

NAUMBURG RECORDING AWARD WINNERS

LESLIE BASSETT

SEXTET for Piano and Strings (in four movements)

Concord String Quartet (Mark Sokol, Andrew Jennings, John Kochanowski, Norman Fischer) with John Graham, viola, and Gilbert Kalish, piano

LESLIE BASSETT (b. Hanford, Cal., 1923) has spent much of his adult musical life at the University of Michigan, where he is chairman of the composition department. Since his *VARIATIONS FOR ORCHESTRA* (CRI 203) won the Pulitzer Prize in 1966, he has enjoyed a wide and ever-widening reputation as a composer of refinement and originality. He came to composition after a career as trombonist and arranger with army bands during World War II, studying with Ross Lee Finney, Arthur Honegger, Nadia Boulanger, Roberto Gerhard and, for electronic music, Mario Davidovsky. His many compositions have earned him commissions, prizes and honors throughout the nation. He writes:

“The SEXTET came into being as the result of several considerations. Nine years had passed since my last chamber music for strings, the *THIRD QUARTET* written in Rome, and I wanted to work again with an ensemble capable of high intensity and poignancy. The piano was added for its incisive quality and extended low register and the extra viola to improve the balance between the strings and piano and to add warmth. I strove to make the work structurally clear, to project many moods, and to call upon a rich variety of instrumental colors. The music alternates between clearly metrical passages, which predominate, and unmetred areas in which metrics gradually move out of phase or disappear entirely. Metrical passages, often closely-knit rhythmically, usually place the piano and strings in dialogue. The first two movements are restless and fast, though quite different in mood and content. Both rise to climactic points, then end quietly. The third movement is slow, the fourth assertive and driving. Much of the musical material emerges from three consecutive major thirds on D-flat, D-natural, and E-flat above middle C, played against a pedal E-natural in the same octave. These closely-grouped notes generate in turn many lines and sounds which have strong influence on all major areas of the music.

“The SEXTET was commissioned by the Koussevitsky Foundation in the Library of Congress and is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitsky. It received its first performance in the Coolidge Auditorium in the Library of Congress by the Juilliard Quartet with John Graham, viola, and William Masselos, piano, on April 27, 1972.”

DONALD ERB

THREE PIECES FOR BRASS QUINTET AND PIANO

New York Brass Quintet (Robert Nagel, Paul Ingraham, Allan Dean, John Swallow, Thompson Hanks); James Smolko, piano; Matthias Bamert, conductor

DONALD ERB (b. Youngstown O., 1927) is one of today's most versatile and widely performed composers. He works in a variety of media, often to startling effect. His *Symphony of Overtures* has been played by the major orchestras of Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Washington, D.C., Dallas, Atlanta, Oregon, Seattle, Indianapolis and other cities. Erb studied at Kent State University, the Cleveland Institute and Indiana University (D.M. 1964), and has taught at Bowling Green State University and at Case Institute of Technology. He has appeared as conductor/lecturer and composer-in-residence at many educational institutions across the nation. He is composer-in-residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music and holder of the Kolas Chair in Composition there as well as director of its Electronic Music Laboratory. Erb writes:

“THREE PIECES FOR BRASS QUINTET AND PIANO was commissioned by Wisconsin State University at River Falls for a brass quintet in residence headed by composer-trumpeter Conrad de Jong. The work was completed in 1968.

“Cast in a classic mold of three movements, the work contains many facets of brass writing. The first movement utilizes many things one can do with a brass instrument without actually 'playing' it. The slow movement stresses the more elegant aspects of brass playing and uses, to some extent, double muting. It is also in the classic sense the lyric movement. The final movement is a hard driving piece which employs techniques learned from my years as a jazz trumpeter. It is hopefully a showcase for brass players.”

GEORGE EDWARDS

KREUZ UND QUER (1971)

Boston Musica Viva (John Heiss, flute; William G. Wrzesien, clarinet; Nancy Cirillo, violin; Marcus Thompson, viola; Bruce Coppock, cello), Richard Pittman, conductor

GEORGE EDWARDS (b. Boston, 1943) studied composition with Richard Hoffmann at Oberlin College and with Earl Kim and Milton Babbitt at Princeton. In 1967 he was a fellow at the Berkshire Music Center, Tanglewood, where he was awarded the Koussevitsky Prize. After teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music from 1968 to 1973, he received a Prix de Rome. His *STRING QUARTET* is on CRI 265. He writes:

“KREUZ UND QUER, written for the Boston Musica Viva, was first performed by them in November 1971 in Cambridge, Mass. It is one of a series of short pieces in which I attempted to concentrate both a wide variety of material (textures, tempi, etc.) and a wide variety of ways of getting from one kind of material to another. In KREUZ UND QUER, the range of character is roughly that of a serenade, while the pacing involves sudden changes, long transitions, pun-like repetitions of previous material in new contexts, and rare moments of complete repose.”

ROBERT MACDOUGALL

ANACOLUTHON: A CONFLUENCE (1972)

Contemporary Music Ensemble (Paul Dunkel, flute; Allen Blustine, clarinet; George Haas, oboe; Allen Dean, trumpet; Donald Palma, bass; Christopher Finckel, cello; Eric Wilson, viola; Timothy Eddy, cello); Arthur Weisberg, conductor

ROBERT MACDOUGALL (b. San Diego, Cal., 1941) played piano and violin and spent three years as a Marine before coming to composition as a student at Berkeley, California. He then went to Peabody Conservatory for his B.M. and to U. C. San Diego for his M.A. (1972); he subsequently studied both music and drama there. He has been a member of Kenneth Gaburo's virtuoso performing group NCME III (CRI 316) and is increasingly involved in multi-media composition. He spends most of his summers in the Northwest as a Forest Service fire lookout. MacDougall writes:

“ANACOLUTHON: A CONFLUENCE (1972) is the product of an interest in instrumental timbres and in what might be called musical characterization. The one is a relatively recent concern; only within the past two years have I been seriously probing and absorbing various non-standard instrumental techniques. The other, however, has been part of my musical outlook since my earliest pieces. Music for me is an essentially dramatic experience; certain elements are set in motion which eventually find themselves in conflict with each other and with themselves. They interact, exploring one another, drawing each other out. Groping, challenging, searching, they sometimes transform one another, or themselves, as the result of such contact. It is intended to be an active, vital process whose power is dependent upon strong initial characterizations: the elements must be delineated clearly and forcefully from the very beginning. By and large I have tried to let the limitations and possibilities of new instrumental sounds and techniques of playing determine pitch content, rhythmic drive, and dynamic range. In other words, I have not thought of these effects as isolated "color" highlights on an otherwise conventional canvas, but have permitted their particular demands to determine the constraints within which the structure of the work evolved.

“But ANACOLUTHON is not primarily a motivic or melodic work; it is rather an attempt to strongly characterize certain musical elements through the use of tempi, dynamics, and timbre and then to bring these elements into conflict with one another. I wanted to create situations in which the performers were given the opportunity to assume control over certain parts of the work, yet I did not want to relinquish responsibility for the course of the composition as a whole. As a result, ANACOLUTHON has become a contrapuntal involvement in the largest sense, not only for me as a composer, but, I hope, for the performer and listener as well.”

All four performing groups on this record have distinguished themselves as elegant performers of contemporary music. The New York Brass Quintet may be heard on CRI playing music of Franchetti, Schuller, Goeb, Druckman, Etler and Miller; the Concord Quartet playing music of Street, Hiller, Jolas and Rochberg; Gilbert Kalish playing music of Marino, Jones, Berger, Harris and Blank; John Graham playing music of Rhodes;

the Boston Musica Viva playing music of Heiss; and the Contemporary Music Ensemble playing music of Blackwood, Sydernan, Hamilton, Mayer and Martino. The Concord Quartet was the 1974 winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, which annually awards prizes for outstanding compositions and underwrites recordings of the winning compositions. Messrs. Erb, Bassett, Edwards and MacDougall won the 1974 awards

Edwards —recorded 24 November 1974

Erb —recorded 28 October 1973

MacDougall —recorded 15 January 1975

Bassett, Edwards and MacDougall recorded by David Hancock

The four pieces on this record were selected by a jury of outstanding musicians for their originality, craftsmanship and musicality. The Naumburg Recording Award has been an ongoing project since 1949: this is the fourth year the winners have appeared on CRI. Seymour Shifrin's **THREE PIECES FOR ORCHESTRA**, which appeared on the first of these, won the Koussevitzky International Recording Award for 1972.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)