

## **PETER LIEBERSON**

PETER LIEBERSON (b. New York, 1946) has a B.A. in Literature from New York University, and his M.A. in Musical Composition from Columbia University. He studied with Charles Wuorinen, Harvey Soilberger, and Milton Babbitt; worked as production engineer on a WNCN (NY) series with Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson; wrote and narrated a program on the music of Igor Stravinsky. He has also worked as musical assistant to Leonard Bernstein and as production assistant on the Young People's Concerts with Michael Tilson Thomas and the N.Y. Philharmonic. He has received a Charles Ives Fellowship from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and the Martha Baird Rockefeller grant that made this recording possible, among others. He has received performances and commissions by the Group for Contemporary Music, Speculum Musicae, the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, Tashi, and Pierre Boulez and the New York Philharmonic among others. He is a founding member of the New Orchestra, founding member and conductor of the Composers Ensemble, and co-director of New Structures Ensemble.

### **CONCERTO FOR FOUR GROUPS OF INSTRUMENTS**

**Speculum Musicae; Peter Lieberman, conductor**

Notes by Peter Lieberman

CONCERTO FOR FOUR GROUPS OF INSTRUMENTS was my first large chamber work, and, luckily, it was commissioned by Speculum Musicae, with whom I have worked extensively since, and who gave this particular work its first very fine performance. It was also my first public conducting venture, and preparing for this, I gave myself a number of challenges as I composed the work. I remember the excitement of the occasion, the realization of the piece in sound almost more than I do the composing of it.

I think that I was attempting a precision in the unfolding of musical gestures which might clarify for me the notion of form. That is, I was working from inside out, from detail to detail in various aspects of musical dimensions, pitch, rhythm, register in particular. I had very few flashes of the work's form in the beginning as happens now so often; instead I was most involved in the appreciation of the notes themselves, how they related to one another as intervals, how intervals in turn were distanced from each other in the musical space to give them meaning. From there I began to have some sense of the energy that might thread all these gestures together into a form.

As for the make-up of the work itself, there are eleven instruments grouped into four ensembles: 2 violins, viola; flute, oboe, clarinet; bassoon, cello, contrabass; piano, harp. In the orchestration I was dealing with the interrelation of various timbres which in turn was reflective of the musical material itself; each particular group worked with specific aspects of the basic material. The result is a sense of similarity on a harmonic level moving at a slow pace while the surface activity is a kind of embroidery revealing the apparent diversity of each group's utterances.

The work is quite short, only some 8 1/2 minutes, but it is very compressed. Its basic speed is intense, the phrases fairly short and cumulative in effect, so that although there is some relaxation in the middle, some more moderate pacing, essentially, the work rises and falls in one long connected wave.

The CONCERTO is best understood, then, from the energetic qualities of the phrases themselves. It is the constant dialogue between the four instrumental forces, an unceasing sense of relationship that is much more important than their actual opposition or merging together.

## **PIANO FANTASY**

**Ursula Oppens, piano**

After the performance of the **CONCERTO FOR FOUR GROUPS**, Ursula Oppens asked me to compose a work for her. I looked forward to it, but it took two years of composing other pieces before it was actually begun. At that point I had a clear intuition of the work before me, and I think I was more aware of the musical space in which the details were to take place. Accordingly there could be all kinds of patterns, relationships between ideas, recalls, and variations, rather than just an ongoing pulse that relaxes only at the conclusion.

I had long admired the music of Brahms, particularly the personal warmth and harmonic richness found in his late piano works, the *Intermezzi* in particular, with their clarity of form and those strikingly varied recapitulations which are as much developments in themselves. It was my own gesture towards that unity between harmonic-rhythmic development and an accommodating form that inspired my own composing.

The piece begins with little communications between various kinds of musical ideas, some articulate and clearly highlighted, others more fluid and connected. This process of beginning occurs four times, with each occurrence of the opening gesture developing longer phrasing until the long midsection of the piece where all the previously developed material is united and works together. The more fluid cantabile melodies are increasingly embedded within a series of steady but decelerating pulses which are a reflection and expansion of the mere rhythmically concise ideas. As these pulses become slower and more distant from each other, the musical space becomes progressively filled, and the texture increasingly virtuosic in nature for the pianist.

The last part of the piece literally folds in on itself. There is a sense of recall and transformation of what has gone on before. But there are more and more gaps and sense of play between phrases, a return to more precise relationships.

## **ERIK LUNDBORG**

**ERIK LUNDBORG** (b. 1948, Helena, Montana) had written by the age of 18 a substantial number of works for orchestra, ballet, theater, chamber and piano, all in the tonal idiom. He then went on to study with Charles Wuorinen, Eugene Weigel, Harvey Sollberger and Jack Beeson, receiving his B.M. from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1970 and his M.A. from Columbia University in 1974. During this period he experimented with various styles and methods. At present, his music reflects serial concerns and procedures.

Since his move to New York in 1970, his music has been receiving more and more attention through performances by established musical organizations of that city. In 1975 he received commissions from *Speculum Musicae* and the Group for Contemporary Music through grants issued by the National Endowment for the Arts, and was also a recipient of a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music. He was elected to the board of the League of Composers — ISCM in 1975.

Lundborg is a founding member of the Composers Ensemble, and serves this organization as conductor and pianist. At present (1976) he teaches theory, composition and piano at the Newark (N.J.) Community Center for the Arts.

## **FROM MUSIC FOREVER NO. 2**

**The Light Fantastic Players (David Holzman, Thomas James, piano; Claire Heidrich, Joseph Passaro, percussion),  
Daniel Shulman, conductor**

Notes by Erik Lundborg

FROM *MUSIC FOREVER* NO. 2 was composed while I attended Columbia University and was performed there in May, 1972. It is scored for piano four hands and two percussionists who share vibraphone, marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel, 12 drums, 6 cymbals and 6 wood instruments. (Temple blocks were used in this recording.) The original idea was to compose a work for a convenient ensemble of my colleagues who could spend the necessary rehearsal time to shape the piece to perfection.

FROM *MUSIC FOREVER* NO. 2 is divided into six large sections. Within sections 1, 3, 4 and 6, durations of smaller sub-sections are often articulated by differing types of even note-values and generally retain a similar texture throughout. A canon is the background to sections 2 and 5, although it may not be heard as such. The listener simply hears the music becoming denser as each voice enters. Section 5 is a repeat of the first canon, but twice as slow. The piano and percussion exchange their notes here. A short piano motive distinguishes the two sections; this motive serves as a compressed reflection of the material that surrounds it. When the non-pitched instruments enter in earnest, section 3 is reached where again various types of even-note values are encountered. In section 4, pitch and rhythmic doubling between the piano and percussion occurs. Section 6 is a literal retrograde of the opening.

## **PASSACAGLIA**

**The Light Fantastic Players; Daniel Shulman, conductor**

PASSACAGLIA was commissioned by Daniel Shulman for The Light Fantastic Players and was first performed at Teachers College in New York on April 8, 1974. The passacaglia "tune" is a series of sustained notes usually heard in thickly "populated" environments. The listener should be able to pick it out after a number of hearings. The first presentation of the passacaglia is repeated during the first half of the piece and is always subjected to rhythmic augmentation and diminution. The sustained "tune," which passes from instrument to instrument should be audible, as distinguished from the context of local gestures and interruptions.

The inversion occurs in a context sounding very much like the opening, but the register is generally lower. It is then subjected to similar procedures to those noted above. A previous section is then literally repeated (*tutti, ff*) followed by the coda which first presents the inversion, then the original tune accompanied by three two-note chords all containing a "drone" middle-C. PASSACAGLIA dies like a single pedalled note on the piano.

For me, the PASSACAGLIA provided a framework which I could work within, enjoying a freedom of choice that is rather ironically in contrast with the idea of a strict passacaglia. The listener should bear this in mind, for the passacaglia in PASSACAGLIA is a guide, not an absolute criterion for listening comprehension.

SPECULUM MUSICAE and THE LIGHT FANTASTIC PLAYERS are among New York's newest and most distinguished groups devoted to the performance of contemporary music. Both are notable for their policy of programming twentieth century classics from as long ago as 1900, as well as of commissioning and performing works by newly blossoming composers. Speculum's nucleus is a tightly

knit group of seven players; Light Fantastic's is almost 30. The players in the Lieberson work are Daniel Reed and Rolf Schulte, violins; Louise Shulman, viola; Paul Dunkel, flute; Steve Taylor, oboe; Virgil Blackwell, clarinet; Fred Sherry, cello; Donald MacCourt, bassoon; Don Palma, contrabass; Ursula Oppens, piano; and Susan Jolles, harp.

DANIEL SHULMAN, conductor and pianist, has served as music director of the Lenox Arts Center and has appeared as pianist or conductor in concerts by numerous organizations, among them the Group for Contemporary Music, the Composers' Forum, Speculum Musicae, the Society for Contemporary Music from Japan, the League of Composers — ISCM, the New Jersey Symphony and the New York Philharmonic. He is on the faculties of the City College of New York and C.W. Post College.

URSULA OPPENS is not only a soloist of dazzling virtuosity and musicality but also a dedicated ensemble performer; she is a founding member of SPECULUM MUSICAE. She has concertized widely including appearances with leading orchestras and is a recent winner of an Avery Fisher Prize. She plays Otto Luening's SONATA IN MEMORIAM FERRUCCIO BUSONI on CRI SD 334.

Early in 1974, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc. awarded ten grants to young composers for funding various professional projects including recordings. Peter Lieberson and Erik Lundborg were among the winners, and this record was the result.

Piano Fantasy, Concerto and Passacaglia

produced by Carter Harman;

Music Forever tape produced by Joe Spivack

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*