

ACA RECORDING AWARD

WILLIAM MATTHEWS

LETTERS FROM HOME

Ensemble of the Center for New Music, University of Iowa; James Dixon, conductor

FIELD GUIDE

Tape realized at the Institute of Sonology; Utrecht, Holland

WILLIAM MATTHEWS (b. 1950) is a flutist and conductor, as well as a composer. He studied at the Oberlin Conservatory and at the University of Iowa, and is currently (1977) working with Jacob Druckman at the Yale School of Music. In 1972, 1973 and 1974, he received BMI Awards to Student Composers, and in 1976 received a Charles Ives Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

From 1974 to 1976, he worked at the Instituut voor Sonologie in Utrecht, Holland, using the computer facilities there to produce several works, including FIELD GUIDE on this album. He writes:

“I have long been interested in modelling musical forms after other, real-life time experiences, and the two compositions on this album are both examples of the possibilities. The first of the pieces, LETTERS FROM HOME, for 11 musicians (antiphonally arranged into four groups which surround the audience), has a non-specific correlation to the psychological time of a term of autobiography. The musical materials expand gradually from the initial isolated (harpsi)chord, taking some odd twists and turns along the way to an epiphanal climax which virtually obliterates the effect of what precedes it. Throughout the piece, the players are asked to contribute sounds other than those they normally produce with their instruments — notably voiced and unvoiced vocal sounds.

“In FIELD GUIDE, for computer-synthesized electronic sound, the composer and computer wander together through a 'field' of 103 different sound events. The program for the piece calls upon the composer to decide which general direction the music should take during the course of performance, while the computer is allowed to decide the details. Listening to FIELD GUIDE is a bit like walking through a woods in which each species of flora is found only in its particular habitat, while interloping fauna are more free to put in surprising appearances here and there.”

RAMON ZUPKO

FIXATIONS (1974)

Nancy Elan, violin; Barbara Bogatin, cello; Andrew Thomas, piano; tape; Harvey Sollberger, conductor

FLUXUS I

Electronic tape realized at the Western Michigan University Electronic Music Studio

RAMON ZUPKO (b. 1932, Pittsburgh) started learning the piano from his mother, a good pop pianist, at the age of 8, and started to compose at about the same time. His talent for composition was encouraged in high school, in Ohio, and he went on to study with Vincent Persichetti (at the Juilliard School) and later in Vienna on a Fulbright Fellowship and at Columbia University. He lived in Europe from 1962 to 1966, studying at the Darmstadt Summer Courses and taking courses in electronic music at Bilkhoven, Holland. Back in the U.S.A., he lived for a year on a Ford Foundation grant and then became Director of the Electronic Music Laboratory at Roosevelt University, Chicago. Since 1971 he

has held a similar position at Western Michigan University, where he also teaches composition and theory and directs the New Music Ensemble. In 1970 his work for soprano and chamber ensemble, *La Guerre* was chosen to represent the U.S. at the festival of the ISCM in Basel, Switzerland.

He has written the following about his music on this record:

“explore obsession

“-focus (out of chaos)

“-set in time (tradition persists)

“frozen movement-change without change ...

“fixations

“Since about 1970 I have been concerned with four areas of expression in my music in varying degrees of emphasis: space, timbre, expanded tonality, and theatre. **FIXATIONS** deals in one way or another with each of these, the last one of course being apparent only in live performance. Spatial characteristics are enhanced in live performance through the placement of the speakers for the tape part behind the audience. The sounds of the tape part are electronically modified and de-synthesized versions of several of the live instrumental sounds, relating to the latter as extended timbres and dimensions of them. The pitch and rhythmic structure is derived entirely from the two hexachords and rhythmic cells of the first dozen bars, and each section of the piece deals with a fixed harmonic field, which creates its own tonal hierarchy. There are ten continuous sections within the single movement, four of which are rhythmically freer cadenzas for each of the three solo instruments, as well as the tape.

“**FLUXUS I** for electronic sounds (1977) is in many ways an alternate solution, employing completely different materials, to the stylistic approach developed in **FIXATIONS**. It was realized on the Moog synthesizer of Western Michigan University, and employs as raw material four parallel seventh chords, and pitch sequences derived from them. These are subjected to a wide variety of controlled manipulations, creating within the basic drone character of the piece a constant state of flux between density and transparency, simple and complex timbres, foreground and background, tonal progression and stasis, rapid and slow spatial movement, regular and irregular rhythms, dramatic declamation and reverie.”

JAMES DIXON, a protégé of Dimitri Mitropoulos, has established a reputation as one of the most conscientious and musical of all conductors of new music. He is in residence at the University of Iowa, and makes guest appearances in major centers. He has appeared on several CRI records.

HARVEY SOLLBERGER, flutist extraordinary, is as distinguished as a composer and conductor. He is co-director of the Group for Contemporary Music at the Manhattan School of Music and a frequent participant in CRI recordings.

This recording was made possible by a grant from the American Composers Alliance.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)