

CRI 309

MUSIC FOR YOUNG LISTENERS

by NETTY SIMONS

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN (Robert Browning)

**Lou Gilbert, narrator; Paul Dunkel, flute; Netty Simons, piano;
violin orchestra conducted by Richard Dufallo**

**SET OF POEMS FOR CHILDREN (James Stephens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Carl
Sandburg and Christina Rossetti)**

Barbara Britton, narrator; string and wind octet conducted by Edwin London

PUDDINTAME

**Barbara Britton and Lou Gilbert, limericists Jean-Charles Francois and Ron George,
percussionists**

CRI's first record for young listeners is more than mere entertainment. Netty Simons, like Debussy, Ravel and Bartok (to name a few earlier composers who wrote pieces for children) has not written music that is deliberately childlike. Rather, she has used her talents to evoke drama and feeling, in a way that seems almost magical.

Music has seemed magical ever since people discovered how to put sounds together to give the effect of shapes and movement. In ancient Greece, the goat-god Pan was thought to use his pipes to bewitch young maidens. In Christian times, early churchmen constructed mighty organs to terrify the heathen while praising God. The flute, a modern kind of pipe, still seems able to hypnotize people with its stream of liquid tones. Few of us today fear enchantment by pipes, but we are quite willing to believe it is possible when we listen to the story of the *PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN*.

The old legend says that many hundreds of years ago, when musical magic may have been more powerful than it is today, a plague of rats descended upon the sleepy German town of Hamelin, and nothing could be done to drive them away. Just when the burghers were ready to throw up their hands in despair, a strange fellow appeared, dressed in outlandish ("pied") garments of yellow and red and carrying a harmless looking pipe.

The piper offered to rid the town of its rats, and the mayor and his Corporation only too willingly laughed and offered a big payment. The stranger unlimbered his pipe and blew a magical tune that coaxed the rats from their hiding places and on to the River Weser into which they all plunged and perished. But when the piper came to collect his fee, the mayor refused to keep his part of the bargain. Angry at being cheated, the piper started playing another, sweeter tune. This time he led the town's children away as well.

This legend came to the attention of Robert Browning, a great poet with a marvelous gift for story telling. He wrote the poem about 125 years ago. In 1955, Netty Simons set it to music. Using all the violins of a large orchestra and a piano, she painted a musical picture of the townspeople and their fat leaders, and of their joy as they watched the rats running out of the houses and into the river and of their horror at seeing their children taken away. The sound of the flute is used to represent the piper.

On this first recording, the poem is narrated by LOU GILBERT, who has been acting for the Broadway stage, films and television for many years. At the time of his recording, he was appearing in the successful play, *Baba Goya*. PAUL DUNKEL, one of New York's most gifted young musicians, plays the magical flute part.

SET OF POEMS FOR CHILDREN (James Stephens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Carl Sandburg and Christina Rossetti)

This is a group of five short poems narrated to the sound of Netty Simons' charming musical settings. The poems are: NIGHT WAS CREEPING by James Stephens; RAIN by Robert Louis Stevenson; FOG by Carl Sandburg; IS THE MOON TIRED? by Christina Rossetti, and MY SHADOW by Robert Louis Stevenson. She composed the music for her own children who, when they were little, loved to listen to her improvising at the piano while reading their favorite verses.

The music was first performed by the New York Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble when it was under the direction of the late Dimitri Mitropoulos. The narrator then, as now, was BARBARA BRITTON. She had already become famous as a film actress; she has since appeared on television and on the Broadway stage. The music on this recording is played by James Stark, violin; Albert Gillis, viola; Peter Farrell, cello; Bertram Turetzky, bass; Peter Middleton, flute; Melvin Warner, oboe; Larry Livingston, clarinet; and Ronald Grun, bassoon. EDWIN LONDON is the talented composer-conductor who teaches at the University of Illinois.

PUDDINTAME

Barbara Britton and Lou Gilbert, limericists Jean-Charles Francois and Ron George, percussionists

Almost everybody has, at one time or another, sat around and sung or made up limericks. A limerick is a special kind of poem. It has five lines. The last line rhymes with the first and second, usually on some silly or surprising word that makes everybody giggle. The middle two lines are shorter, and rhyme with each other.

PUDDINTAME is the name of a limerick game. The rhymers sit around and recite their favorite limericks. As soon as one of them finishes, everybody chimes in with the refrain:

What's your name?

PUDDINTAME!

Ask me again,

I'll tell you the same!

Netty Simons' music for PUDDINTAME is played entirely on percussion instruments — instruments that are sounded by getting hit, brushed, jingled and even, in the case of whistles, blown-on. It is a kind of game for the players, too. Following certain rules, they make up a specific type of music for each limerick, sometimes loud and crashy, or slithery or feathery or thumpy and funny. After each verse, the players move on to the refrain, where pandemonium reigns.

JEAN-CHARLES FRANCOIS is a gifted percussion player from France, and RON GEORGE is a member of the faculty of the University of California at San Diego.

NETTY SIMONS was born in New York City. She was a scholarship student at the Juilliard School and also attended the New York University School of Fine Arts. She has written lots of music, which has been performed in Europe, Japan, Australia and throughout the U.S.A.

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