

## **RICHARD WILSON**

### **MUSIC FOR SOLO FLUTE**

**Harvey Sollberger, flute**

### **CONCERT PIECE FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO**

**Rolf Schulte, violin; Ursula Oppens, piano**

## **COLIN McPHEE**

### **CONCERTO FOR PIANO WITH WIND OCTET ACCOMPANIMENT**

**Grant Johannesen, piano; Octet conducted by Carlos Surinach**

RICHARD WILSON (b. Cleveland, 1941) studied piano and cello before entering Harvard in 1959. Among his teachers there were Randall Thompson, G. W. Woodworth, and Robert Moevs. The last was his principal teacher in composition at Harvard, in Rome during 1963-1964, and at Rutgers during 1964-1966. Upon graduation in 1963, Wilson received the Frank Huntington Beebe Award for study abroad. He lived first in Munich and then moved to Rome, where he gave piano recitals under the auspices of U.S.I.S. After receiving his M.A. at Rutgers, Wilson joined the faculty of Vasaar College, where he is currently (1973) Associate Professor of Music. Among his awards are four in recognition of accomplishment from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

About his music, the composer writes:

“MUSIC FOR SOLO FLUTE was written in the summer of 1972 at the request of Harvey Sollberger. The first of its three movements begins in a declamatory manner, changing after a flourish to more strident music involving sharply articulated short notes with high graces. The contrast between these two styles gives shape to the movement. The second movement, weightiest of the three, begins in a tentative manner and develops in two distinct modes, one slow and lyrical, the other quick and dryly staccato. The former prevails in the end. The closing movement has the character of a scherzando; it concludes with a coda that is sustained and reflective.

“Initially I had expected to explore some of the newer flute techniques of which Harvey Sollberger is an acknowledged master. But I found that more interesting to me than pedal notes, microtones, glissandi, key clicks etc. was Mr. Sollberger's wonderful capacity to revitalize the familiar vocabulary of flute sounds to which I decided finally to restrict myself.

“Mr. Sollberger played the first performance at the Manhattan School of Music on November 20, 1972.

“Sonority and form were in the forefront of my mind as composed CONCERT PIECE FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO in 1967. I had always loved to play and hear the violin and piano sonatas of Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms. But in even the best works of this fine repertoire I was aware of a certain oil-in-water immiscibility of the two instruments. Achieving a blend of sound became a goal in this piece, which perhaps explains why little use is made of either instrument alone or in dialogues featuring their polite alternation.

“Form was a particular concern because I then had limited experience organizing a single movement of eight or nine minutes. I pursued a plan suggested by several late-14th century isorhythmic motets I had been studying, a plan which I have since found exhibited elsewhere. I wrote paired sections, A and variant A', B and B', C and C', but ordered them

so that the pairs were not adjacent, namely: ABCA'C'B'. The variants A',B',C', are related to A,B,C, respectively, through texture, motivic use, and rhythmic style, but in different degrees of closeness and perceptibility. One additional section, D, appears before B'. This section functions to offset the dynamic highpoint of the piece which occurs toward the end of C'; it emerges as a consequent of earlier phrases or subsections that serve similarly to balance climactic points in sections B and C. Tempo as well reinforces the shape of the piece: A and B have the pulse at about 60; C begins at 100 then slows to 80; A' returns to 60; C' moves at 100, 80, 120, and broadens slightly for the climax; D, marked 60, lacks a sense of pulse; B' reasserts the pulse at 60 and quickens to 80 for the closing.

“The first performance of CONCERT PIECE was given at Chautauqua, New York, on July 30, 1967 by Isidor Desser, violin, and Richard Wilson, piano.”

HARVEY SOLLBERGER is one of the outstanding flutists of the day. He is also co-director of the Group for Contemporary Music, Inc. URSULA OPPENS and ROLF SCHULTE, also exceptionally gifted musicians, are members of New York's Speculum Musicae.

COLIN MCPHEE, composer, pianist, and writer, was born in Montreal, in 1901, and died in Los Angeles in 1964. He began his musical studies at the Hamburg Conservatory, in Toronto. He received his later training at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, where he graduated in 1921. He returned to Toronto to study piano with Arthur Friedheim for two years, appearing in 1924 with the Toronto Symphony, when his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* created a sensation. The same year, he went to Paris, to study composition with Paul Le Flem and piano with Isidore Philipp. On his return to America in 1926 he took up residence in New York and soon established himself among the foremost young composers of that day.

Other works of this period include *Sea Chantey Suite* for men's chorus, two pianos and drums (1930), and music for two experimental films by Ralph Steiner, *H<sub>2</sub>O* and *Mechanical Principles*.

In 1931, McPhee became interested in the music of Java and Bali, after hearing some rare recordings of Indonesian gamelan music. What he then scheduled as an exploratory visit to the island kept the composer in the Far East until 1939, during which time he took an active part in Balinese musical life and personally encouraged the revival of earlier court and temple music. He supplemented his studies in Bali with musical excursions to Java, Japan, China and Southeast Asia.

In 1935 he returned to America long enough to compose one of his major orchestral works, *Tabuh-Tabuhan*, based on Balinese gamelan methods and musical materials and scored for two pianos, full orchestra, xylophone, marimba, celesta, Indonesian gongs and cymbals. It was introduced by Carlos Chavez in Mexico City with great success. McPhee then returned to Bali for three more years.

In 1939 he moved to New York, became an American citizen, and continued his activities as writer, lecturer and composer. He received fellowships from both Guggenheim and Bollingen Foundations.

In 1953, Leopold Stokowski introduced *Tabuh-Tabuhan* in a New York concert of music by Canadian composers; it won immediate acclaim. Virgil Thomson hailed it as “the evening's most brilliant event, a delight for bright sounds, lively rhythms and lovely tunes, and maybe the ending piece all conductors are looking for.” The following spring, McPhee won an award from the National Institute for Arts and Letters.

THE CONCERTO FOR PIANO WITH WIND OCTET ACCOMPANIMENT was composed in 1928, in Shady, N.Y., at the home of Henry Cowell. The work had its first performance that same year, in New York, the composer appearing as soloist with the Georges Barrère Little Symphony.

The CONCERTO is a work in neo-classic style, in which the piano is treated throughout as a virtuoso instrument, but always closely integrated with the supporting octet: piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, and trombone. The brilliant and often percussive orchestration calls for a virtuoso ensemble as well as soloist.

The work is composed in three movements. The first is based on a developing and uniting of musical material contained in the two preceding movements. Peggy Glanville-Hicks reviewed the work after a Composers Forum performance in New York, November 7, 1954, with Grant Johannesen, piano, and Carlos Surinach conducting the wind octet. Her remarks read, in part:

“The McPhee Concerto is surely one of the classics of the '20s; its three movements expound instrumental and acoustic originality that -- though colored by the era — is highly personal, highly expert. Its first movement, the most interesting thematically, is perhaps the least perfect in form; its slow movement is a dream: A chorale of Gothic charm is veiled, yet magically transcends a pointillated modern surface texture. The finale, as all the movements, demonstrates the composer's mastery in elaborative pianism that remains organic.”

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*