

BRIAN FENNELLY

EVANESCENCES

Members of Da Capo Chamber Players

(Joel Lester, violin; Patricia Spencer, alto flute; Allen Blustine, clarinet; Helen Harbison, cello) Edward Murray, conductor. Tape part realized at the Electronic Music Studio, School of the Arts, New York University

WILLIAM HIBBARD

STRING QUARTET

Stradivari Quartet (Allen Ohmes, John Ferrell, William Preucil, Charles Wendt)

BRIAN FENNELLY (b. Kingston, N. Y., 1937) has degrees from Union College, where he studied engineering, and Yale (Mus. M., Ph.D.) where he studied composition with Mel Powell and theory with Allen Forte, Donald Martino, and others. At present (1974) he is Associate Professor of Music at New York University and editor of *Contemporary Music Newsletter*. His theoretical articles have appeared in *Journal of Music Theory*, *Perspectives of New Music* and *The Dictionary of Contemporary Music*; he is also a contributor to *Notes* and the forthcoming *Grove's*. His compositions have been performed throughout the U.S. *EVANESCENCES* is his first completed work with tape; since then he has also realized pieces at the State University of New York at Albany electronic studio, including *Sunyata* for 4-channel tape (1970) and *Festive Psalm* for narrator, choir, organ, and tape (1972). His compositions include other choral and chamber works, such as a string quartet and works for brass quintet and various solo instruments.

Mr. Fennelly writes:

"*EVANESCENCES* was composed in 1969 for the Aeolian Chamber Players, who premiered it at the Bowdoin College Contemporary Music Festival in May of that year. The tape component consists entirely of electronically generated material and was realized with the Buchla modular system at the New York University School of the Arts. Portions of the tape music were later incorporated into *Three Pieces for Tape*, also completed in 1969.

"Compared to my multi-sectioned *Wind Quintet* (recorded on CRI SD 318), which explores tempo modulation and multiplicity and the linear possibilities of the medium within a twelve-tone pitch structure, the more reflective style of *EVANESCENCES* stands at an opposite pole; here timbral considerations have high priority — the sonorities of the individual instruments in their various modes of sound production as well as instruments in combination.

It is here where the particular instrumentation — alto flute, clarinet, violin, cello — is most effective. The pitch structure in this work is the result of more intuitive processes, with the gestures dictating the details within a web of motivic relationships. This was a necessary concomitant of the nature of the electronic equipment at hand, with its multiplicity of sound processing possibilities coupled with limitations in tempered pitch control. The title may be seen in part to reflect the results of this timbral preoccupation, while describing as well the sense of immobility, of time suspended, that characterizes certain sections.

“EVANESCENCES is in three parts; within each movement the relation of the instruments to the tape is essentially different. Instrumental sections frame the instrument/tape interplay in Parts I and II; Part III is more varied. The most extensive tape section of Part I features the instrumental *concertante*, although they often imitate tape sounds. Part I closes with a lengthy meditative section with a G pedal which spreads upward through several octaves. The tape in the middle section of Part II (an 'ABA') emerges from the instruments, which then join with similar material in an extended accumulation of momentum. The closing 'A' section imposes *ponticello* figures in the strings over the pointillistic 'imitations' of the 'A' music.

“In Part III the electronic elements finally have an opportunity to stand alone — the feature of this movement is the alternation of the two forces. The instruments emerge after a tape solo and introduce a new section (with strings to the fore) out of which the second tape section grows. Reference is made to other movements by instrumental interjections. A *tutti* seems to herald the close as the forces unite; however, a cello cadenza follows. Cello harmonics are sustained during the closing coda, while the flute (in multi-phonics — heard also in Part I) and the violin (*pizzicato*) seem to 'lose their voices.' The tape softly suggests Part I at the cadence, as if alluding to things, half-remembered, evanescent to the memory.”

WILLIAM HIBBARD (b. Newton, Mass., 1939) was educated at the New England Conservatory of Music and the University of Iowa. He is a faculty member of the latter institution where he serves as music director of its nine-year-old resident contemporary performing ensemble, the Center for New Music, and as director of the University's interdisciplinary arts organization, the Center for New Performing Arts. He writes:

“My STRING QUARTET, composed at the request of the University of Iowa's Stradivari Quartet, was completed in December 1971. It is my most extensive work involving serial interrelationships of pitch and rhythm, a dominant concern of my recent compositions. In particular, an investigation of modular redefinitions of pitch content, intervallic structure, and rhythmic groupings provided the initial thrusts of my pre-

compositional activity. This led to considerations of harmonic stability and mobility, a potential resource of the time point system as initially formulated by Milton Babbitt, where the varying rhythmic structures within the length of the measure would have considerable harmonic import — a function, furthermore, not entirely dissimilar to that in traditional tonality.

“The quartet may be described loosely as unfolding along the lines of a Baroque concerto, though without any neo-stylistic references. In terms of general expressive qualities, instrumentation, register, rhythm, texture, and — most obviously — harmonic content, a formal opposition of two ritornello-like sections is set up, the primary ritornello presented largely by the two violins in a contrasting rhetorical manner at the opening, and the secondary ritornello by the solo cello approximately one-third through the work. This divisively delineating independence provides for considerable episodic interaction and evolution of material. For those who seek and enjoy manifestations of historical continuity, one might recognize that many of the elaborations, extensions, and distillations performed on the ritornelli may seem quite similar to some of the devices and their effects employed by J. S. Bach in his concerti.

“Rhetorical 'roles' are not rigidly assigned to individual instruments throughout, though leading characteristics are present and do play a part in the musical discourse: violin I with a lyrical, cantilena style; violin II with a jaggedly lean style; the cello with a more ponderous mosaic of varied expression; the viola as a type of interloper.”

THE STRADIVARI QUARTET was invited to use the famous instruments once owned by Paganini and now owned by Washington's Corcoran Gallery. The quartet is in residence at the University of Iowa.

JOEL LESTER, PATRICIA SPENCER, ALLEN BLUSTINE AND HELEN HARBISON are members of the Da Capo Chamber Players.

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