

CRI SD 325
Erickson/Ferritto/Randall/Ivey

Robert Erickson
End of the Mime (12:10)
Text from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*
NMCE I
Kenneth Gaburo, director

John Ferritto
Oggi (9:15)
Text by John Ferritto
Neva Pilgrim, mezzo-soprano; Allen Blustine, clarinet;
Ursula Oppens, piano

J. K. Randall
Improvisation (6:30)
Text by E.E. Cummings
Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Allen Blustine, clarinet;
Ronald Anderson, trumpet; Thomas James, piano;
Albert Regni, saxophone; Stanley Silverman, guitar;
David Gilbert, conductor

Jean Eichelberger Ivey
Hera, Hung From the Sky (12:30)
Text by Carolyn Kizer
Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano;
Notes from Underground group and tape conducted by Andrew Thomas

Robert Erickson (*b* Michigan, 1917) has been the recipient of Guggenheim and Ford Foundation Fellowships. His Second String Quartet won the Marion Bauer Prize in 1957. Since about 1965 his compositions have exhibited an intense interest in musical timbre, and he has invented several acoustical musical instruments which explore the possibilities of controlling new timbres. He composes and teaches at the University of California, San Diego. His *Chamber Concerto* is on CRI 218.

Mr. Erickson writes:

“What drew me to *Finnegans Wake* was especially its polyphony. That quality of multiple levels was what I have tried to bring out in my setting of this passage from the end of Book I, Chapter 2.

“There is no plot in *Finnegans Wake*—almost all of its themes appear on every page—but in this particular passage there is an event sequence which may be helpful to those who are new to Joyce: the children come home from play; they study their lessons; they become noisy; their father chases them off and slams the door; they flee to the bedroom; a prayer ends the chapter.

“Joyce’s meanings fan out from this domestic scene to the life and history of mankind; all fleeing, all thunderous door slams, all sexual relationships are woven in. The multiplicity of meaning can become very confusing, although there are no nonsense words. Everything has a meaning—more likely, several.”

John E. Ferritto (b Cleveland, 1937) was already a performing violinist and pianist before he left high school. After graduation from the Cleveland Institute of Music he became co-conductor of the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra in Europe. He went on to study piano with Ward Davenny and composition with Mel Powell at Yale, gathering an impressive collection of awards while he was there. Since then he has split his career between performing, conducting, and composing, and his music has been performed by distinguished organizations. He is now (1974) music director of the Springfield (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra.

About his music, Mr. Ferritto writes:

“*Oggi*, a setting for soprano, clarinet, and piano, Op. 9, was written for Neva Pilgrim and was completed in April 1969. It is my first attempt to write text and music simultaneously. This technique was also used more extensively in a later work, *Sogni*, for soprano and orchestra, Op. 12.

“*Oggi*, means ‘today’ in Italian; the setting is a reflection upon the general mass dream of life going on on any particular day. The words are often meaningless in the sense of linear thought. Textural word phrases are often set up only to create certain timbres with the instruments. The thrust of the work is conceived as a gradual change in roles of the three players. The singer and the players interchange their functions as the work progresses, and finally, in the last section, each role is clearly defined. The singer’s recitation of the old Celtic prayer is the final summation of all of the real or unreal thoughts which have been felt throughout.”

J. K. Randall (b Cleveland, 1929) currently teaches at Princeton University. His compositions include *Mudgett: monologues by a mass murderer* (1965); *Lyric Variations* for violin and computer (1968); and the score for the feature length film *Eakins* (1972). He is the author of *Compose Yourself: a Manual for the Young*, currently being serialized in *Perspectives of New Music*.

Of his *Improvisation* on a poem of E. E. Cummings (1961), Mr. Randall writes:

“My *Improvisation* should seem very much the poem speaking. Not something being done with (or to) a text. Nor someone delivering the poem. (Please read it.) Not vocalization packaging phonemes as timbre; or aping the rhythms and contours of ‘natural’ speech either. (Nor like a Syllable Count.) And certainly not like music going like music goes, fending off (for both’s sake) some debris of what once was language. Nor known words speaking, except as carriers of a meaning/rhythm evolving as the poem’s own vocabulary evolves as the poem speaks; (words in a vocabulary evolved along some finely erotic edge of what once was mystic; somewhere I have never traveled). Like rhythms of grammar made flesh. (Nor does the title report the method of composition.)”

Jean Eichelberger Ivey (b Washington, D.C., 1923) holds master’s degrees in composition from the Eastman School and in piano from Peabody Conservatory. She took her doctorate in composition from the University of Toronto, where she also studied electronic music. She teaches composition and electronic music at Peabody, has composed in all media and is widely performed.

“. . . the dramatic and beautifully lyric *Hera, Hung From the Sky* by Jean Elchelberger Ivey was sung with great expression and musicality by Elaine Bonazzi and accompanied by Notes from Underground and tape.” So wrote Stephen Burton in the *Contemporary Music Newsletter* of the New York premiere Feb. 23, 1974, at Carnegie Recital Hall, which took place during the closing concert of the national conference of the American Society of University Composers. The same performers, conducted by Andrew Thomas, recorded it shortly afterward.

Hera, Hung From the Sky was commissioned by the University of North Dakota’s Collegium Musicum, which gave the world premiere under its conductor Tamar Read, April 12, 1973. The occasion was a festival on Women in the Arts and the composer had been asked to select a text by a woman writer.

“I searched through a great den of poetry before I came upon this poem in a volume by Carolyn Kizer,” writes Dr. Ivey. “As soon as I saw it, I knew I had found my text. It deals with the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus, who for her presumption of equality with him was punished by being turned into a constellation, still hanging in the sky. This re-interpretation of myth from the woman’s point of view seemed not only appropriate to a woman’s conference, but full of vividly dramatic possibilities well suited to the ensemble of winds, percussion, and tape for which I had been asked to write. Besides, much of the poem’s imagery, especially the swinging pendulum, seemed to invite musical expression. When I had found the text, the music almost wrote itself.”

The tape part was realized in the Peabody Conservatory Electronic Music Studio, of which Dr. Ivey is the founder and director. She is the twenty-first woman composer in the CRI catalogue.

About the performers:

NMCE (New Music Choral Ensemble) was formed by Kenneth Gaburo in 1966 and quickly made its reputation as a virtuoso performing group. It has since gone through three incarnations, the third of which performed Mr. Gaburo’s own controversial *Maledetto* on CRI SD 316. **Bethany Beardslee** has been for many years the unrivalled queen of the contemporary music world. She may be heard singing Milton Babbitt’s *Vision and Prayer* on CRI SD 268. **Elaine Bonazzi** is a dynamic and virtually flawless star of the New York City, Santa Fe, Cincinnati, and Washington opera companies who has already participated in nine operatic premieres and has appeared with most of the major U.S. orchestras. **Neva Pilgrim** is widely admired for her performances of traditional as well as contemporary music. She may also be heard on CRI SD 245.

The recordings of *End of the Mime*, *Oggi*, and *Improvisation* were made possible by grants from the American Composers Alliance.

Produced by Carter Harman

Recorded by David Hancock

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