

- Harley Gaber
1. *Ludus Primus* (1966) (11:55)
David Gilbert, Karl Kraber, flutes; Raymond Des Roches, vibraphone
 2. *Kata* (1969) (13:45)
Linda Cummsiskey, violin
- William Hellermann
3. *Ek-Stasis II* (1970) (9:00)
Philip Corner, amplified piano;
Michael Levenson, percussion, with electronic tape
- Paul Zonn
4. *Chroma* (1967) (8:30)
Wilma Zonn, oboe; Arthur Maddox, piano

Harley Gaber (b Chicago, 1943) began composition studies (with Horace Reisberg) while in high school, and subsequently has studied with Darius Milhaud, Kenneth Gaburo, Boris Porena, and Aldo Clementi in Italy and William Sydeman in New York. His music is written for a wide variety of vocal and instrumental combinations, with titles that reflect his thoughtful and inquiring disposition. Besides composing, he writes and lectures on musical subjects, is a graphics designer and is active in the organization and operation of musical organizations. He currently is (1972) general manager of New York's Composers' Forum.

Gaber's two compositions on this record represent quite different phases in the development of his musical thinking. The first, *Ludus Primus* (1966), is the earlier work and reflects a more characteristically Western approach and experience than the second work. *Kata* (1969) suggests the very stark and direct experience of certain Oriental arts and modes of thinking.

In *Ludus Primus* a distinction is made between what is happening "out there" in the music and what is being experienced by the listener and even the performer. They are both presented with a self-contained experience in which the focus is on how the elements are made to relate to each other, rather than on the elements themselves or the tensions these elements generate. Inherent in each gesture is the feeling of its place within the whole, its particular function and its relationship to all the other gestures in the piece. The structure is delineated by the suspension of the two flutes over a ground (the vibraphone) and the use of particular intervals, dynamics, voice leadings, voice crossings, textures, and rhythms. All of the aspects function to create the impression of a multifaceted sound image within a well-defined area.

The writing in *Kata*, which because of its deliberate starkness seems almost impoverished in comparison to the richness of *Ludus Primus*, seeks to focus on the elements and gestures in such a way that the context is revealed through them rather than vice versa. The listener as well as the performer is asked to experience the individual tensions and sound qualities, all of which are highly controlled, without really understanding the manipulations behind them, or for that matter, their specific musical reason for existing as they do. Thus the gestures are isolated and in a certain sense become symbolic of themselves. The reality of *Kata* as a "piece of music" is no longer entirely relevant.

The following notes are included in the score and addressed to the performer:

"*Kata* are the formal exercises or forms of karate, each consisting of a systematically organized series of techniques or moves (blocking, kicking, punching) performed in a set sequence. Although the *kata* are performed against an imaginary foe, they are nonetheless important in that they demand and help to develop the precision and discipline needed for actual karate fighting. From a less literal point of view the *kata* can be looked at as a highly developed art form, something very similar to dance. While the structure and specific tensions of each *kata* are determined by the various moves they employ, and are therefore

somewhat different, they have in common the qualities of poise, focused energy, deliberation, and inevitability. Apart from strictly musical considerations, the performers should consider breathing, body movement, placement of feet, and movement of the bow arm as integral aspects of the performance. Finally, it is very important that the performance never gives the impression of being hurried. The slowness is a framework in which the musical gestures are defined: initially there is a feeling of extreme resistance, a forced containment of the gesture, which is ultimately released giving way to a feeling of floating and ascending.”

The difficulties for the performer in sustaining the intense level on which the piece operates are imposing. The piece demands virtuoso playing without the bravura and self-indulgence usually associated with virtuosity. The performer must re-think his approach to the violin as the conventions of violin playing such as vibrato speeds, intonation, bow speed, bow placement, and standardized modes of attack, have been taken out of their normal context so that they can exist as independent aspects of a note rather than as the stylistic devices found in most violin writing and violin playing.

Finally, to achieve the directness and seeming effortlessness that is so crucial to the piece, the performer must think out each detail, coordinate the details, further integrate them within the whole piece, and then play them as if without thought. This “mindless,” and in a sense, removed approach is common to many Eastern experiences: the composer has attempted to convey the essence of a violin piece rather than an actual violin piece.

A Note on the Recording

It was decided to forsake the usual “smooth” sound of most string recordings in favor of a harsher sound that seemed more appropriate to the piece. Consequently, the violin was miked very closely to pick up a wide range of color, as well as the transient quality of certain sounds, the roughness of some sounds, and the almost “brutal” articulations of others.

William Hellermann (*b* Milwaukee, 1939) has been a jazz trumpeter and is now a guitarist specializing in the performance of new music, as well as a composer. His guitar playing, he thinks, has focused his attention on the details of sounds (articulations, unusual performance techniques, timbral effects, for example). His use of unconventional sounds in a polyphonic rather than a textural manner very likely stems from his studies with Stefan Wolpe. He also has studied composition with Otto Luening and Chou Wen-chung and electronic music with Vladimir Ussachevsky. He has received numerous commissions and his works in all mediums have been widely performed in the U.S., Latin America, and Europe. Hellermann also has been active in the organization and operation of various contemporary music groups. He is presently (1972-73) residing in Rome where he is a fellow at the American Academy.

About *Ek-Stasis II*, the composer writes:

“Ek-stasis is the Greek root for the English word ecstasy. In its earlier meaning, it meant an object set outside one’s self for contemplation.

“The point of the piece and the intended drama is that there is no dichotomy between the worlds of natural and electronic sounds. The timpani strive to be more than a natural sound medium by the use of unusual coloristic modes of playing and by functioning as resonators for other sounds created normally. On the other hand, the taped sounds, which are entirely generated by electronic means, resemble those that occur in nature. The piano, being amplified, partakes of both and serves as an intermediary between them.”

Ek-Stasis was commissioned by Jesse Kregal; the tape part was realized in the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Center.

Paul Zonn (*b* 1938, Boston) is a clarinetist and conductor as well as a composer. He received his advanced training at the University of Iowa and immediately went to Buffalo under a Rockefeller

Foundation grant to work at the Center for Creative and Performing Arts. Since then he has won three Ford Foundation grants in the humanities and two Fromm Fellowships at the Berkshire Music Center. He has founded, conducted, and performed in several organizations devoted to the music of our time. Presently he is conductor of the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Illinois, where he is (1972) also chairman of the theory-composition department.

About *Chroma*, the composer writes:

“*Chroma* was written for Wilma Zonn as a virtuoso vehicle making use of several (of the then) ‘new’ oboe techniques, such as multiphonics, double-note trills, microtonal pitch changes, and coloration of notes. We had begun to investigate and catalogue these and other advanced techniques as compositional devices as early as 1962. When I completed *Chroma* in 1967, I hoped at that time that I had managed to integrate the unusual sounds into the compositional fabric in a convincing and natural way.”

David Gilbert and **Karl Kraber** are among the leading members of New York musical society. Gilbert is composer-in-residence to the New York Philharmonic. Kraber is a member of the Dorian Quintet (CRI SD 293) and teaches in New York.

Raymond Des Roches is one of the few percussionists with the ability and courage to undertake the most difficult contemporary scores. He appears on many CRI recordings.

Linda Cummiskey is one of the rare violinists who is willing and able to cope with the special demands of music such as *Kata*. She is currently on the faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz where she founded the Hudson Valley New Music Ensemble.

Philip Corner is a widely performed composer who is increasingly interested in playing other composers’ music. He currently is (1972) designing an innovative approach to the study of music theory at Livingston College of Rutgers University.

Michael Levenson, a percussion pupil of Walter Rosenberger, is active in contemporary music projects. He lives and teaches in New York.

Wilma Zonn is in demand as an orchestral, chamber music, and (obviously) solo oboist; a number of composers have written works with her impressive command of the instrument in mind. Although *Chroma* calls for more flexibility and control than most other oboe works, it sounds easy when she plays it. She has performed it in concerts from New York to Honolulu.

Arthur Maddox is on the music faculty at the University of Illinois. He is a specialist in the performance of complex modern scores and, among other duties, is pianist for the Contemporary Chamber Players.

This recording was made possible by grants from the American Composers Alliance. Produced by Carter Harman

Gaber and Hellermann recorded by David Hancock

Zone recorded by Jaap Spek

Ludus Primus, Ek-Stasis, Kata, Chroma All ACA (BMI)

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(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)