

## **MUSIC OF RICHARD FELCIANO**

### **CRASIS for seven instruments and electronic sounds**

**David Subke, flute; Donald O'Brien, clarinet; Robert Bloch, violin; Bonnie Hampton, cello; Beverly Bellows, harp; Naomi Sparrow, piano; Lawrence Blackshere, percussion; conducted by the composer**

### **SPECTRA for piccolo flute, alto flute and contrabass**

**Nancy Turetzky, flutes; Bertram Turetzky, contrabass**

### **GRAVITIES for piano, four hands**

**Milton and Peggy Salkind**

### **CHÖD for six players and electronics**

**The Philadelphia Composers' Forum; Joel Thome, conductor**

**Eric Rosenblith, violin; Marcy DeCou, cello; Jack Kulowitch, contrabass; Arthur Maddox, piano; Michael Sirota, David Woodhill, percussion; Romulus Franceschini, electronics; Timothy Mabee, electronic engineer**

RICHARD FELCIANO was born in California in 1930. He holds degrees from Mills College, the Paris Conservatory, and the University of Iowa. His principal teachers of composition were Darius Milhaud, with whom he worked at Mills and in Paris, and Luigi Dallapiccola, with whom he studied privately during a year in Florence. He had held grants from the French and Italian governments, the Woolley and Copley foundations, a Fulbright grant, two Ford Foundation fellowships, and a Guggenheim fellowship. In 1967 he was appointed Professor of Music at the University of California at Berkeley and in the same year became resident composer to the National Center for Experiments in Television in San Francisco. The sensitive eloquence and boldness of design which characterize his works have made him one of the highly respected American composers of his generation.

CRASIS represents a response to one of the most powerful acoustical experiences of my life: a performance of a Noh drama by a professional troupe from Japan. The subtle graduations of the wailing voices (wail is such a poor word; we really have nothing to describe such a flexible vocal phenomenon) and the abrupt and cataclysmic explosions on the part of the drummers, interrupting and yet preserving a strange sense of stasis — all these made an intense impression on me. The appropriateness of these materials to an electronic context seemed clear, and I set about writing a work which would be not programmatic but rather an attempt to build a structure in sound whose acoustical materials are derived from the Noh. The notation, which includes miniature mobiles, is both traditional and proportional; cues are given sometimes by the conductor, sometimes by sounds emerging from the tape. As the work progresses, the relation of the live instruments to the electronic sounds proceeds from complement to fusion, hence the title (crasis: the joining of two vowels into one).

SPECTRA for piccolo, flute, alto flute and contrabass was written for Nancy and Bertram Turetzky in February 1967. The title refers to the broad frequency spectrum which this particular combination of instruments makes possible. The form which the range assumes in the course of the piece is somewhat that of an isosceles triangle, the complete range being heard at the outset, then gradually contracted in the course of the work. In addition, there is exploitation of the variety of timbral and articulative characteristics of these instruments, as well as of their dramatic and expressive qualities — the brilliant beginning of the piccolo, the plaintive end of the alto flute, the contrabass cadenza preceding the final section. Some of the textures are produced by aleatory means and certain aspects of the sound palette reflect the aural images of electronic music. Basically there are five sections: three duos (one for each of the flutes and bass) separated by an interlude and a cadenza for the contrabass alone.

GRAVITIES for piano, four hands, evolves by subjecting its musical ideas to forces of attraction and repulsion in terms of each of the compositional materials involved: duration, harmony, dynamics, and texture. Contrast is achieved through stasis. Dance gestures and certain aural images of electronic music are in evidence (a dancer, after all, is in constant dialogue with gravity . . .). The four-hand medium is exploited through the simultaneous use of wide registers and the employment of overlapping rhythms and dense textural blocks not otherwise available. The work was commissioned by Milton and Peggy Salkind.

For some time I have been fascinated by the apparent dichotomy of two modes of being in the universe: the inevitable, quasi-periodic motions of atoms and celestial bodies and on the other hand, and on a more intermediate scale, the actions and rhetoric of man, assertions of his will and thereby his independence, yet inevitably conditioned by the other mode of being and ultimately drawn to union with it. Thus in CHÖD two kinds of motion are apparent: those which manifest a pervasive, slow, quasi-periodic movement in which the five C's of the opening structure move in a single convergence to the central C at the end; and those which, like much of the music of the Occident, are tied to more intermediate time-structures (rhythm and phrase) and to instrumental analogies of the expressive capacities of the human voice, with all its attendant implications of ego-manifestation. The title is that of a Tibetan mystery-play and means "cutting-off," a reference to the absorption of personality in the universal order of all created matter.

CHÖD was commissioned by the Philadelphia Composers' Forum.

Notes by Richard Felciano

The ensemble performing CRASIS on this recording is made up of outstanding individual performers with a long dedication to new music in the West.

BERTRAM TURETZKY is unquestionably the foremost exponent of contemporary music for the contrabass. He has simultaneously extended the performing capacities of the instrument (his book, *The Contemporary Contrabass*, published by the University of California Press, is a milestone in the development of bass technique) and stimulated the creation of a large and impressive body of music for the contrabass as a solo or chamber instrument. He has played these works all over the United States and Europe.

NANCY TURETZKY is a distinguished flutist and is widely admired for her performance of contemporary music. She and Bertram have commissioned and performed many works for flute and bass (they have performed SPECTRA more than 200 times).

MILTON and PEGGY SALKIND have championed a contemporary role for the four-hand piano medium through commissions (to composers such as Seymour Shifrin, Ralph Shapey, and Boguslaw Schaeffer) and extensive performances in the United States and abroad.

The PHILADELPHIA COMPOSERS' FORUM is one of the major professional groups performing contemporary chamber music in the United States. Founded in 1954 for the purpose of presenting works of composers in the area of Philadelphia, it has expanded its musical boundaries to international dimensions; its performances have been broadcast world-wide and its recordings have received international acclaim. The Forum's major objective is to present performances of new music on the highest artistic level. To this end, six new works from outstanding contemporary composers are commissioned annually. JOEL THOME, the group's conductor and music director, studied conducting with Herman Genhart and Pierre Boulez and composition with George Rochberg. He has been a member of the faculty at the Israel Academy of Music at the University of Tel Aviv, a musical advisor to INBAL, the National Dance Theatre of Israel, and an associate to the Electronic Music Sound

Research Center of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At the present time (1975) he is also conductor to the Erick Hawkins Dance Company and music director-conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra da camera.

With the exception of SPECTRA, the recording was engineered by George Craig using Ampex-Dolby equipment and Neumann microphones.

The National institute/American Academy of Arts and Letters makes awards to four composers each year in recognition of distinguished achievement. Richard Felciano was a 1974 winner, and this recording was part of his prize. Felciano also was a winner of a 1975 Composers Award of the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., which provided additional subsidy.

Produced by Carter Harman

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*