

MIRIAM GIDEON

RHYMES FROM THE HILL

Jan DeGaetani, mezzo soprano; Arthur Bloom, clarinet; Raymond Des Roches, marimba; Fred Sherry, cello; David Gilbert, conductor

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

William Metcalf, baritone; Ronald Roseman, oboe; Isidore Cohen, violin; Karen Phillips, viola; Fred Sherry, cello; Fritz Jahoda, conductor

BURRILL PHILLIPS

CANZONA III

Elinor Basescu, reader; Juilliard Ensemble; Anne Diener Giles, flute; Virgil D. Blackwell, clarinet; Ronald Murray Romm, trumpet; Max Lifchitz, piano; Richard Fitz, percussion; Romuald G. Teco, violin; Fred Sherry, cello; Dennis Davies, conductor

MIRIAM GIDEON is an outstanding member of the growing list of woman composers in America. She studied composition with Lazare Saminsky and Roger Sessions, and holds an M.A. in musicology from Columbia University and a Doctor of Sacred Music in Composition from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Many of her works have been performed in the United States, Europe, and South America by leading orchestras, soloists, and chamber groups. She has received a number of prizes and commissions. She is currently (1971) on the music faculty of the City University of New York and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

About her music, she writes:

“THE HOUND OF HEAVEN, composed in 1945, is a setting for solo voice and chamber group, a combination which I have used many times subsequently. This work, for voice, oboe, and string trio utilizes several lines from the poem of that title by Francis Thompson, expressing profound life experiences, which mar, in order to make, the human being: 'Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?' Of this work George Perle has written: 'The texture . . . is strikingly personal, characterized by lightness, the sudden exposure of individual notes, constantly shifting octave relationships ... This is a technique that may be indefinitely expanded and within which a composer may grow.'

“RHYMES FROM THE HILL is a song cycle, composed in 1968, comprising five poems from the "Galgenlieder" (Gallows Songs) by Christian Morgenstern, set in the original German for solo voice, clarinet, cello and marimba. On the first appearance of these poems in Germany in 1905 a critic spoke of the 'magnificent subtle humor of the heart behind these crazy verse fancies.'

From this sardonic collection I have chosen five poems:

1. SONG OF THE GALLOWS GANG — Nocturnal shrieks and sinister sounds of nature are heard in the clattering of the marimba and the wail of

the clarinet.

2. GALLOWS CHILD'S LULLABY — A biting parody of the nursery rhyme Sleep, baby, sleep, in which the rocking of the marimba, the sinister purring of the clarinet, and the lulling of the cello suggest a less than benign path to slumber.

3. and 4. concern two clocks: the first moving backward or forward, the second adjusting its pace as desired – a clockwork with a heart. Brittle sounds from the marimba provide a mechanical, ticking background for the espressivo phrases of cello and clarinet.

5. THE SIGH — a tribute to Love. Skating on the ice, the sigh becomes so overheated by amorous thoughts that the ice melts and he disappears. Tremolos on the marimba, grace notes on the clarinet, and glissandi on the cello are used to depict this ironic tragedy.”

BURRILL PHILLIPS is an important member of the middle generation of contemporary American composers. He was born November 9, 1907 in Omaha, Nebraska, and gained his early education in Denver, Colorado. He studied music at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, under Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson and taught composition there from 1933 to 1949. That year, he went as Professor of Music to the University of Illinois in Urbana, where he remained until resigning in 1964. He has been Visiting Professor of Composition at Colorado College, Colorado Springs; the University of Colorado at Boulder; at Eastman and at the Juilliard School in New York, as well as visiting composer at the Universities of Texas, Kansas, Southern California, and Hawaii.

His gifts have been recognized by Guggenheim Foundation (1942 and 1961), Fulbright and the American Academy of Arts and Letters awards, among others, and by numerous commissions including the Koussevitsky Foundation (Tom Paine overture); the Fromm Foundation (The Return of Odysseus for chorus and orchestra); the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, Library of Congress (String Quartet No. 2); the Centennial Committee of the University of Illinois (Fantasia for Concert Band); the Juilliard School and Jose Limon (La Piñata for chamber orchestra).

Mr. Phillips writes:

“CANZONA III is so named because it was the third such form I had written, the other two being the titles of movements in other works. My wife, Alberta Phillips, wrote the verses that are read by the actress. She has written many other poems and libretti for my setting. (Among others: "The Return of Odysseus", for chorus and orchestra; "Don't We All", one act opera; "A Bucket of Water" and "The First Day of the World", for chorus.)

“The five movements of the work employ a tonal and rhythmic language which tends to emphasize the color potential of the seven instruments, singly and in combination. These instruments are abstracted asymmetrically from the traditional woodwind, brass, percussion, and strings of the orchestra. The first movement uses all of the instruments, as do the third and fifth

movements, but in each case in an obviously different way: simultaneously, serially, and both combined. The second movement is a scherzo for the low-pitched instruments only of the group, while the fourth movement is a scherzo using only the high-pitched instruments. Sometimes the meaning of the recited words comments satirically, sometimes lyrically, sometimes very obliquely on the musical movements which follow the verses."

The CANZONA had its first performance in 1964 at a Round House Concert at Urbana, Illinois, which the composer conducted.

JAN DE GAETANI is widely admired for her beautiful voice, her fine musicianship and her commitment to contemporary music. She may also be heard in Jacob Druckman's ANIMUS II (CRI SD 255) and his DARK UPON THE HARP (167).

JOHN METCALF is a member of the New York City Opera with a distinguished history of appearances with opera companies, orchestras and choral groups.

ELINOR BASESCU is an established stage and television actress, and is particularly well known for her readings of drama, prose and poetry. She teaches and appears before school groups and has edited and performed on seven solo record albums.

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