

## **RICHARD WERNICK**

### **HAIKU OF BASHŌ**

**Neva Pilgrim, soprano; Contemporary Chamber Players of The University of Chicago;  
Richard Wernick, conductor**

### **MOONSONGS FROM THE JAPANESE**

**Neva Pilgrim, soprano**

RICHARD WERNICK (b. Boston, 1934) attended Brandeis University where he studied composition with Irving Fine and Harold Shapero, and received his M.A. degree from Mills College where he studied with Leon Kirchner. Since 1957, when he served as musical director and composer-in-residence of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, he has received many awards and grants — including the 1977 Pulitzer Prize in Music and the award of the American Academy-Institute of Arts and Letters that made this recording possible. Wernick has been a faculty member of the University of Buffalo and the University of Chicago, and became Professor of Music at the University of Pennsylvania in 1968. He writes:

“The HAIKU OF BASHŌ is a setting of five haiku by and (in one instance) about Matzuo Bashō (1643-94), generally acknowledged to be the foremost writer of this form of Japanese verse. The first four poems of the cycle are fine examples of how Bashō was able to capture the essence of seemingly inconsequential moments or vignettes and, with the most frugal means of literary expression, communicate to the reader a sense of the timeless and eternal. The fifth poem, written a century later, is more in the nature of a 17-syllable one-line-joke, a play on the word 'bashō' which means 'banana leaf,'

“There are no programmatic connections between the haiku and the music, nor is there any attempt at word painting. The relationship of the music to the words is rather one of attitude attempting, through an economical and tightly woven means of abstract musical expression, to create sound images similar to (or analogous to) the poetic images evoked by the haiku. The attitude is perhaps best summed up by Basho's own admonition to his pupils: 'Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old; seek what they sought.'

“The melodic and harmonic aspects of the score are derived from one tone row which appears throughout the piece in several forms. There is a departure from conventional 12-tone technique in that the rows are used only as the basis for harmonic and melodic materials which are then subjected to more or less standard procedures of development and variation. The improvisational qualities of the HAIKU are partially achieved by the use of metrical modulation in which the conjunction and the superimposition of even and uneven metrical units generate continuous changes in the speed of the music. Apart from a few places where the speed may vary at the discretion of the conductor or one of the instrumentalists, the relationship of rhythm to speed is directed by the composer's notation, and is intended to provide a feeling of freedom without the composer abdicating control of the music.”

“MOONSONGS FROM THE JAPANESE was composed in the spring of 1969, not long after the first performance of HAIKU OF BASHŌ.

“This piece was written in response to a request from Neva Pilgrim for a work that would 'travel lightly,' i.e. one that could be done without piano accompaniment. This led to the conception of a work for 3 voices the outer two being pre-recorded and the middle one being performed live. Although it is conceivable that the MOONSONGS could be sung by three different sopranos, no performance of this version has yet taken place.

“The idea of composing a 'sequel' to the HAIKU OF BASHŌ (in the sense of writing another group of haiku settings) seemed a natural one to me at the time. I had enjoyed immensely the challenge of setting that uniquely spare and evocative poetic genre.

“The time when I began work on the piece coincided with the final preparations for the first moon landings, and it seemed more than appropriate to select a group of haiku about the moon. Aside from the excitement which most of us felt about this great achievement, I also had tinges of regret that the moon would never again be quite the same after it had been 'stepped on.' The very fact of human contact, by its nature, would detract from the mystery and romance which for thousands and thousands of years had surrounded this everchanging celestial body. Thus the selection of these affectionate and evocative poems.

“Both the HAIKU OF BASHŌ and MOONSONGS FROM THE JAPANESE are dedicated to Neva Pilgrim.”

## **DAVID JOHN BOROS**

### **ANECDOTE OF THE JAR**

#### **PIANO INTERLUDE (The Pleasures of Merely Circulating)**

**Martin Boykan, piano; Alan Nagel, bass; David Satz, bass clarinet; Brandeis Chamber Chorus; James Olesen, conductor**

### **YET ONCE AGAIN**

**Constance Boykan, flute**

### **WEDDING MUSIC**

**George Fisher, piano**

The music on the other side of this record is the work of a composer who died young. DAVID JOHN BOROS was 31 years old in 1975. The tragic automobile accident that killed him and his wife, Emidia Meloncelli, cut short the career of a very gifted composer, a highly unusual spirit whose energy and imagination promised continued creativity in the years to come.

He was born in 1944. He received a B.A. degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1966 and an M.F.A. degree from Brandeis University in 1970. His teachers included Seymour Shifrin, Arthur Berger, Martin Boykan, David Lewin and Henri Lazard. He spent 1968-69 in Rome on a Fulbright-Hayes grant, studying with Petrassi. At the time of his death he was on the faculty of Brandeis University.

Between 1970 and 1973 he lived in Rome, working as a pianist in an American gospel group that toured Italy, Switzerland and Austria. Jazz and gospel music played an important role in his life and their influence is always present in his music, although not explicitly until the unfinished piece he was working on at the time of his death.

WEDDING MUSIC, written in 1968, is the earliest of the pieces presented here. This solo piano piece was written for a specific occasion, the marriage of a lifelong friend. YET ONCE AGAIN is a solo flute piece, written in 1970 for Constance Boykan, who performs it here. This is perhaps the piece which most strikingly reveals his outstanding gift for melodic line. An extended opening section employs only three notes, playfully resting on one and then the next. Rapidly the piece opens up into a long and flowing aria.

The unfinished choral piece based on poetry of Wallace Stevens is the most ambitious of the pieces. It was to consist of two movements, the first of which, ANECDOTE OF THE JAR, is in its finished and complete form. In the second movement, *The Pleasures of Merely Circulating*, the entrance of the chorus is

preceded by a long introduction in the piano. This introduction was conceived of as a piece in itself. For that reason it is included on this recording, even though the eventual entrance of the bass clarinet and the double bass strongly suggests continuation. The choral movement which was to follow exists only in sketch, and is unfinished, even in that form.

The poem pits order against disorder, rationality against what Stevens called the squirming facts of life. The poem suggest that the two remain in constant competition from which neither can triumph. This duality is portrayed metaphorically in the poem in the images of the clear, round jar and the slovenly wilderness. In the music it is suggested by contrasting, sometimes conflicting, musical elements.

The piece is divided into three sections. In the first, the chorus is unaccompanied and the writing tends to be polyphonic. The second section consists of a long interlude for the bass clarinet and the double bass. The jazz influence is apparent here, a kind of stylized jam session. When the chorus re-enters at the start of the third section, the instruments continue. They do not accompany the voices, but rather, as is suggested by the poem, they maintain melodic and rhythmic freedom, even though they have lost the wildness of the middle section.

The unfinished choral setting of *The Pleasures of Merely Circulating* was a conscious attempt to integrate some of the materials and feeling of gospel music into the language of contemporary music. Some of that material is present, in a more disguised form, in the piano introduction. This is particularly apparent in the parallel chords heard at the opening. It is an intensely felt and moving piece, and when, at the end of it, the other instruments enter to prepare for the movement that will not follow, there is a dramatic sense of promise which will not be fulfilled.

Notes on Boros by Edward Cohen.

NEVA PILGRIM is known and admired throughout the country for her performances of contemporary music. She has appeared with major orchestras and groups including the Chicago Symphony, Speculum Musicae and the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago, and many composers besides Wernick have written music for her. She also appears on CRI SD 245 in Murray Schafer's REQUIEM FOR THE PARTY GIRL and Rochberg's SONGS IN PRAISE OF KRISHNA on CRI SD 360.

The CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER PLAYERS of THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO is one of the foremost groups of its kind. Its music and that of its founder-conductor, Ralph Shapey, are to be heard on several CRI records. The members on this recording are: Elliott Golub, Terry Applebaum, Stanley Davis, Michael Geller, Marie Moulton, Edward Poremba and Andrea Swan.

JAMES OLESEN is conductor of the Brandeis Chorus and director of the Early Music Ensemble. GEORGE FISHER played the first performance of WEDDING MUSIC as a freshman at Brandeis. A student of Robert Helps, he is at present a graduate student at SUNY (Stony Brook). CONSTANCE BOYKAN is a free-lance flutist who has appeared extensively as a soloist, and with such chamber music groups as Seraphim. MARTIN BOYKAN teaches at Brandeis; his music may be heard on CRI SD 338.

Members of the Brandeis Chorus on this recording are: Carolyn Arend, Majorie Cohen\*, Karen Komar, Susan Larson\*, Barbara Marcus, Barbara Winchester, Ivy Anderson\*, Mary Seago, Kathy White, Bruce Fithian\*, Edward Nowacki, Charles Walker, Allen Anderson\*, Matthew Dooley, Keith Kibler, Howard Treibitz.

\* soloists

Each year, the American Academy-Institute of Arts and Letters bestows awards upon four young composers for achievement, and a recording of their music on CRI is part of their prize. Richard Wernick was a 1976 winner. The memorial recording of music by the late David John Boros was made possible by the generosity of his family, friends and colleagues here and abroad.

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*