

## CRI 238

### NED ROREM

#### SOME TREES

Phyllis Curtain, soprano; Beverly Wolff, contralto;  
Donald Gramm, baritone

#### LITTLE ELEGY

#### NIGHT CROW

#### THE TULIP TREE

#### LOOK DOWN, FAIR MOON

#### WHAT SPARKS AND WIRY CRIES

#### FOR POULENC

Phyllis Curtin and Donald Gramm  
Ned Rorem, piano

### DAVID WARD-STEINMAN

#### FRAGMENTS FROM SAPPHO

Phyllis Curtain, soprano  
Samuel Baron, flute; David Glazer, clarinet  
David Ward-Steinman, piano

Although NED ROREM has composed for all instrumental media and for the opera stage, it is in the field of song that he is probably most known. The songs here have never been recorded before, and the vocal trio, SOME TREES, received its world premiere just shortly before this recording was made. Mr. Rorem writes:

“Ever since as a teenager I started writing songs — shortish settings of quality poems for single voice with piano accompaniment — I’ve been tempted by the flashily thicker textures of trios and quintets and such. But either from sloth or shrewdness I never did anything about it. Off the opera stage these groupings were rare: the vocal ensemble not being a standard chamber medium, at least not in this century, there seemed little reason for composing one. Even the delicious duets of Mendelssohn and Schumann or Brahms’ unique **Liebeslieder Waltzes** were exceptions to their time and written more for fun than money. Community fun, amateur participation, has not been a major preoccupation of modern art (Christmas carols notwithstanding), and even the solo voice recital has verged on extinction. Lately, though, with the Beatles’ advent—not to mention mixed-media Happenings throughout the globe—there seems to be a reawakening of the musical pleasure principle and of group participation.

“Even so, I would probably never have come to composing an ensemble were it not for a practical impetus. SOME TREES is a trio designed for specific singers on a specific occasion. The singers are those on this record. The occasion was a recital (Town Hall, December 12, 1968) on which each soloist separately performed a group of my songs. It seemed appropriate to end the concert by joining the artists in a group offering. So I composed this cycle.”

DAVID WARD-STEINMAN was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1936, and pursued a musical education through the University of Florida (Bachelor of Music), University of Illinois (M.M. and D.M.A.), and with Nadia Boulanger among other teachers. After settling in California, he began receiving an impressive list of awards, citations, commissions and performances, which continues to grow. He is (1969) Professor of Music at San Diego State College.

Of FRAGMENTS FROM SAPPHO, the composer writes:

“The actual composition took 3 1/2 years, for it had to be sandwiched in between a number of larger-scale commissioned works — an oratorio (THE SONG OF MOSES), two concertos, and two ballets. Songs 1-3-5 are scored for the full ensemble — soprano, flute, clarinet and piano. Song #2 omits the clarinet, Song #4 the flute, and Song #6 (EPILOG) the piano, so that each of the instruments is featured in turn with the voice.

“The first performance took place 29 April 1966 in La Jolla (California) with Emma Small as soloist in a concert of “Poetry and Modern Music” sponsored by the La Jolla Theatre Group.”

PHYLLIS CURTIN, who sings all but two of the selections on this record, has a varied and distinguished career as opera star and recitalist which is currently (1969) being climaxed with her appearances with the Metropolitan Opera. She is equally admired by connoisseurs of contemporary music for the warmth and musicianly approach which she so graciously bestows on it.

BEVERLY WOLFF is one of the nation's most exciting mezzo-sopranos. She created the title role in Douglas Moore's CARRY NATION with the New York City Opera in 1968, and made such an impression as Erika in the Washington Opera Society's performance of Samuel Barber's VANESSA, that one reviewer wrote that it might easily have been titled ERIKA.

DONALD GRAMM is a protean performer, with a vast repertoire. He has sung with the nation's major opera companies (including the Metropolitan and the New York City), and orchestras, everywhere winning almost ecstatic praise. He created the role of John in Ned Rorem's opera, MISS JULIE.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters and its parent organization, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, are honorary societies with a distinguished membership of creative artists. They are chartered by an act of Congress and are devoted to the furtherance of the arts in the United States.

Through joint committees of selection, these societies every year award fifteen grants to young artists in recognition of distinction and promise. Four of these awards go annually to composers, in addition to the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award given every third year to an established composer of distinction.

In the spring an exhibition of the works of award winners in painting and sculpture is held at the Academy building. In 1956, it was decided to inaugurate a series of recordings with the similar purpose of calling attention to the works of award winners in music. This release, presented in collaboration with Composers Recordings, Inc., offers works by 1968 award winner, Ned Rorem.

The Ward-Steinman recording was made possible by a grant from the American Composers Alliance.

*(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP Jacket)*