

**CRI 244**

**EZRA LADERMAN**

**STRING QUARTET No. 2**

**Isidore Cohen, Hiroko Yajima, violins**

**Samuel Rhodes, viola**

**Robert Sylvester, cello**

**MARK BRUNSWICK**

**STRING QUARTET (contrabass)**

**SEVEN TRIOS FOR STRING QUARTET**

**Felix Galimir, Hiroko Yajima, violins**

**Samuel Rhodes, viola; Fortunato Arico, cello**

**Julius Levine, contrabass**

EZRA LADERMAN (b. 1924) has been recognized as one of the important younger composers of mid-century America. He is the recipient of a rare trio of Guggenheim Fellowships as well as many other prizes. He has been commissioned most recently by the New York City Opera (SHADOWS AMONG US, libretto by Norman Rosten), the Minnesota Symphony (CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA, 1968-69) and CBS-TV (GALILEO, with libretto by Joe Darion). He has composed scores for two Oscar-winning movies, THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT STORY and THE BLACK FOX. He has no fewer than fifteen scores published by the Oxford University Press, with more in the works.

Like Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions and George Gershwin, Ezra Laderman was born in Brooklyn. Music occupied his attention as far back as he can remember. He attended the High School of Music and Art, where a performance of his PIANO CONCERTO convinced him — if he had been in doubt — that he should devote his life to music. He was with the Army in Europe when hostilities ceased. After conducting a performance of his LEIPZIG SYMPHONY, composed after its liberation, he became the official orchestrator for the GI Symphony Orchestra. Returning home, he studied with Stefan Wolpe for three years, and then with Otto Luening, at Columbia, earning his M.A. there.

Mr. Laderman feels a strong affinity for the string quartet as a medium. He has now written three, and feels sure he will write more. The medium, he says, is practically unique in its cohesiveness; the interdependence between the players, he feels, allows him to let his imagination range freely with a minimum of the practical restrictions that would be imposed by larger groups. He is also affectionately aware of "what has gone before" — the music of his predecessors — and, in fact, says that the opening of this quartet reflects Beethoven's Grosse Fugue.

QUARTET No. 2 was composed in 1963-64, near the end of a period when Laderman was engrossed in the technique of "continuous development." It makes use of a broadly pointillist technique that results in a brilliant tapestry of sound that Musical America said, "seethes with sombre intensity." The entire three movements are built on a single 24-note line. This line is made up of four "cells" and they make up the four phrases of the initial presentation of what is clearly and unequivocally a theme — to some listeners a welcome rarity. After a second complete statement is offered by the cello, the notes of each cell in turn serve as the basis for a brief development, then again for a longer development. Finally, the whole line reappears as the movement ends.

The second movement, a scherzo, is based on a transformation of the original line. The composer points to the true recapitulation here as evidence that, despite his use of certain serial techniques, this is not strictly a 12-tone composition. The trio is notable in that the entire line is exposed simultaneously on separate (and distinct) levels. The finale is a cumulative accelerando, the movement gathering speed inexorably, with only an occasional moment of serenity to provide relief.

This is Ezra Laderman's third appearance on CRI, the others being on CRI 126 and 130.

MARK BRUNSWICK is, will-he nill-he, lumped by historians of today's music with Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions (will-they nill-they) as a distinguished and comparatively sane voice of the 1930s. Like them, he was active in the various "movements" notably the Schoenberg group in Vienna and the International Society for Contemporary Music — U.S.A. Section, of which he was chairman — whose main purpose was giving concerts of music that the musical establishment would not play. He was also a devoted music educator, being chairman of the Department of Music of the City College of New York from 1948 until his retirement in 1966. Perhaps because he gave so much energy to these activities, the catalogue of his music is relatively short, including several large symphonic works, a number of shorter vocal pieces and a handful of chamber works of which this recording contains two of the most important.

Mr. Brunswick writes,

"I love the strings, but in later years I wondered why the 18th and 19th century combination of two violins, viola and cello was still sacrosanct. In 1954, when I wrote these very short, perhaps somewhat expressionist movements (followed by a somewhat longer prelude on a hymn), I did not feel the need for more than three instruments. But, facing the reality that fills the musical performing world with about 100 string quartets for every string trio, I tried to combine my need for only three instruments with the varying sonorous possibilities of the whole quartet. The basis of each movement of the SEVEN TRIOS is one of the seven poems by myself, which I tried to transmute into music."

"In 1956, when I wrote the QUARTET, I was perhaps less consistent: I did away with the second violin but added the double bass to make a string quartet with extended range and expressive capacity (I also love the sounds of a double bass as a solo instrument and felt that it had been too sadly neglected).

"I like to write music that is not very long, so it turned out that the two movements, considerably longer and more developed than the concise, in a sense epigrammatic movements of the SEVEN TRIOS, are still not as long as a conventional quartet. It is probably irrelevant that the first of the two is in sonata form, in the late-Beethovenian way, the slow and fast parts being integrated into one, flowing whole. The form of the second I never worked out."

Felix Galimir founded the GALIMIR STRING QUARTET between the wars in Vienna. Then it consisted of himself and his three sisters, and was internationally known for its performances and recordings of contemporary music. Since emigrating to the U. S. in 1938, Mr. Galimir has continued, with varying personnel, to maintain its eminence in this field. The Mark Brunswick side, made with the assistance of the distinguished bassist, Julius Levine, is its second recording for CRI; its first is STRING QUARTET No. 2 by Elie Siegmeister (CRI 176).

ISIDORE COHEN is one of New York's most distinguished and respected violinists, specializing in that most elegant of musical subdivisions, chamber music. He has been a member of the Juilliard Quartet and has added his tones to those of such titans as Pablo Casals and Jascha Heifetz. He has long been a Casals devotee, and is currently (1969) a member of the Casals Festival Orchestra in Puerto Rico and Marlboro. Two members of his quartet also play with the Galimir Quartet in this recording, and his cellist, Robert Sylvester also appears on CRI 240.

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.

## **SEVEN POEMS**

by Mark Brunswick

### **I. Finale**

Geometry of the soul:  
Pity and distance –  
Loving separateness –  
That which can give,  
But gives not  
When taken  
It cannot  
Be –  
This love that  
Moves the stars.

### **II. Fame** (Alfred Maurer's Portrait of George Washington)

A granite mask  
Of distant grandeur –  
The desert mice  
Are much impressed.  
They flock around:  
“Oh how profound!  
It's said that Hercules  
Is coming soon.  
You know the Moon  
Prevents all bees  
From hibernating –  
My mousefriend,  
I'm not sure which,  
Fell in the ditch.  
Oh Mr. Grand's  
Outdone all!  
They say he has one ball:  
Or am I mixed?  
I never can remember.”

### **III. Maturation**

Some years ago  
I didn't know  
What I know now.  
It's very hard to bow  
Down to the distant past  
Yet hold tight and fast  
To your life as it unfolds  
To-day and slowly moulds  
The groping, hoping future  
Of our lives in tune with nature.

You can't possibly end  
With such a corny bend  
Of rhyme in utter desolation  
Mocking mine and all consolation.

#### **IV. A Folksong**

Oh put my weary bones to bed  
The flesh that clothes them's nearly dead  
My sorry soul is broke in two  
O girl again I'll never woo.  
Ah put my weary bones to bed  
There's nothing more that needs to be said.

#### **V. Last Question**

I want to know why  
This love must die,  
Oh wise one, before  
It's born, on the cold door –  
Step, not in, not out.  
Why must I always flout  
All councils of safety  
And knowledge? Why was your gaiety  
Transmuted in my imagination  
Into the bearing, transmigration  
Of souls, of our child; why  
You and I could not deny  
Childhood and grow together  
Up to Father and Mother?

#### **VI. Oedipus the Slave**

Ah can't see nuthin' no more –  
Ah just can't see it.  
Somethin' hit  
Me hear ma head,  
Wuz just before ah went to bed.  
Ah can't see nuthin', nuthin'  
No more.

Ah didn't know she wuz a whore,  
Ma muther;  
Ah thought it was another  
Across the street;  
She'd always greet  
Them gentlemen  
Across the street.  
But ma muther –  
Ah didn't think she wuz a whore.  
Ah can't see nuthin', nuthin'  
No more.

Who'd she whore with?  
I dunno;  
I'z always with her.  
I wus in her bed.  
She couldn't a' whored,  
Cuz I wus there,  
Who'd she whore with  
I'd like to know.  
Ah can't see nuthin', nuthin'  
No more.

**VII. HYMN – Das alte Jahr vergangen ist** (Translated from the German)

The old year has passed away;  
We thank thee, Lord Jesus, for thy sway,  
That hath shielded us in such great danger and in fear  
This long time, this long, long year.

*(Original Liner Notes from the CRI LP Jacket)*