

## **SYDNEY HODKINSON**

### **MEGALITH TRILOGY (1973): DOLMEN, MENHIR, TALAYOT**

**William Albright, organ**

SYDNEY HODKINSON (b. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1934) received his Bachelors and Masters degrees from the Eastman School of Music and his Doctorate from the University of Michigan, where he studied composition with Bernard Rogers, Louis Mennini, Leslie Bassett, Niccolo Castiglioni, George B. Wilson and Ross Lee Finney. In addition, he has studied with Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt at Princeton University. He has received major composition awards including one from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, an artist-in-residence award from the Ford Foundation, the S. Thompson Orchestral Award, the composition award from the International Congress of Jeunesses Musicales. He is a professional conductor and clarinetist, and has conducted amateur and professional chamber music and orchestral concerts throughout the United States and Canada. In 1976 he was on the conducting and composition faculties at the Eastman School of Music where he directs the Musica Nova Ensemble. The composer writes:

“Stravinsky is reputed to have said one of the problems with the pipe organ was that it 'never breathes,' and as is true with many other composers, I avoided this King of Instruments for many years. In fact, a 1969 commission from William Albright lay fallow in my mind until 1972 — a period when I found myself fascinated by prehistoric megaliths. At some point, my visions of the vast ceremonial ruins — Stonehenge - Tenochtitlan – Knossos - Angkor Wat — translated themselves into static, frozen musical sounds. The very quality that Stravinsky complained about seemed ideally suited to this vision.

By that time I was already working with severely- limited pitch materials — perhaps a reaction to many contemporary scores that were to me 'colorful' or dense without reason. My first work of this type — *Stabile for Orchestra* (1970) — was, I felt, quite successful, and the organ seemed well suited to continue work along these lines. The music began as an aural representation of monolithic sculptures or Calder steel constructions: huge, never-changing, but constantly different. With these separate but related approaches, I began work on Bill's commission, and, as the work progressed, three pieces resulted.

“A *dolmen* represents a prehistoric structure consisting of two mammoth upright stones with a capstone. DOLMEN largely employs slow — moving symmetrical pitch structures within a narrow register, using limited segments of notes rather than the total chromatic spectrum. A *menhir* is a single, tall, upright megalith. MENHIR is perhaps the most stringent and austere of the works, since the piece employs only six tones from the twelve possible, three of them simply a transposition of the other three. A *talayot* is a large stone but consisting of many small boulders. All of the sonorities in TALAYOT are derived from a single component of two intervals: the major and minor third.

“Within such highly-restricted, indeed intentionally primitive bounds, these pieces evolve as a series of contrasted blocks — stone pillars of sound. The MEGALITH TRILOGY was completed in 1973 in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Rochester, New York. Each work is dedicated to a composer friend: William Albright, Robert Morris, and George Cacioppo.”

## **JOHN HEISS**

### **INVENTIONS, CONTOURS AND COLORS (1973)**

**Speculum Musicae**

**Richard Fitz, conductor**

JOHN HEISS (b. 1938, New York City) studied composition with Milton Babbitt, Earl Kim, Otto Luening, and Darius Milhaud. He won a National Institute of Arts and Letters award in 1973 and National Endowment for the Arts grants in 1974 and 1975. He has taught at the New England Conservatory since 1967. The composer writes:

“INVENTIONS, CONTOURS AND COLORS was commissioned by the Berkshire Music Center and Fromm Music Foundation. The three-choir nature of the ensemble (string-wind-brass) is a fundamental conception. Expressive melodic writing at the opening gives way to more sharply contrasted outbursts and extended textures (string pizzicatos, flowing woodwind lines, brass flourishes). A 'chorale' idea, heard first in the brasses and later in the strings, develops in quieter passages; it stands in opposition to the more intense polyphonic sections which cannot seem to get anywhere. Toward the end, opening material returns briefly, several harmonies implied during the work achieve full focus in four bold chords, and the expressive solo voices have the last word, reaching a culmination in their final, evaporating sonorities.”

## **CHINARY UNG**

### **MOHORI (1974)**

**Barbara Martin, soprano**

**Contemporary Chamber Ensemble**

**Arthur Weisberg, conductor**

CHINARY UNG (b. Cambodia, 1942) came to the United States in 1964. He studied at the Manhattan School of Music and received a doctorate degree with distinction in composition at Columbia University. He has studied with Chou Wen-chung, George Crumb, Mario Davidovsky, Jack Beeson, Bulent Arel and Vladimir Ussachevsky. Ung has received the Margaret Grant Memorial Composition Prize, the Boris and Ida Rapaport Prize, and awards and commissions from the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund, the Creative Artists Public Service, the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation (for MOHORI), and the Asia Foundation. He recently received the Indochina Fellowship Award (Ford Foundation) in order to undertake a research project on the music of his native Cambodia.

MOHORI is a Khmer term for the chamber orchestra of the royal palace, made up of voice plus wind, string and percussion instruments. The term also refers to a legendary bird, Sat Mohori, a figure in traditional Khmer folksong. In this work, the use of Khmer phonetic is meant neither to escape from words nor to block the listener's thoughts, but rather to create the diffuse emotional state of the compositional process. The interjection of “hai-oe” is used for emphasis by Khmer singers, both the palace singers and those among the commune people in the fields. MOHORI has been described by the composer in these words:

“Lyricism in a linear perspective is the generator in the composition of MOHORI. Its creating process focuses on, at a certain given point in time and space, the lay-out of selected floating sound materials to lighten a world of textural timbre and to evoke a sense of atmospheric oneness. It is an attempt to depict the drama of life.”

This record was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc. John Heiss was a winner of the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund's Composers Award for 1974 and Sydney Hodkinson for 1975.

#### INTRODUCING BARBARA MARTIN

CRI is proud to present the first recording of Barbara Martin, who is already much admired in contemporary concert circles. She has appeared with Pierre Boulez and the Speculum Musicae, has toured with the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble and has appeared in classical operatic roles in major centers.

WILLIAM ALBRIGHT has extensively recorded and performed recent music for organ and piano. He also tours regularly with another specialty: classic piano jazz and ragtime. His organ music appears on CRI SD 277 and his piano playing on CRI SD 346. He is Associate Professor of Music Composition at the University of Michigan.

Performers on this recording, members of the outstanding SPECULUM MUSICAE, are: Virgil Blackwell, John T. Clark, Paul Dunkel, Nancy Elan, Steve Johns, Donald MacCourt, Donald Palma, Porter Poindexter, Louis Ranger, Louise Schulman, and Fred Sherry.

The much acclaimed CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE was founded in 1960 by Arthur Weisberg to perform contemporary works composed for less-than-symphony-sized orchestra. Members on this recording are George Haas, Kenneth Hosley, Susan Jolles, Gilbert Kalish, Susan Palma, Joseph Passaro, and David Starobin.

Produced by Carter Harman

THIS IS A COMPOSER-SUPERVISED RECORDING

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*