

**CRI SD 245**

**CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER PLAYERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**  
**RALPH SHAPEY, Conductor**

**THOMAS PUTSCHÉ**  
**The Cat and the Moon**

Opera in one act, based on a play by W. B. Yeats.

Cast:

Saint Colman Elsa Charleston

Lame Beggar Thomas Mac Bone

Blind Beggar James Mack

The following quotation is included as the introduction to Mr. Putsché's score:

“The tradition is that centuries ago a blind man and a lame man dreamed that somewhere in Ireland a well would cure them and set out to find it, the lame man on the blind man's back . . .

“It seemed that I could be true to the associations of such places if I kept in mind, while only putting the vaguest suggestion of it into the play, the lame man was the soul . . . But as the populace might alter out of all recognition, deprive of all apparent meaning, some philosophical thought or verse, I wrote a little poem where a cat is disturbed by the moon, and in the changing pupils of its eyes seems to repeat the movement of the moon's changes, and allowed myself as I wrote to think of the cat as a normal man (the two beggars) and of the moon as the opposite he seeks perpetually (the Saint) . . . But I had to bear in mind that I was among dreams and proverbs, that though I might discover what had been and what might again be an abstract idea, no abstract idea must be present. The spectator should come away thinking the meaning as much his own manufacture as that of the blind man and the lame man had seemed mine.”

from *WHEELS AND BUTTERFLIES* by W. B. Yeats  
published by the Macmillan Co., 1935

Of *THE CAT AND THE MOON*, Mr. Putsché recollects the following about its composition in 1957:

“Beyond an attempt to enhance the dramatic action, the music was conceived of as relating the action to the poetic imagery.

“As I recall, everything in the opera comes from the first few measures: the bongo rhythm (later in timpani), representing the creeping of the cat and the searching of the beggars; the flute idea, representing the cat and the two beggars (their animal nature) and the harp idea, representing the moon and the saint (also the beggars when approaching spirituality). But, trying to remain “among dreams and proverbs,” I derived shapes from these motives through free association. They were often combined and sometimes only suggested certain harmonic or orchestral idioms. And, while it may be possible to trace precisely these derivations, it is not necessary, I would hope, in order to understand the piece.” Harold Schonberg in the *New York Times* found that the composer has “a decided dramatic feeling” and that everything in his work “points to the climax.” Bernard Jacobson in the *Chicago Daily News* wrote that “he has a keen sense of beauty, backed by an unusually powerful technique” and that “we should hear more of him.”

THOMAS PUTSCHÉ, in addition to teaching and composing, has been active in various societies that help to promote contemporary music including the Friends and Enemies of Modern Music, the International Society for Contemporary Music, and the Institute of Contemporary American Music. He is also occasional music critic for the *Hartford Courant*. He was born in Scarsdale, N. Y. in 1929 and studied composition with Milton Babbitt, Aaron Copland, Arnold Franchetti and Vittorio Giannini.

## **R. MURRAY SCHAFER**

### **Requiems for the Party-Girl**

#### **The Party-Girl: Neva Pilgrim, soprano**

R. MURRAY SCHAFER was born in Canada in 1933 and studied composition at the Royal Conservatory of Music Toronto. In 1965 he joined the faculty of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Mr. Schafer, a prolific composer, is also author of several books on music. The Fromm Foundation awarded the Foundation Prize for 1968 to REQUIEMS FOR THE PARTY-GIRL.

Mr. Schafer writes:

“REQUIEMS FOR THE PARTY-GIRL was composed in 1966 in response to a commission from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It is intended as part of my opera-in-progress, PATRIA, and is a cycle of connected arias documenting the mental collapse and suicide of a young woman. The text is my own, though I have borrowed numerous thoughts from the diaries of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus.

“I have called the young woman simply 'The Party-Girl,' and as such she is the prototype of those strange harlequinlike creatures one meets occasionally at parties, beneath whose furious demonstrations of gregariousness and *joie de vivre* one detects obscure signs of terror and alienation. As the gossiping voices around her whisper their absurd propositions in her ear, there is laughter in her eyes to disguise the anguish in her heart. She is resolved to suicide from the beginning and she knows that no one will prevent her. 'Outstretched hands are rare,' she says.

“If only she could discover a friend. But her methods are bizarre. She says, 'Whenever I go out I leave a paper on my desk for visitors to sign . . . No one signs. Though people are coming and going and seldom silently.' But as the cycle progresses the voices of the world become fainter and fewer, for the Party-Girl's resolution obliterates this whole confused and whirling picture around her to fix itself now on the only absolute future she can comprehend.

“The music is calm, detached. Then suddenly, she kills herself. At the moment she dies the strings begin a long sustained chord very softly, like an organ tone over which the dead spirit of the girl looks back reflecting on what has just happened. 'On my door I had written, "Come in, I have killed myself." I had written "I" but there is no longer any "I". The work ends with furious and spasmodic repetitions of the word 'Requiem' by the singer, accompanied by throngs of bells.”

The music, which is partly improvised, is performed without conductor. The performers are: Jan Herlinger, flute, piccolo; Stanley Davis, clarinet, bass clarinet; Paul Ondracek, horn; Thomas Siwe, percussion, timpani; Elizabeth Cifani, harp; John Cobb, piano; Elliott Golub, violin; Arnold Sklar, viola; Roger Malitz, cello.

## **HENRY WEINBERG**

### **Cantus Commemorabilis I**

HENRY WEINBERG was born in Philadelphia in 1931 and is Associate Professor of Music at Queens College in New York. He studied with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt at Princeton University, where he received a Ph.D. degree; and with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence under a Fulbright Fellowship. A commission from the Fromm Music Foundation, through the Berkshire Music Center, resulted in CANTUS COMMÉMORABILIS I, which was premiered at Tanglewood in 1966. Mr. Weinberg has received the Walter W. Naumburg Award, the Rome Prize Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and Brandeis University's Creative Arts Award.

CANTUS COMMEMORABILIS I was composed for the composer's cousin, Paul Weinberg, a musician and mathematician, who died at the age of 27. The composer writes:

“There are many who cannot imagine that in a work which has such a personal emotional meaning to a composer, he would concern himself with rhythmic series, sets of rates for the various dimensions, organization of many aspects of pitch and register, etc. One can only reply that an emotional expression is the end, and that such formal concern may allow for the channeling of intensities which are not always best expressed by means of immediate and unpremeditated statement. To be concerned with getting to the base of musical relationships need not result in expressive sterility.

“The score poses great performance problems. The distinctions, rhythmic and otherwise which are called for, are not always functional ones. It is not enough to produce rhythms which are 'not together.' While the impressions should be one of continuous flux, on a subliminal level, the audience should absorb transformed repetitions which are aurally unmistakable ...”

THE CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER PLAYERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, under the direction of composer-conductor Ralph Shapey, are an outstanding example of a significant development in the history of contemporary music. It, like performing groups of similar titles in a dozen universities across the nation, is made up of perhaps two dozen musicians of extraordinary capabilities. The players must not only meet exacting technical standards but must show genuine interest in contemporary music. When these qualities are matched by ample rehearsal time, the performances, as may be heard on this recording, are of a superior order of excellence. (This group may also be heard on CRI 232; other university contemporary music groups appear on CRI SD 230, 231, 233.)

In addition to those who play the Schafer work, the performers on this record are: Gladys Elliot, oboe; James Berkenstock, bassoon, double bassoon; Rodney Miller, trumpet; James Mattern, trombone; Roger Moulton, violin; Harold Klatz, viola; Robert Chickering, bass.

This recording was made in cooperation with the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago, one of a number of such groups supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, assisted by a grant from the Alice M. Ditson Fund for Music.

*(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP Jacket)*