

JOHN HARBISON

PARODY-FANTASIA (from December Music)

Robert Miller, piano

ROGER JOHNSON

WOODWIND QUINTET

Dorian Quintet

RAOUL PLESKOW

MOVEMENT FOR NINE PLAYERS

**Contemporary Chamber Ensemble,
Arthur Weisberg, conductor**

BAGATELLES NO. 3

Lewis Kaplan, violin

PER VEGE VIENE

Lewis Kaplan, violin; Walter Ponce, piano

JOHN HARBISON (b. 1938) studied composition with Earl Kim and Roger Sessions at Princeton, where he won his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1963. After a Junior Fellowship at Harvard and a Rockefeller Foundation Composer-in-Residencship at Reed College he became Assistant Professor of Music at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His music has been performed by leading ensembles specializing in contemporary music as well as by the Oakland and Milwaukee Symphonies, where it has been received with enthusiasm.

He writes:

“Parody-Fantasia was composed in December 1967 and January 1968 at the suggestion of the pianist Ursula Oppens, who gave it its first performances. My two basic intentions were to make a large but compressed piece, and to combine sonority and abstraction.

“The ‘parody’ of the title refers to the use of a venerable cantus firmus as a binding thread and also to the occasional ironic character of the music. In navigating through the single continuous movement, the player is guided by sub-headings: Preamble — Take-offs — Flights — Arrivals — Games — Post-Mortem. These might well be more technical substitutes like plateau-long upbeat-long downbeat-higher plateau. They focus on the large rhythmic issues, and may also suggest connections with Schumann, air travel, and various fantasies.

“This piece is grouped with two others, *Preludes* for three treble instruments, and *Bermuda Triangle* for tenor saxophone, amplified cello and electric organ. They share the same cantus firmus and are collectively called DECEMBER MUSIC.”

ROGER JOHNSON (b. 1941, San Mateo, Calif.) is a man of many musical parts. He is active as composer not only of serious concert music but electronic music and popular songs; performer on the French horn, piano and as conductor; music editor and copyist, and as teacher at the university level. He received his B.A. at Washington University, where he studied with John Verrall and George McKay; his M.Mus. at Yale, where his teachers included Mel Powell, and is completing his doctoral studies at Columbia under Chou Wen-chung and Otto Luening. He began composition early, and all his early works were performed later and retired. During his study at Yale, he became absorbed in the 12-tone technique which became more lyrical in recent years. He is currently (1972) teaching at Ramapo College of New Jersey.

The WIND QUINTET is in one movement and is fundamentally lyrical, with a strong harmonic foundation. The majority of the pitch material is derived from the four note series B C D E b and its many transpositions. The music is based on an alternation of two types of contrasting episodes. The introduction, coda and two internal episodes are chordal in nature and slow moving, with the tone-series used as the principal chord.

All start and end with the same widely spaced version of the chord which serves as an important landmark in the structure. The contrasting episodes are polyphonic and are characterized by slow, long lines in opposition to fast moving and wide ranging lines. Here the series is used melodically. These sections carry the prime movement of the piece and become gradually more complex and progressively more improvisatory.

The piece is dedicated to the Dorian Quintet, which gave it its first public performance and have since performed it in this country and in Europe.

MOVEMENT FOR NINE PLAYERS was written in 1967 and is scored for flute, clarinet, violin, piano, celesta (alternating with piano II), percussion, trumpet, cello and bass. It received its first performance by the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble under its conductor, Arthur Weisberg, in October of that year. The work consists essentially of 31 variations set in 7 bar units with some expansions, elisions and interpolations.

The ensemble in this piece is sometimes subdivided into two groups, sometimes set as one unit and at times regrouped into various smaller instrumental combinations. The "moveable" way the ensemble is used as complemented by the constantly changing textures and constant re-alignment of the musical material itself. The material is built up by alternation of symmetrical and asymmetrical phrases, continuous and interrupted activities, lean and thick textures and passive and active unfolding of the pitch material.

BAGATELLES No. 3 FOR SOLO VIOLIN was written in 1968 and is the third of a series of short works for various instruments. It was commissioned by Daniel Kobialka but received its first performance by Jeanne Benjamin, violinist. The work is in two movements.

PER VEGE VIENE was written in the summer of 1970. The title is dedicatory. The first movement of the two-movement work consists essentially of the alternation of three basic activities: 1) Chords and long notes; 2) rapid 16th note movement, 3) diversified thematic material in a canonic relationship between violin and piano. These three events are engaged in constantly changing textural, rhythmic and syntactical relationships. The basic pitch material for both movements is the two chords of parallel construction with which the piece begins.

The second movement is in essence a retelling of the first in a more compressed and sparser format. The work received its first performance at Carnegie Recital Hall by the present performers in 1971.

RAOUL PLESKOW was born in Vienna, and educated in New York. He studied at the Juilliard School of Music, Queens College (B.A.) and Columbia (M.A.) and privately with Stefan Wolpe. Mr. Pleskow is Professor of Music at C. W. Post College of Long Island University. His compositions include a work for orchestra, several works for varied instrumental ensembles and pieces for solo instruments. His music is frequently performed and highly praised, both in the U.S. and Europe. His other work recorded by CRI is *Movement for Oboe, Violin and Piano* (CRI SD 253).

The DORIAN QUINTET was organized in 1961 and has since become widely acclaimed as an outstanding chamber ensemble. In addition to its tours throughout the world, it is in residence throughout the New York State University system and at Hunter and Brooklyn Colleges. The members are Charles Kuskin, oboe; Jerry Kirkbride, clarinet; Karl Kraber, flute; Jane Taylor, bassoon and Barry Benjamin, French horn.

The CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE and their founder-conductor, ARTHUR WEISBERG, were among the first professional groups organized to play difficult modern music. They remain a leader in this expanding field. Members on this recording are Jeanne Benjamin, Allan Dean, Arthur Bloom, Paul Dunkel, Gilbert Kalish, Frederic Rzewski, Fred Sherry, Alvin Brehm and Raymond Des Roches.

ROBERT MILLER is one of the leading performers of contemporary piano music. He has been chosen to give first performances of music by Wolpe, Stravinsky, Boulez, Berger and Babbitt, among others. He is a resident of New York City.

LEWIS KAPLAN is widely admired for his devoted and musicianly performances of contemporary music. He is founder of the Aeolian Chamber Players, which shares his enviable reputation: more than 50 compositions have been written for him and the group. He is currently (1972) a member of the faculties at the Juilliard School and the C. W. Post College of Long Island University.

WALTER PONCE was born in Bolivia and received his advanced musical education at the Juilliard and Mannes Schools. As soloist he has played several seasons at the Marlboro Festival; as chamber musician he is a member of the Aeolian Chamber Players. He teaches at C. W. Post.

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