

ROBERT HELPS

SACCADE

Genevieve Chinn and Allen Brings, piano, four hands

ROBERT HELPS (b. 1928, Passaic, N.J.) has developed an outstanding reputation as a composer and as a pianist specializing in contemporary works. He studied composition with Roger Sessions, and his works have been widely performed by leading artists including William Masselos, Beveridge Webster, Bethany Beardslee and Isidore Cohen. *Adagio for Orchestra* received a Fromm Foundation award and was played by Leopold Stokowski and the Symphony of the Air; his *Symphony No. 1* received a Naumburg Foundation award and was subsequently recorded; and *Serenade*, for small instrumental ensemble, was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation. His awards also include a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Academy-Institute of Arts and Letter award in 1977. He teaches piano at the Manhattan School of Music and at Princeton University. He writes:

“SACCADE was commissioned by Milton and Peggy Salkind through the Friends of Four Hand Music (San Francisco) and premiered by them in San Francisco in June, 1968.

“After finishing the piece and having the problems that often attend finding a title, a search through the S-section of Webster's unabridged dictionary turned up the word 'saccade.' Saccade is a riding term meaning a quick check of the horse by a violent pull on the reins and a musical term meaning a sudden strong pressure of the violin bow causing two or more strings to sound simultaneously. All of this would seem to apply most meaningfully, if at all, to the opening of the piece which does a rather nasty thing to any 'togetherness-minded' four hand piano team by stating the main declamatory theme in six widely-spaced chords which are *not* to be played quite together by the two players. This quasi grace-note characteristic plays a recurring role one way or another in several parts of the piece.

The piece has no severe pitch organizational scheme and was rather rhapsodically written. It does have non-literal but nonetheless obvious returns to the original theme and it has a series of climactic points (one of them starts the piece). About 3/4 of the way through, momentum decreases, and continues decreasing, generally speaking, to the end.

“I would hesitatingly describe the piece as having the following characteristics — violence, gloom, heaviness, thickness of texture both in chords and counterpoint, as well as some contrasting areas, not so much in mood as in dynamics and texture.”

THOMAS MOORE

METAMORPHOSIS

Genevieve Chinn and Allen Brings, piano, four hands

THOMAS MOORE (b. Fairfield, Alabama, 1933) studied composition with Dika Newlin, Jack Beeson and Otto Luening and holds a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University. Since leaving C.W. Post College, where he taught for six years, he has been a violinist with the Kansas City Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony, and Florida Symphony Orchestras. His compositions include a piano concerto, string quartet, several works for orchestra, music for a wide variety of chamber ensembles, music for piano, and about thirty songs.

About METAMORPHOSIS Moore writes:

“I am concerned with a kind of 'overwriting' in which an addition is made to an original in such a way, that the additional matter absorbs the original into itself. In this case, METAMORPHOSIS is written over the first movement of Anton Webern's *Symphony, Op. 21*, much as a painter might fill in the spaces to transform an original abstraction. Webern's material (in augmentation and with changes in durational values) is embedded in the new work. In most of the piece the choice of new tones is governed by the same twelve-tone set that Webern used in the *Symphony*. In one passage (together with its repetition) Webern's original tones are not covered over but are changed in their articulation. With these words my compositional debt to Webern for METAMORPHOSIS is acknowledged.”

METAMORPHOSIS was composed for and dedicated to Genevieve Chinn and Allen Brings.

RAOUL PLESKOW

THREE PIECES

Genevieve Chinn and Allen Brings, piano, four hands

RAOUL PLESKOW (b. Vienna, 1931) was educated in New York. His compositions, widely performed in the United States and in Europe, include works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, voices and solo instruments. Among recent honors are awards from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Pleskow is Professor of Music at C.W. Post College. Other works of his appear on CRI 253, 293, 302, and 342.

THREE PIECES was written in 1968, and premiered by Genevieve Chinn and Allen Brings at whose request it was composed.

The three short pieces of which this work is comprised are not differentiated significantly by tempo or mood. They are rather like three variations, each with its own thematic properties, undergoing a procedural technique characterized by the juxtaposition and interaction of small musical fragments and sudden and frequent changes of texture, dynamics, and syntax.

ARTHUR SHEPHERD

CAPRICCIO II; LENTO AMABILE; IN MODO OSTINATO; EXOTIC DANCES NO. 1 and 3; ECLOGUE NO. 4; GIGUE FANTASQUE

Vivien Harvey Slater, piano

ARTHUR SHEPHERD (b. Paris, Idaho, 1880, d. Cleveland, 1958), was a member of the generation that built a bridge between the music of MacDowell, Loeffler, Chadwick, Parker, Foote and Griffes, and that of the later Piston-Harris-Copland generation. Like the music of his own contemporaries such as Converse, Carpenter, Farwell and Gilbert, the work of Arthur Shepherd is being rediscovered as an important contribution to American art. His extensive catalogue of music in many forms has been performed internationally by leading orchestras and soloists. It is distinguished by exceptionally solid workmanship, a striking individuality of sound and content, and a communication which has been called genuinely aristocratic. His long career as composer, teacher, conductor, pianist, critic, and counselor of countless younger artists was — in the words of musicologist William S. Newman — “marked by a quiet steadfastness of purpose, not by spectacular adventures.”

Shepherd studied at the New England Conservatory, later teaching there and in Salt Lake City. He came to national prominence as a composer and conductor while still in his twenties. In 1920 he settled in Cleveland and until 1926 was the first assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra and its erudite program annotator until 1930. For a time, he also was music critic of The Cleveland Press. Between 1930 and 1950 he taught at Western Reserve University, serving as Chairman of its Music Department between 1933 and 1948. After his retirement he lectured at the Longy School in Cambridge, Mass., and at the University of Utah.

CAPRICCIO II (1941). Except for a certain quality of willfulness, even stubbornness, the term Capriccio should not here be taken to mean “capriciousness.” This is a large-scaled, virtuosic composition more complex in organization than appears on the surface. The songful material of the middle section is soon displaced by more brilliant figurations, and the quiet return to the opening material is aptly designated as somewhat *sinistro*. The final *allegro* strides dramatically from very soft sounds to a bold crashing cadence.

LENTO AMABILE (1938). The tonality of this piece is elusive, the harmony chromatic, and the opening melody approaches the shape of a Schoenbergian twelve-tone row — not, to be sure, carried through in strict adherence to the method.

IN MODO OSTINATO (1945), in which an almost jaunty phrase recurs “obstinately” and unperturbably, begins as if it were an etude, but the 7/4 meter lends it a constant sense of fluidity.

EXOTIC DANCE NO. 1 (1928), despite its title, contains no pseudo orientalism; only a subtle use of augmented intervals, in a scale probably invented by Shepherd.

EXOTIC DANCE NO. 3 (1941, revised 1954) is one of the composer's most elusive pieces — almost a sketch, an improvisation, and with much of the magic of such spontaneity.

ECLOGUE NO. 4 (1948), shows the composer's masterly command of traditional harmony untraditionally employed.

GIGUE FANTASQUE (1931, revised 1945). The old dance known as the *gigue* or *jig* is here revitalized through virtuosic treatment and many a fantastic excursion.

GENEVIEVE CHINN and ALLEN BRINGS have performed extensively in the United States and in Europe as soloists and in programs of chamber music and music for piano, four-hands. Genevieve Chinn made her debut with Leopold Stokowski and the NBC Symphony Orchestra at the age of eight, and has received many awards. She is Associate Professor of Music at C.W. Post College of Long Island University. Allen Brings, composer as well as pianist, has written works for orchestra, band, chorus, various chamber ensembles, piano and voice. He is Professor of Music at Queens College of the City University of New York.

VIVIEN HARVEY SLATER, Pianist-in-Residence at Colgate University, made her New York debut in Town Hall in 1952. Since the 1940s, when she studied composition with Arthur Shepherd at Western Reserve University, she has played his music not only in Cleveland but in New York, London, Rome, Seville, Granada, Konstanz and Wurzburg, and she prepared this recording with his counsel and approval. In 1976 her album of Czerny's “Art of Finger Dexterity” was released by the Musical Heritage Society.

Produced by Carter Harman

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)

