

OTHER VOICES

OLLY WILSON

SOMETIMES (1976)

William A. Brown, tenor; electronic sound realized at the Electronic Music Studio, University of California at Berkeley

OLLY WILSON (b. St. Louis, 1937) attended St. Louis public schools, Washington University, St. Louis, and received his Mus. M. degree from the University of Illinois, 1960, and Ph.D. degree from the University of Iowa, 1964. He studied composition with Robert Wykes, Robert Kelley, and Phillip Bezanson. He played jazz piano and bass with local groups in St. Louis, studied electronic music at the Studio for Experimental Music, University of Illinois, 1967, and was a member of several orchestras as a bass viol player. He has taught at Florida A & M University and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Presently (1977) he is Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. The Boston, Dallas, San Francisco, Baltimore, Oakland, Minneapolis, and Atlanta Symphony orchestras have performed his works. His electronic composition, *Cetus*, won the Dartmouth Arts Council Prize; his *Voices* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony and the Fromm Foundation at Tanglewood. *PIECE FOR FOUR* is on CRI SD 264, and *ECHOES* is on CRI SD 367. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1971-2, studying African music, and in 1974 won the citation of the National Institute/American Academy of Arts and Letters which made this recording possible. The composer writes:

“SOMETIMES was composed especially for William Brown and is based on a contemporary interpretation of the Black spiritual 'Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.' In this work, I attempted to recreate within my own musical language, not only the profound expression of human hopelessness and desolation that characterizes the traditional spiritual, but simultaneously on another level, a reaction to that desolation which transcends hopelessness. It is for this reason that musical events associated with the original spiritual appear in this work in a number of different ways — sometimes straight forward, sometimes fragmentized or extended, and sometimes in completely new relationships with one another, both on the immediate as well as the large scale formal level.

“The relationship between the tenor soloist and the electronic tape also reflects a multitude of shifting roles. They frequently exchange solo and complementary functions in varying degrees at different times in the course of the piece. Following an opening section by the tape alone, the tenor gradually enters, eventually becoming the focal point. A series of interrelated sections ensues in which the interplay between tape and singer becomes increasingly complex. The tenor then states a cadenza, followed by the tape reentry and, eventually, a buildup to the climactic point of the piece. The composition closes with a 'moan-like' postlude.

“The electronic tape was prepared at the U.C. Electronic Music Studio. The voice portions of the tape were derived from the singing of William Brown. SOMETIMES is dedicated to my parents who, through love and patience, taught me how to sing.”

ALLAN BLANK

TWO SONGS

Jan deGaetani, mezzo-soprano; Arthur Weisberg, bassoon

ALLAN BLANK (b. New York, 1925) went to the High School of Music & Art after early study of the violin. He studied composition and conducting there and at Juilliard. Further studies were at New York University (B.A. 1948), University of Minnesota (M.A. 1950), Teachers College, Columbia University, University of Iowa and as a participant (summer 1960) in the Princeton Seminar in Advanced Musical Studies. He was a violinist with the Pittsburgh Symphony (1950-52) and has taught at a number of schools. He is currently (1977) an Associate Professor in the Music Department of Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY). His compositions are available from a number of publishers and are widely performed. Other recordings of his music are on CRI SD 250 and CRI SD 329. The composer writes:

“TWO SONGS FOR VOICE AND BASSOON (1964) was premiered at my Composers' Forum concert in New York in 1964. While it is problematic and certainly subjective to pinpoint the expressive content of any music, these songs, I believe, combine humor and nostalgic wistfulness — characteristics that attracted me to the Ferlinghetti poems. As an example of two-part writing in which no consistent sustaining element appears, one of the issues I had to face was to construct the pitch and registral changes so that there is an illusion of harmonic fullness and a closing of the gap between the wide register of the voice and the bassoon. Consequently, the figurations in the bassoon — since it is assigned the dual task of 'bass' and 'filler' — are involved and difficult. The performance demands in the voice part are not less easy but stem from the more traditional and evolving need for maximum intervallic and rhythmic flexibility and subtleness. There is no special approach to the setting of the words other than the desire to both capture and project the changing moods and extend them into the bassoon writing.”

LEO SMIT

SONGS OF WONDER

Martha Hanneman, soprano; Leo Smit, piano

AT THE CORNER OF THE SKY

Men and Boys Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, N.Y.; Henrik Svitzer, flute; Nora Post, oboe; Leo Smit, speaker; Frederick Burgomaster, choirmaster and conductor

LEO SMIT (b. Philadelphia, 1921) first studied piano and theory with his father. During a family visit to Russia when he was eight, he was offered a scholarship for study with Dmitri Kabalevsky. A year later, he auditioned for Josef Hoffman, Director of the Curtis Institute, and won a three-year scholarship to study with Mme. Isabelle Vengerova. At the age of fourteen, he began studying composition with Nicolas Nabokoff. The following year he became pianist for the American Ballet Company and began a long-lasting friendship with Igor Stravinsky.

In 1939, Smit made his piano debut at Carnegie Hall. Since then, he has performed and conducted new works by Bartók, Berger, Bernstein, Bliss, Copland, Fine, Haieff, Hindemith, Kabalevsky, Lopatnikoff, Shapero and Stravinsky. As a piano soloist, he has appeared with numerous American and European orchestras.

In 1947, Smit composed his first major work, *Virginia Sampler*, commissioned by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and choreographed by Valerie Bettis. His *First Symphony*, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, and the League of composers, won the New York Critics' Circle Award in 1957. His *Second Symphony* was given a N.Y. premiere in 1966, with Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic.

As recipient of Fulbright and Guggenheim fellowships he traveled to Italy in 1950 and worked at the American Academy in Rome for two years. From 1957 to 1963 he served as Head of the Piano Department at the University of California at Los Angeles. At the 1962 Ojai Festival he made his conducting debut with André Prévín as soloist in the Mozart C minor Concerto. That same year he accepted the Slee Chair in Composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo; a year later he was appointed Professor of Music, a position he still holds. He has composed for voices, instruments, orchestra and the theater. The composer writes:

“SONGS OF WONDER was composed during the summer of 1976, which I spent in Santa Fe, New Mexico, near the Indian pueblos of the Rio Grande, the brooding Jemez mountains and the clefted Sangre de Cristo range. In this ancient and sacred land of ceremonial dance and song, I received several poems by Beth Frost written last year when she was twelve years old. I found the twin themes of Nature and Metaphysics (so characteristic of young children and old cultures only to be exchanged in time for the less poetic subjects of Man and Physics) in perfect harmony with the extraordinarily beautiful landscape, and chose three poems for the song cycle, all of which are suffused with the sense of awe and wonder. They are *Untold Wonders*, *The Horizons of Time* and *A Magic Starry Night*, set for high voice and piano. SONGS OF WONDER was composed for Lynne Milstein, who, with Beth and all the sisters of Astraea (Starry Maid) understands the lines of a great Wintu poet:

The stars streaming in the sky are my hair
The round rim of the earth which you see
Binds my starry hair.

“I composed AT THE CORNER OF THE SKY to celebrate the spiritual example of the ancient American people who inhabited this continent for many thousands of years. Though the way of life of the American Indian has been virtually destroyed by the Republic which now commemorates its 200th birthday, the profound religious beliefs and ceremonies of the first Americans still live in their myths, poetry, songs and dances.

“The three Vision Events define the tripartite, though continuous, form of this work. They also reveal the nature, source and technique for locating inspiration. The first Vision Event (Sioux) invokes the release of emotion in a remote and isolated place. This is followed by a Lullaby (Tsimshian) telling why a little girl was born. The second Vision Event (Eskimo) prescribes hypnosis, which can result when a simple act is carried to repetitive extremes. This is followed by a Mourning Song (Tsimshian), an outpouring of depressed, broken emotions wrenched from the bottom of the human abyss. Next come four Animal Songs — Turkey (Navajo), Deer (Yuma), Coyote (Nez Percé) and Wolf (Sioux). Vision Event 3 dares us to share the ultimate experience, to face Death and to feel its chill terror, then to tell what we have seen. This is followed by the Song of an Initiate (Huichol), who climbs the blue staircase to heaven, where the roses are singing, where the gods are waiting, but hears nothing, hears only silence. AT THE CORNER OF THE SKY was commissioned by and is dedicated to the St. Paul's Cathedral and its music director Frederick Burgomaster.”

WILLIAM BROWN's unique talents have won him engagements throughout America and abroad. His credits include the New York City Opera, Goldovsky Opera Theater, London Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, ABC Network Television, Columbia Records, and London Records. Mr. Brown serves (1977) as Professor of Voice at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville.

JAN deGAETANI can do no wrong, whatever she sings, and she remains the First Lady of contemporary vocal music. ARTHUR WEISBERG's principal place has been on the podium, particularly with the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, but he is also known as a superb bassoonist. He plays his chosen instrument on CRI SD 269 in music of Paul Chihara and 353 in music of Vincent Perichetti.

MARTHA HERR HANNEMAN, lyric soprano, is a Fellow of the Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, SUNY at Buffalo. She was selected as featured artist for the Rome premiere of Morton Feldman's opera *Neither*. The ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR has performed extensively in this country and in 1976 made a tour of England. It has performed other contemporary works in addition to those of Leo Smit. FREDERICK BURGOMASTER has been Conductor and Music Director of the Buffalo Schola Cantorum since 1973 as well as assuming duties as Organist and Choirmaster of St. Paul's Cathedral and Organist of Temple Beth Zion, both in Buffalo. HENRIK SVITZER has been solo flutist with the Sjaellands Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Danish Opera Orchestra. He has toured extensively throughout Europe and is a member of the faculty of the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music and the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts at SUNY, Buffalo. NORA POST has also been a member of the Center for Creative and Performing Arts since 1976. She is widely known for her outstanding virtuosity and dedication to contemporary music, and at the same time has specialized in Baroque and 18th century works.

Each year the National Institute/American Academy of Arts and Letters rewards four composers for outstanding work during the year. Olly Wilson was a 1974 winner, and this recording is part of his prize. Allan Blank's TWO SONGS were recorded for Desto before that company stopped production and kindly offered the tapes to CRI; the production is assisted by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. Leo Smit's recording was assisted by the St. Paul's Cathedral of Buffalo, New York.

Produced by Carter Harman

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)