

## **HALL OVERTON**

### **PULSATIONS (1972)**

**The Ensemble; Dennis Russell Davies, conductor**

## **LESTER TRIMBLE**

### **IN PRAISE OF DIPLOMACY AND COMMON SENSE (1965)**

**The Ensemble; Dennis Russell Davies, conductor;**

**Richard Frisch, baritone**

PULSATIONS is the last in Overton's considerable catalogue and is probably the work that most perfectly fuses his own equal and opposite musical loves, concert music and jazz. In his words, it “explores various aspects of rhythm. Instead of avoiding the pulse, my intention was to write music based largely on a strong, steady beat.” This is not, however, the primitive pulse of the typical jazz hand, but ranges from “straight-ahead propulsion, lag-beat, silent beat, free time and 'doubling.’” The moderately knowing listener will recognize characteristic jazz figures, along with others that are subtler, more deeply imbedded in the musical texture, and also more personal to Overton. In addition to its specific jazz references, PULSATIONS sometimes achieves a strange and dreamlike atmosphere that seems to represent the unworldly aspects of the jazz scene.

The work is dedicated to Thelonious Monk, the eminent jazz pianist, who is one of the many jazz people Overton worked closely with. It was commissioned by The Ensemble of New York.

HALL OVERTON was born in Bangor, Michigan, February 23, 1920, and died in New York on November 24, 1972. He started composing "serious" music when he was in his teens, when his family moved to Grand Rapids. His first orchestral work was performed while he was still in high school. It was only later, during his military service with the Third Armored Division, that he learned how to play jazz piano.

Upon his return to civilian life, he studied with Persichetti at the Juilliard School and with Riegger and Milhaud at Aspen, meanwhile playing and recording jazz—and impressing the jazz world with his gifts.

His compositions include the operas *The Enchanted Pear Tree* and *Huckleberry Finn*, a string quartet (released on CRI 126) and other chamber and orchestral works which won him important prizes and commissions.

At the time of his death he was on the faculty of the Juilliard School and was Visiting Professor of Composition at the Yale School of Music.

IN PRAISE OF DIPLOMACY AND COMMON SENSE has been described as "a sonic happening"; "a hallucinatory montage"; "an ironic sequence." It has been compared to sections of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. To evoke such observations, IN PRAISE OF DIPLOMACY AND COMMON SENSE would seem to be a new and unusual kind of theatre—one might call it "spatial, sonic theatre"—which seeks, through techniques of musical and verbal overlaying and interpenetration, to evoke the realities of a dramatic event and, simultaneously, to make a philosophical comment upon them.

The composer writes:

“The libretto is a montage of news items culled mostly over an eight-day period from the New York Times, the Washington Post, Time magazine, and Life magazine. It presents the simultaneous spectacles of a bloody uprising in the Congo, the release of the Warren Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, violent anti-American demonstrations in Egypt, a threatening contretemps between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union in the United Nations, and other examples of human cruelty and intransigence displaying an apparent absence of true diplomacy or common sense from the national and international arena.

“The many shocking events, plus the equally shocking and morbid style of prose in which they were reported, cried out for comment. They were the genesis of IN PRAISE OF DIPLOMACY AND COMMON SENSE a musician's protest against the violence and inhumanity which have characterized world-events for most of his lifetime.”

When the work was premiered on Max Poilikoff's New York "Music In Our Time" series (and on subsequent performances) it was presented as a spatial, in-the-round drama, with performers placed in various locations about the hall, and the actors' voices emanating, amplified, from loud speakers at the rear of the auditorium. On this recording, stereophonic and over-dubbing techniques have been employed to imply the spatial effects.

Other Trimble works on CRI are Five Episodes for Orchestra and Symphony in Two Movements (CRI SD187).

LESTER TRIMBLE was born in Bangor, Wisconsin, 1923. He began violin studies at nine. At Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie Mellon University, he studied composition with Nikolai Lopatnikoff, violin with Gosta Andreasson, and musicology with Frederick Dorian. He *was* concertmaster of the Conservatory Orchestra for five years. Further studies took him to Tangle: wood, then to Paris where he worked with Milhaud, Honegger, and Boulanger.

Upon his return to New York he became a reviewer for the New York Herald Tribune and Music Critic for The Nation and began composing the music which won him a Guggenheim Fellowship; a Thorne Foundation Fellowship; an Award and Citation of the National Institute and American Academy of Arts and Letters; a commission for *Symphony No. 2* by the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress; a grant from the Alice M. Ditson Fund for work on an opera, *Boccaccio's Nightingale*. Among his related activities, Trimble has served as General Manager of the American Music Center and on many committees and panels serving composers. From 1963 to 1968 he was Professor of Composition at the University of Maryland, and he is now (1973) on the faculty of the Juilliard School of Music.

He was chosen by Leonard Bernstein as Composer-in-Residence with the New York Philharmonic through a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation. He writes articles and criticism for Stereo Review magazine. His music is played internationally.

THE ENSEMBLE was formed as the Juilliard Ensemble in 1968 by Dennis Russell Davies and Luciano Berio. It has given concerts, informal concerts and seminars in Europe and America, where it has performed more than 100 compositions by 55 contemporary composers. It may be heard on CRI SD 286. Its members on this recording are: Allen Blustine, Jean Dupouy, Gordon Gottlieb, Linda Gottlieb, David Jolley, Elizabeth Kane, Max Lifchitz, Garrett List, Charles Nussbaum, Donald Palma, Roy Pennington, James Stubbs, Romuald Teco, Joel Timm, Eric Wilson, Ransom Wilson.

DENNIS RUSSELL DAVIES was co-founder (with Luciano Berio) of the Juilliard Ensemble (now THE ENSEMBLE) and is now musical director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Norwalk Symphony. His career began as a pianist (he was a finalist in the Busoni Competition in 1966) and he has since played and conducted premieres of many new works in Europe, Honolulu and the U.S.A.

RICHARD FRISCH is a graduate of the Juilliard School and a leading singer of contemporary music. As a member of the Group for Contemporary Music, and in concerts with The Ensemble, the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, Speculum Musicae and other new music organizations, he has premiered many works. He has also appeared in T.V. operas and in shows on and off Broadway, and has recorded Stravinsky's solo cantata *Abraham and Isaac*

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This recording was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., the American Academy—National Institute of Arts and Letters which awarded Hall Overton a composition award in 1964, and the Contemporary Music Society.

THIS IS A COMPOSER-SUPERVISED RECORDING

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*

