sessions at Berkeley, and was head of the theory and composition department of the San Francisco Conservatory. He has received grants from Yaddo, the Ford Foundation and the Guggenheim Foundation. In June 1967 he took up his duties as professor of music at the University of California at San Diego.

Chamber Concerto calls for an ensemble of seventeen players. It was first performed by the Wesleyan Chamber Ensemble in 1962. After a performance by the Hartt Chamber Players at a concert of the International Society for Contemporary Music the following year in New York, Alan Rich wrote in *The New York Times* that the music was “substantial and rewarding;” he described the music as taking its point of departure from Webern’s Op. 10 orchestra pieces, adding that Erickson “has proved, as few other proponents of the Webern style have, that this kind of music can be writ large and succeed.”

—Carter Harman

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(Original Liner Noters from CRI LP jacket)