

CHARLES WUORINEN	SONATA, 1969
STEFAN WOLPE	FORM and
	FORM IV: BROKEN SEQUENCES
YEHUDI WYNER	THREE SHORT FANTASIES
GEORGE PERLE	TOCCATA

ROBERT MILLER, pianist

This record contains several of the many compositions written for and dedicated to the pianist ROBERT MILLER. Since the works were not commissioned, the dedications are a testament to the high regard composers have, not only for this pianist's precision and fluency but also for his penetrating understanding and his ability to bring it to musical life.

CHARLES WUORINEN (b. New York, 1938) is a multiple-threat musician (composer, pianist, conductor, teacher) and controversial figure on the New York musical scene. His imposing output of new compositions has won him important awards and commissions, including two Guggenheim Fellowships, the National Institute-American Academy of Arts and Letters Award and, in 1970, the Pulitzer Prize. He is President and Co-Artistic Director (with Arthur Weisberg) of the American Orchestra for Contemporary Music and co-founder and Co-Director (with Harvey Sollberger) of the Group for Contemporary Music at the Manhattan School. Among his many appearances on CRI are CRI SD 230, 231 and 239.

He writes:.

“I composed my SONATA during the second half of 1969, for Robert Miller; many years of close musical collaboration had given me a respect for his abilities that impelled me to undertake the work as a testimony of regard.

“It is in two movements, but the work is essentially a single unbroken continuity. Thus the hiatus between Parts I and II is more a breathing space than a major point of punctuation. An ornamented two-voice polyphony obtains throughout, but these two structural voices are frequently laden with supplementary material, or otherwise partitioned into a more elaborate surface counterpoint than the two-line origin might at first suggest. The entire work unfolds as a large-scale projection of the intervals (in both time and pitch) of its basic set, and the large form of the work may be said to be an articulated response to these basic relations. For the rest, the surface of the work is a celebration of the virtuosity of the performer for whom it was composed.”

STEFAN WOLPE (b. 1902, Berlin, d. 1972, New York) was one of the major musical influences of his day. His highly individual style incorporated elements of the European mainstream (he studied with Scherchen, Busoni and Webern), folk and Hebrew music (partly, no doubt, picked up during his life in Palestine, 1932-38) and jazz, which he absorbed after settling in New York in the latter year.

Mr. Miller writes:

“FORM was one of Wolpe's favorite compositions. When he was senior composer-in-residence at the Bennington Composers' Conference, during the summer of 1965, this was the work he singled out for performance. It is a short work, clear and concise, with a wide range of contrast. It is a fine example of his later style, and was extraordinarily well received by the audience.

“In 1969, when Parkinson's disease was rapidly consuming him, I asked Stefan if he would write another piano work, since he had not written one since FORM in 1959. He said that he had intended to write a work to complement it. Fortunately, he was invited to the MacDowell Colony that summer, where, for the first time in a long while, he could escape from the telephone and the busy-ness of New York City. He was also invited again to the Composers' Conference and when he appeared there in the middle of August he took me completely by surprise when he handed over the manuscript of FORM IV: BROKEN SEQUENCES. In spite of the severe physical strain that writing notes on paper imposed, he had composed this vibrant work in one month at the MacDowell Colony.

“Stefan completed only one more work before his death almost three years later, in 1972.”

YEHUDI WYNER was born in Calgary, Canada, and was educated at Juilliard, Yale and Harvard. He is a distinguished pianist and conductor as well as composer. He has received numerous awards, including the Guggenheim, Rome Prize, National Institute of Arts and Letters and Brandeis. He is on the composition faculty of Yale University, where he was chairman and coordinator 1969-73, and where he composes numerous works for his performing colleagues. He has also written music for the theater and a substantial body of liturgical music for the modern synagogue. His music may be heard on CRI 141 and 161.

He writes:

“The composition of THREE SHORT FANTASIES spans 8 years. The first, fluently sketched in 1963, was evoked by the mysterious sonority of Stravinsky's *Symphonies for Wind Instruments*. For a number of years I set aside this Fantasy, unsure of its value (repelled, attracted, indifferent) until at last it persuaded me. I dedicated it to friends, P and B, under the title *Piccolo Armonie*.

“The second, subtitled *Piccola Fantasia Davenniana*, written during the summer of 1966, was a birthday present for the pianist Ward Davenny. The pitch structure derives from a simple system based on his name.

“*Fantasy III* was completed expressly for Robert Miller to play in 1971, and is dedicated to him. His interest in the first two pieces and his unruffled confidence that the new piece would be ready in time helped turn long speculation into reality.

“I feel the three fantasies live well together, despite the years that separate them, despite the absence of a unifying idea or a systematic program. Like the unplanned elements in a city, the pieces comprise a neighborhood. I say these things because I am interested in unity I cannot explain. Demonstrable unities, methodical construction often bore me with their simple-minded ingenuities, substituting reasons for the mystery of intuitive coherence.”

GEORGE PERLE (b. 1915, Bayonne, N. J.) is well known as a teacher and theorist as well as composer. He has held teaching posts at the University of Louisville, University of California (Davis), Juilliard School, Yale University, University of Southern California, State University of New York at Buffalo, and is currently (1973) Professor of Music at the City University of New York (Queens College). His book, *Serial Composition and Atonality: an Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, which has gone into four editions, is widely recognized as the standard text in its field. He has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a number of important commissions, and is currently at work on a large composition for orchestra and chorus, dedicated to the memory of Noah Greenberg and commissioned for the fiftieth anniversary of the Dessoff Choirs.

TOCCATA (1969) is dedicated to Robert Miller. The composer has submitted the following remarks concerning this piece: “Ever since my first article on twelve-tone music was published, more than thirty years ago, it has been obvious to almost every critic who has been called upon to comment on my work that I must be a composer of 'twelve-tone' or 'serial' music. Thirty years ago that made me 'avant-garde,' and today that makes me 'academic.' But the fact is that in all these years I've written only three pieces in which one can discover tone-rows or serial procedures, and of these I've discarded one and the other two have never been published or publicly performed.

“The TOCCATA, like almost everything I've written but rather more decisively than many of the pieces that precede it, I think, reflects my preoccupation through all these years with something one might provisionally call 'post-diatonic tonality.' If I tried to say anything more about this concept in this brief note, it would be misunderstood. Besides, I hesitate to tell listeners in advance what they ought to hear in a new work of mine, beyond what is already implied in the title itself. The piece was originally called 'Tocatta in D,' but I thought this might imply too much, and perhaps some things that I didn't want to imply.

When a colleague told me that he considered this title inflammatory, I decided that I would simply call the piece TOCCATA.”

ROBERT MILLER is a graduate of Princeton University and studied piano with Abbey Simon and Mathilde McKinney. He has served on the faculty of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood and taught piano at Princeton. He has been pianist with The Group for Contemporary Music and at the Composers' Conference (formerly at Bennington, later at Johnson, Vermont) since 1964, has concertized extensively throughout the eastern United States and has recorded for Columbia, Deutsche Grammophon (AR Contemporary Music Project), and Turnabout-Vox. His CRI recordings include CRI 293, 300, and 302. Mr. Miller adds:

“I am honored that the compositions on this record, exclusive of FORM and the first two FANTASIES, were written for me. They were created out of a mutual respect for and a personal relationship with the composers. The variety of the compositions on this record is self-evident and yet they were all written within a two-year period by composers who live within a small geographical area.

“It is exciting to await a new composition, learn it independently of the composer, play it for him or her to discover if my performance fulfills the composer's intentions; and then exchange ideas, resolve conflicts — but never come to blows. The experience varies considerably with each composition, but the same questions pass through my mind each time.

“This recording is dedicated to the memory of my father who during the first day of my recording sessions was suddenly taken seriously ill. He entered the hospital and requested that I not be informed until I completed the recording the following day. He died within the week.”

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(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)

