

CRI 258

FRANCIS THORNE: Liebesrock

T. J. ANDERSON: Chamber Symphony

MICHAEL BROZEN: In Memoriam

with JANET PRICE, soprano

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, JAMES DIXON, conductor

The inspiration for LIEBESROCK was a celebration in the New York State Theater, in Lincoln Center. Francis Thorne was on the top level, looking down on the huge, distant lobby floor, into what he describes as an inferno of dancers, churning to the thunderous beat of a rock group, surrounded by opulence.

The composer thereafter went for an extended stay in Florence, Italy, where he taught (the history of jazz) and where he composed LIEBESROCK. As he began to conceive the composition, his perspective became focused, with the result that the music emerged as the score for a ballet. He writes:

"I pictured total darkness at the opening, then gradual light—a single male dancer lying prone on stage—a series of mirrors as the only scenery. As he wakes and becomes conscious of himself and his reflection, he slowly rises and starts to dance. Lights and sound and music crescendo together.

"The dancer becomes fascinated with his image and his movements. As he becomes more self-admiring, his movements become faster and more sensual. Finally, self-infatuation becomes hypnotic and the only possible denouement is a dance to exhaustion, collapse and death.

"The allegory, of course, is the U.S.A. in 1968 wallowing in the arrogance of power, self-satisfaction (officially speaking) and complacency—dancing to its potential destruction to the sounds of hard rock music."

The score calls for a symphony orchestra augmented by three electric guitars, the instruments that are the basis for most rock groups. The recording was made under severe difficulties, inasmuch as the balancing of such powerful forces could not be made clear by the score alone—the work had never been performed in public—and the composer, who had planned to land in London in plenty of time to supervise, was fogged out and spent the day fretting in Frankfurt. The success of the recording is owed to heroic efforts on the part of Conductor Dixon.

FRANCIS THORNE was born (1922) in Bay Shore, Long Island, and lives in New York. Although he studied composition with Paul Hindemith and Richard Donovan at Yale, he started his career as a businessman. The urge to compose took over, however, and by 1954 he had become completely occupied with music (some jazz fans will remember him from his piano playing in Manhattan's Hickory House and on TV). His later teachers include Leo Smit, Alexei Haieff and David Diamond. His BURLESQUE OVERTURE and RHAPSODIC VARIATIONS FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA appear on CRI 216. He is currently president of the Composers Fund, Inc., which provides assistance to living composers, and executive director of the Walter W. Naumberg Fund, Inc.

T. J. ANDERSON is one of the outstanding black composers of the younger generation. His music is in demand by performing organizations across the nation, and he is personally in demand as teacher, composer and lecturer: he is currently (1969-71) composer-in-residence with the Atlanta (Ga.) Symphony Orchestra. He was born in 1928 in Coatesville, Pa. and formerly made his home in Nashville, Tenn. He attended the West Virginia State College, Penn State University, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the University of Iowa, where he won his Ph.D. in 1958, and the Aspen School of Music. He taught at Tennessee State University, and has been visiting professor at several distinguished locations.

His CHAMBER SYMPHONY was written for Thor Johnson and the Nashville Symphony. The work makes use of the most archaic significance of the term in that it is a series of stylized dances combined in a one-movement composition. It has been well received, impressing reviewers as a work of substance, imagination and individuality.

MICHAEL BROZEN was born in New York in 1934, and continues to live and write there. He studied piano with Grete Sultan, composition and piano with Paul Nordoff at Bard College, and composition with Lukas Foss at Tanglewood and Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard. Among his awards are a two-year grant from the Ingram Merrill Foundation and the one from the National Institute-American Academy of Arts and Letters which made this recording of IN MEMORIAM possible.

He writes:

"IN MEMORIAM was written in 1968 on commission from Howard Hanson. Dr. Hanson, to whom the work is dedicated, conducted the Eastman-Rochester Symphony in the first performance that same year in the Festival of American Music at the Eastman School.

"The words are from Tennyson's long elegy. The poem was published anonymously in 1850, having evolved for seventeen years after the death of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. Considering the theme, it is a remarkably sensuous-sounding yet objective and well-structured work. Every despondent canto has its symmetrical optimistic counterpart elsewhere in the poem. I have linked two of these pairs: the first and second songs are performed without pause, as are the fifth and sixth. I have also adapted Tennyson's expressive and organic use of time of day and time of year: the song cycle progresses from morning to night and from summer to winter and the possibility of spring.

"In making art out of his grief, Tennyson avoided the tendency toward rhetoric and edification that endeared him to his own generation but made some later readers uncomfortable. Now we appreciate Tennyson's poetry for its structural strength, its intricate yet clear emotional line, and the sumptuous but purposeful beauty of its sound—qualities that are particularly attractive to a composer of vocal music."

JAMES DIXON possesses one of America's great conducting talents, the outstanding components of which are a capacity for detailed preparation, an accurate tonal imagination and a determination to get the music to sound right. He is in residence at the University of Iowa, where he conducts the University Orchestra, regarded as one of the finest in the country. He conducted the Charles Wuorinen PIANO CONCERTO on CRI 239.

From IN MEMORIAM A. H. H. by Alfred Lord Tennyson
(Roman numerals refer to sections of Tennyson *In Memoriam*)

1.
(VII)
Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

2.

(CXIX)

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand

3.

(XI)

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground;

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

4.

(CXXVI)

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

5.

(CIV)

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

6.

(from XXVIII)

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

7.

(CXXIX and from CXXX)

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal;
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeper, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

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Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circl'd with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee the' I die.

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(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP Jacket)