

NWCRL247

Dane Rudhyar & Ruth Crawford Seeger

William Masselos / Joseph Bloch



Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985)

1. *Paeans* (1927) (7:00)
2. Stars from *Pentagram No. 3*
"Release" (1926) (3:00)

3. *Granites* (1929) (8:45)
William Masselos, piano

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901-1953)

- Nine Preludes for Piano* (1924-1925, 1927-28) (16:47)
4. I. Andante tranquillo (0:49)
5. II. Allegro giocoso (1:45)
6. III. Semplice (2:22)
7. IV. Grave, presto (2:03)
8. V. Lento (1:38)
9. VI. Andante mystico (1:57)
10. VII. Intensivo (1:39)
11. VIII. Leggiero (1:55)
12. IX. Tranquillo (2:05)
13. *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* (1930) (1:07)
Joseph Bloch, piano

© & © 1968 Composers Recordings, Inc.
© 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

Notes

This recording might be called a tribute to the music of the intense and experimental 'Twenties in America. These were the days of the International Composers Guild which featured the music of Edgar Varèse, Charles Ives, Charles Ruggles and Henry Cowell as well as Ruth Crawford and Dane Rudhyar. While this was a period of restless and youthful enthusiasm and of a search for new sounds, and many ears were dismayed by the results, it opened new fields for subsequent American composers, and in a sense it paved the way for the electronic music that is to come.

Dane Rudhyar was born in Paris in 1895 and started his career just before World War I as a writer and composer, his first works being published by the great editor, Durand. He came to New York in November 1916 to organize a performance of some of his orchestral pieces at a gala of abstract dance. Pierre Monteaux directed the orchestra. This was probably the first polytonal music heard in America, as the music of Stravinsky and, of course, Ives was still unknown here. After living and lecturing in many States for 40 years he now resides in San Jacinto, California. Music composition is only one of the several outlets for his torrential creative energy; he has written books on musical philosophy and history, a volume of essays, poetry and studies of mysticism and astrology, and has also expressed himself in drawings and paintings.

Such profligacy of means may be regarded as the macrocosmic expression of the unity of all things which in music he has described as the Sound of Nature. In the works so sympathetically played by William Masselos and recorded by David Hancock, this approach is voiced in Rudhyar's directions to "blend the resonances of all the chords by means of the pedal, for there is, in this music, 'but one harmony'." He asks the performer to think of the piano as a "resonant mass of wood and metal, a sort of condensed orchestra of gongs, bells and the like..."

Rudhyar thinks of much of his music as deriving from speech rather than the European tradition, from the dance. It seeks, he wrote, "to communicate inner experiences of human growth, of crisis and fulfillment" rather than to represent objects or narratives. It also has a determining effect on his uneven rhythms and craggy dissonances.

In a sense, Rudhyar is a spiritual ancestor of aleatoric music for, he says, he regards the worship of the printed score as "essentially evil." The score "is not the music; the music must do something to you, something vital, tonifying, magical... The score... is futile in itself... In other words, the music is not meant to be pleasurable... soothing us away from the tragedy of life (but to) exalt Life in those who live."

Ruth Crawford Seeger was born in East Liverpool, Ohio, the daughter and granddaughter of Methodist ministers, and raised in about as 'American' a manner as a person could get. Her career might be divided into an early period, during which she was studying piano and teaching it at the American Conservatory in Chicago, and the subsequent years on the East Coast.

Her switch from piano works to music for combinations of instruments more or less coincided with her meeting Charles Seeger, the musicologist, whom she married in 1931 (she continued to compose under her maiden name, however). By the time she made the change, her gifts as an original spirit had been recognized and she won the first Guggenheim Fellowship ever granted to a woman. She died suddenly of cancer in 1953, at a time when her interests were concentrated in American folk music.

Her piano music, whether it is the startling pure homophony of *Study in Mixed Accents*, with its undetectable split at mid-flight, whence it runs backwards to the beginning, or the uncompromising starkness of some of the chords in her *Preludes*, is comparatively straightforward; it is in her later period that she dabbled in "heterophony," allowing several unrelated events to take place simultaneously — another forecast of musical happenings in the late 1960s.

In both styles, her music is highly compressed — usually coming to a conclusion before the listener expects it to — lucidly and flawlessly made. Even when it has no words, it often gives the impression of protest. Her *Woodwind Quintet* will appear in the fall of 1969, on [NWCRL]249.

William Masselos is not only a sympathetic interpreter of contemporary piano music but is personal friends with many living composers, including Dane Rudhyar. He appears on [NWCRL]198 (William Mayer's *Piano Sonata*) and [NWCRL]239 (Ben Weber's *Piano Concerto*).

Joseph Bloch is also a friend of new music, a careful interpreter and a teacher and the Juilliard School of Music. He has appeared on [NWCRL]136 (Robert Moevs' *Piano Sonata*) and [NWCRL]154 (music by Jacques de Menasce).

Production Notes

Dane Rudhyar

Paeans, Stars, and Granites

Produced by Carter Harman. Recording Engineer: David Hancock. Recorded at Hancock Studios in NYC on October 2, 1969. Publisher: New Music Editions (Merion Music, Inc., BMI)

The original recording was made possible by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.

The Rudhyar pieces were digitally remastered by Joseph R. Dalton with Charles Harbutt, engineer and Francis X. Pierce, assistant engineer at Sony Classical Productions, Inc., NYC.

Managing Director: Joseph R. Dalton

Ruth Crawford Seeger

Study in Mixed Accents and *Nine Preludes for Piano* recorded at Stereo Sound Studios, New York City, 1969. Recording Engineer: Jerry Newman. Preludes for Piano Nos. 1–5 published by Merion Music, Inc., (Theodore Presser; BMI). Preludes for Piano 6–9 published by the Hildegard Publishing Company, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania; (BMI). Funded by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.