

Paul Chihara

Piano Trio (11:00)

Elegy (8:40)

Mirecourt Trio:

Kenneth Goldsmith, violin; Terry King, Cello; John Jensen, piano

Henry Cowell

Hymn and Fuguing Tune No. 9 (1950) (5:48)

Four Declamations with Return (1949) (3:25)

Terry King, cello; John Jensen, piano

Gravely and Vigorously (In Memory JFK) (1963) (10:10)

Terry King, cello

Paul Seiko Chihara was born in Seattle in 1938. His music education began at the age of eight with piano and violin lessons, and he began composing soon thereafter. He studied with Robert Palmer at Cornell, with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and Gunther Schuller for three summers at Tanglewood. He has received numerous awards and prizes, including a Fulbright Fellowship (to Berlin), Lili Boulanger Memorial Award, and Guggenheim, National Endowment for the Arts, and Fromm Foundation grants. His music has been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, London Symphony, New Philharmonia Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony, American Symphony, Houston Symphony, Roger Wagner Chorale, and the San Francisco Ballet. In addition, Chihara has composed for movies and television, including the feature *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*.

He writes:

“This Piano Trio was composed in 1974 for the Mirecourt Trio, who first performed it at Carnegie Recital Hall on February 3, 1975. The *Elegy*, which is intended as a companion piece to the Trio, was written in memory of my father, who gave me my first violin lesson, and encouraged me to be a musician.”

Henry Cowell (1897–1965) was a major creative force in music, and his compositions covered the entire gamut of musical experience. Cowell's esthetic was that of a pre-romantic, and he was never dedicated to any single musical style or technique. Cowell has said, “I want to live in the *whole world* of music! . . . I have never deliberately concerned myself with developing a distinctive 'personal' style, but only with the excitement and pleasure of writing music as beautifully, as warmly, and as interestingly as I can. . . . If a man *has* a distinctive personality of his own, I don't see how he can keep it out of his music. And if he hasn't, how can he put it in?”

This recording contains Cowell's only available cello works. The *Hymn and Fuguing Tune* is the ninth in his series of neo-Baroque compositions conceived as “something slow followed by something fast.” The specific musical materials came from the British Isles via rural American hymnody. Cowell combines the modal style of the ballad tunes that were appropriated for hymns with the fuguing idea associated with Billings and other colonial American composers.

The *Four Declamations with Return* is a miniature declaration of spontaneous pleasure in the beautiful Guarnerius cello acquired by Seymour Barab in 1949. Barab spent an evening demonstrating the instrument's special beauties and difficulties to several friends, most of them composers. Lou Harrison gleefully wrote a piece designed to “sound” only on this particular instrument, a piece that he declared would be unimpressive or even impossible on any other; most of the other composers wrote cello pieces for Barab soon thereafter, too. Henry Cowell wrote this one that same evening, for Barab to play with their friend William Masselos. The composition is one of tremendous chromatic dissonance and explores the lush sonorities of the cello. The first three declamations are quite lyrical, the fourth is a gigue-like section while the Return is an exact intervallic retrograde of the first three declamations, though the rhythm is changed.

Gravely and Vigorously is for unaccompanied cello.

Mrs. Cowell writes:

“Word of President Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963 reached Mr. Cowell late in the day because he never played the radio. It seems to have sent him at once to score paper and pen in the New York City apartment. The streets were empty and the city was literally silent. A sad little sign on the grocery door said: 'President dead. Gone home.'”

“Mr. Cowell's interest in politics was slight but he had met President Kennedy several times and he fully appreciated the importance of Kennedy's interest in the arts, unprecedented in the White House, and long overdue in a twentieth-century government. We had been part of that golden evening when American music was honored by invitations from the President and Mrs. Kennedy to representative American composers, conductors and critics to a formal dinner made uniquely memorable by the generous playing of Pablo Casals that followed.

“To Mr. Cowell the invitation meant that his lifelong struggle for the recognition of contemporary composers was acquiring allies in an unexpectedly powerful quarter. The occasion was festive and brilliant. That the radiant enjoyment of life the Kennedys showed that night could be so suddenly extinguished is a painful shock still today.

“During that long November afternoon Mr. Cowell fiddled inexpertly from time to time with our tiny radio in the fruitless hope that the news would be contradicted. He worked on his piece into the small hours of the morning, which is why it bears the date “November 23rd,” since he normally dated a piece (when he dated it at all) from the day he finished it.

“His first idea was to give the music a place as No. 17 in his series of hymns with fuguing tunes, since it is written in that two-movement slow-fast form and owes something to the style of early American folk hymnody. But the publishers felt it should not be part of a series and in the end its title was taken from the headings of the movements: “Gravely” for present shock and grief, “Vigorously” for the most visible quality of a man the composer liked, admired, and always mourned. The next *Hymn and Fuguing Tune* (which turned out to be the last of the series) was numbered 18; No. 17 never was written. Mr. Cowell sent the manuscript to Mrs. Kennedy as an expression of sympathy written in the language he knew best. The holograph is among the papers in the Kennedy Library.

“*Gravely and Vigorously* was for several years played in unison by the cello section of the BBC Symphony in London, to honor the memory of President Kennedy on the anniversary of his death.”

The **Mirecourt Trio** was formed in 1973. It is in residence at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa.

Kenneth Goldsmith studied violin with Mischa Mischakoff, William Kroll, and Nathan Milstein, and graduated from Stanford University. He has been a member of the American Arts Quartet, Group for Contemporary Music, Fromm Quartet, Festival of the Two Worlds (Spoleto), Casals Festival, and, most recently, the world-renowned Mirecourt Trio.

Terry King, one of the country's finest cellists, was a protégé of Gregor Piatigorsky and served as his assistant in the master class at the University of Southern California. His famed teacher joined him in a duo concert last spring in one of the master's last concerts. *The New York Times* recently proclaimed that King's playing “could not be faulted . . . playing with relish and technical aplomb.” Many prominent American composers have written works for King as well as entrusted him with their premieres, among them Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, and Halsey Stevens. King is presently (1977) artist-in-residence at Grinnell College with the Mirecourt Trio.

John Jensen studied piano with John Crown and Gwendolyn Koldofsky at the University of Southern California. He has toured as accompanist for several artists under the auspices of Community Concerts, and is active as a jazz theorist and pianist. He has three solo albums of traditional and ragtime jazz on Genesis Records, and has appeared on the Andy Williams show and at centers of serious Jazz in Southern California.

I consider them second to none in the world. —Gregor Piatlgorsky

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All recorded at Herrick Chapel, Grinnell College by Alan Leichtling, in February and October 1977
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