

JACQUES-LOUIS MONOD
CANTUS CONTRA CANTUM I
Merja Sargon, soprano; chamber orchestra
conducted by Jacques-Louis Monod

JACQUES-LOUIS MONOD (b. Paris, France), studied at the Conservatoire Nationale de Musique Paris, the Juilliard School of Music and the Hochschule für Musik and Konservatorium of West Berlin. He holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Columbia University, where he has taught for a number of years, has been a guest lecturer at Princeton and Harvard Universities and is an Associate Professor at Barnard College. He has conducted major orchestras in North and Central America, Scandinavia, Eastern and Western Europe, where he was primarily associated with the BBC Third Program. As a pianist and conductor, he has performed world premieres of works by, among others, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Babbitt, numerous first performances of works by Berger, Carter, Dallapiccola, Gerhard, Hoffmann, Ives, Krenek, Leibowitz, Philippot, and Varese and gave the first all Webern concerts in Paris and New York (1951). He made first recordings of works by Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Schnabel and Carter for Dial, Classic, Epic, Metronome, Columbia, and his last recording for CRI was Shifrin's *Three Pieces for Orchestra*. For his compositions, he has received a citation from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, a Dorothy Spivack Grant and a Martha Baird Rockefeller Grant. He is the President of the Guild of Composers, Inc., and of the Rene Leibowitz Association, a permanent representative of the A. Zemlinsky International Composition Prize, and the Director of Publications of Boelke-Bomart, Inc. and Mobart Music Publications. He writes:

“My CANTUS CONTRA CANTUM I, (1972) is a song cycle in one movement for woman's voice and chamber ensemble. It is made up of seven sections: The first and the last are hummed vocalises, and the middle five are settings of French texts by Paul Eluard and Jean Senn (chosen for their complementary treatment of the imagery germinating from the word visage).

“The work is part of a group of three compositions written between 1968 and 1976 including a *Duo for Violin and Cello* (Cantus Contra Cantum II) and a set of *Three Vocalises for Double Chorus (SATB) a cappella* (Cantus Contra Cantum III). It was premiered under my direction by the American Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music on September 25, 1975, at the MacMillin Theater, Columbia University, New York, with the assistance of a Dorothy Spivack Grant from Barnard College (1974), which permitted the scheduling of 12 rehearsals for the preparation of both the world premiere and the first recording. In these instances, the players were: Patricia Spencer, flute; Susan Barrett, oboe; Allen Blustine, clarinets; Frank Morelli, bassoon; Michael Martin, horn; Donald Butterfield, tuba; Maria Parisella, mandolin & violin; Frederic Hand, guitar; Amy Shulman, harp; Thomas James, piano; Donald Palma, double bass; Joseph Passaro and Raymond DesRoches, percussion.

“There is unfortunately very little a composer can do to assist the non-professional listener toward an understanding of his work, for a transliteration of his creative statement will be in the best of circumstances a tautology.

“Further, it may obscure the interaction between the author's and the listener's aesthetic proclivities by dissociating the work from that perceptual level, where the listener experiences the discipline's long standing association with the cultural context. Thus, I will

agree with Naum Gabo “that a work of art restricted to what the artist has put in it is only part of itself,” and that “it only attains full stature with what people and time make of it.” (Horizon, Vol. X, No. 53. July 1944)

“For both the non-professional and professional listener, understanding will begin with and depend upon the intensity of intuitive perception and the desire for a significant aesthetic experience that transcends the measurable assets of a given discipline.

“Together with the apprehension of concepts and the acquisition of information, professional understanding will achieve cultural significance through the eventual enrichment of a compositional technique that will serve a broader aesthetic responsibility than that of an ideology which relegates aesthetic consideration to that of a surface event.”

BEN WEBER

STRING QUARTET NO. 2

New Music Quartet (Broadus Earle, Matthew Raimondi, violins; Walter Trampler, viola; Claus Adam, cello)

BEN WEBER (b. St. Louis, 1916) began to compose in Chicago in 1936, moved to New York in 1945 and has lived there ever since. He became active in the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1946, and in ensuing years received several fellowships, (Guggenheim; Fromm; Phoebe Ketchum Award) as well as numerous commissions for various orchestral and chamber combinations, and vocal works. Additional honors include an award in 1950 from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and lifetime election to that organization in 1970. He was one of the two Americans chosen in 1954 to represent the U.S. at the Convegno Musicale in Rome, and for that occasion wrote his *Violin Concerto*, Op. 41 which was performed there. It was first performed in USA in 1974. Though his health does not permit much public activity, he continues to compose and teach privately in NYC. He writes:

“STRING QUARTET NO. 2, Opus 35 was commissioned in 1951 by the late Alma Morgenthau, and is dedicated to her. It was written specifically for the New Music Quartet, now some years disbanded, who perform it on this record. It received its first performance within a few months of its completion at the estate of Mrs. Morgenthau, where she for some years gave summer concerts. The work has been performed a number of times, both here and abroad, and by other quartets.

“The structure of the piece is, briefly, an opening thematic amalgam of two distinct sections; the first part serves as a slow introduction, quickly followed by a second part (scherzando) which leads directly into a series of three separate variations played without pause which close the whole first main section of the piece. These lead immediately into a development section, during which the material of the three variations is developed more elaborately, leading into a reprise of the opening of the quartet, presented in a more evanescent manner, but leading into a full development of the scherzando portion. This developed scherzando, much greater in length than in its original presentation, forms the rhythmically excited coda of the whole work. So in a way it is a work that could easily make the claim to be in a very elaborate Sonata Form in one movement.”

SEYMOUR SHIFRIN

STRING QUARTET NO. 4

Fine Arts Quartet (Leonard Sorkin, George Sopkin, violins; Bernard Zaslow, viola; Abram Loft, cello)

SEYMOUR SHIFRIN (b. New York, 1926) was educated at the High School of Music and Art and Columbia University and was instructed in composition by William Schuman, Otto Luening and Darius Milhaud. He taught for many years at the University of California at Berkeley and then became Professor of Music at Brandeis University. He has been the recipient of the Beams Prize, Copley Award, Horbit Award and Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships. His *Three Pieces for Orchestra* (1958) won the Naumburg Award and was recorded by the London Sinfonietta under Jacques-Louis Monod (CRI 275). This record received the Koussevitzky award for 1972, the composer's second. He has received important commissions and his music has been performed widely by major organizations. He writes:

“The FOURTH QUARTET was commissioned by the Fine Arts Foundation and is dedicated to the members of the Fine Arts Quartet. There are three movements. The opening, *lirico*, is slow in tempo. The muted strings introduce central harmonic and intervallic relationships around a long lyric line rich in arabesques initiated by the first violin. The line is interrupted by brief chordal interjections and the linear aspect returns, first in the viola, to build to a point of climax and dissolution. There follows a section, mutes off, that extracts from the opening those aspects that were secondary — the chordal interjection, the arabesque figures — and evolves from them a continuity in discontinuities. Gradually the harmonies refer more closely to the opening and there grows a sense of the lyric line emerging again, transformed.

“The second movement, marked *comodo, delicately, leisurely*, demands that the technically difficult sound simple and effortless. It is a play on constancy where the timbrally differentiated composite rhythm in sixteenths is forever shifting; intervals and rhythms recur, but always to form different relationships. Above there is a refrainlike melody, simple, songlike, but it, too, is unpredictable in its coming and going. Suddenly the web is interrupted and an angular explosive succession of trumpetlike contrapuntal figures is announced, overlaps, builds to an intense stretto and ends abruptly. Soon there is a shift to the original tempo; lines play but the seeming simplicity of the opening is never fully regained.

“The final movement opens with a slow introduction marked *misurato*, and anchors the work harmonically, offering relief from the constant shifting of the preceding movement.

“An *allegro* follows, full of counterpointing elements; lines of thrust, of lyricism, are juxtaposed, interlocked, taking a route that leads to a summative reference to the harmonies of the opening introduction and, ultimately, to a point of union between these harmonies and those of the first movement.”

MERJA SARGON, a graduate of the Juilliard School, has sung with the Santa Fe Opera and the Finnish National Opera, as well as in concerts with such groups as Speculum Musicae and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The NEW MUSIC STRING QUARTET was a legend in its own lifetime, the equal of any score, with a special quality of delicacy and finesse. After it disbanded in 1956 Broadus Earle became leader of the Yale Quartet; Matthew Raimondi leader of the Composers Quartet; Claus Adam cellist of the Juilliard Quartet; and Walter Trampler known around the world as a leading viola soloist.

The FINE ARTS QUARTET is one of America's most distinguished chamber ensembles. Since 1963 they have been professors and artists-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee. In addition to performing standard repertoire they have played works by numerous contemporary composers, including Babbitt, Wuorinen, Johnston and Husa.

This record was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. The Weber quartet was originally recorded for the American Composers Alliance and has been rechannelled for stereo; the Shifrin was originally recorded for the A-R recording project but neither of them was released. CRI has acquired the tapes as part of its ongoing project in collaboration with the Ditson Fund to rescue important recordings that might otherwise disappear.

Produced by Carter Harman

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(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)