

Lejaren Hiller

Portfolio For Diverse Performers and Tape (1974) (21:50)

Gregg Smith Singers;

Gregg Smith, conductor;

Tape parts realized at the Experimental Studio, Polish National Radio, Warsaw

Rolf Yttrehus

Quintet (1973) (12:16)

Members of Speculum Musicae:

Benjamin Hudson, violin; Virgil Blackwell, clarinet;

Michael Parloff, flute; Jerry Grossman, cello;

Ursula Oppens, piano;

Donald Palma, conductor

David Maslanka

Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano (14:30)

Phillip Rehfeldt, clarinet; Barney Childs, piano

Lejaren Hiller was born in New York City in 1924. He attended Princeton University, where he studied music with Milton Babbitt and Roger Sessions while he majored in chemistry. He worked for some years as a research chemist, first with duPont and then at the University of Illinois. More than twenty of his earlier scores were composed during this period. In 1957, he composed the first computer music, *Illiad Suite for String Quartet*, in collaboration with Leonard Isaacson. From 1958 to 1968, he was director of the Experimental Music Studio at the University of Illinois. Since then he has been Frederick B. Slee Professor of Composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He went to Poland in 1973-74 as Senior Fulbright Lecturer in Music and to Brazil in 1980 in the same capacity.

Hiller has composed more than sixty works in all media including six piano sonatas, two symphonies, seven string quartets, vocal music, electronic and computer music, and numerous scores for theater, movies, and television. His *Computer Cantata* and *String Quartet No. 6* are on CRI records.

He writes:

“*A Portfolio . . .* was commissioned by Polskie Radio, Warsaw, Poland. The tapes were made in the Studio Eksperymentaine of Polskie Radio in 1973-74 and the performance materials were completed later that year with the help of a faculty fellowship from the Research Foundation of the State University of New York.

“*A Portfolio . . .* is a composition for up to ten performers of any sort accompanied by four stereo tapes (eight channels). It is in one long movement, in a completely symmetrical arch form which reaches its climax exactly halfway through. The four tapes are a “Timing Tape” containing voices and a strike tone marking each thirty-two-second period of the score, a “Harmony Tape” containing a prolonged harmonic progression from E-flat to A, a “Bell Tape” containing sum and difference tones arranged in peals by change ringing, and a “Canon Tape” meant to be interleaved with the performers’ music. The voices on the “Timing Tape” are Amanda Hiller and David Hiller, aged nine and eight in 1973.

“The performers’ materials are derived from the composer’s previous fifty compositions, starting with Piano Sonata No. 1 of 1946 and ending with *Six Easy Pieces for Violin and Piano* of 1974. Each performer receives five sheets of music (plus music for an Introduction and a Coda) which are abstractions of a page or so of the earlier pieces devoid of key signatures, tempi, expression marks, tessitura, etc. The performer may perform the sheets in any order, but must make the music performable and expressive and in accord with the harmonic plan.

“*A Portfolio* . . . was premiered at the Warsaw Autumn in 1974, where it created a storm of controversy. Other performances have taken place in Reykjavik, The Hague and Middelburg, Holland, Rome, Cologne, and Santos, Brazil, as well as in the U.S. The first all-vocal performance was by the Gregg Smith Singers in New York City in 1978, and it is this realization of the work that is recorded here.”

Rolf Yttrehus (b Duluth, Minnesota, 1926) studied at the Universities of Minnesota and Michigan and spent several years studying in Europe. He studied harmony with Nadia Boulanger and composition with Ross Lee Finney, Roger Sessions, Aaron Copland, and Goffredo Petrassi, receiving a diploma from the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome in 1962. He has received a Fulbright Scholarship, a Margaret Lee Crofts Award, Italian Government Scholarships, a Martha Baird Rockefeller Recording Subsidy, and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant. His works have been performed by the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome, the Fromm Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood, the New and Newer Music series at New York’s Tully Hall, the 1976 World Music Days of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Boston, and League of Composers - ISCM concerts in New York. His *Sextet* (1964–70, revised 1974) appears on CRI SD 321. He has taught at the University of Missouri, Purdue University, the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, and since 1977 has been an associate professor of music at Rutgers University.

He writes:

“The Quintet was first performed in Town Hall in 1974 by the Da Capo Chamber Players. The work may be divided in six sections as follows: 1) Exposition in two parts; the first fast, the second slow. 2) Entrance of the bass clarinet whose sinister character causes the other instruments, especially the piccolo, to scamper about frantically. It plays a four-note motive in large note values which has a quasi-isorhythmic function. Eventually the piccolo joins the bass clarinet in canon. When all of this turmoil has worked itself out, the music settles down to a more quiet character. The last four notes of the bass clarinet are the first four notes of the 3) Recapitulation. 4) Grand Canon at the inversion between the violin and the cello serves as a cantus firmus for the more jagged and *feroce* material of the other instruments. 5) Climax, with the piano as a dramatic virtuoso instrument. 6) Coda, with an expressive conjunct-motion melody in the violin and other instruments. The flute settles down to a low B, the music thinning out and coming to a cadence over this pedal point.”

David Maslanka (b New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1943) is a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory and Michigan State University. He studied composition principally with Joseph Wood and H. Owen Reed. He has received numerous grants and awards, among them National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship-Grants, MacDowell Colony Fellowships, and the grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, which made this recording possible. He is presently living in New York City.

He writes:

“*Three Pieces* was commissioned in 1974 by Phillip Rehfeldt and Barney Childs for their Clarinet and Friend series. It was completed in 1975 and has since been widely performed.

“The first piece is understated—elliptical, secretive, willful. Spidery, sparse textures of the beginning and end surround a central episode of denser, more tonally-oriented material. The piece embodies altogether a deliberate contrary juxtaposition of clarinet and piano.

“The second piece, marked aggressive, explosive, is a rough, raucous, bursting movement giving the impression of improvisation, though with the exception of one small section, it is entirely composed. Again there is a deliberate separation of clarinet and piano material. The effect is of two musics occupying roughly the same space but having very little to do with each other. The underlying tonal orientation of the whole piece begins to emerge in the piano writing.

“Number three follows with only brief pause. It is a gentle reconciliation of forces leading to a chorale-like passage with clarinet and piano in rhythmic lockstep. There follows a gradual revelation of the key of C# major and a long, ethereal coda for piano alone.”

The **Gregg Smith Singers** have been an important and pervasive force in American choral music for more than twenty-five years. Founded as a semi-professional group in southern California in 1955, the organization quickly rose to international fame as a unique professional ensemble and was called “Best in America” by *Time Magazine*. **Gregg Smith** (b Chicago, 1931) attended UCLA as a composition major, receiving his B.A. and M.A. under Lukas Foss. He studied choral conducting with Ray Moreman. In addition to his conducting activities, Smith has written more than twenty-five large works for chorus and many other pieces for varied ensembles. His music is published exclusively in a *Gregg Smith Series* by G. Schirmer of New York. **Speculum Musicae** (“A Mirror of Music”), a chamber ensemble devoted to the performance of music ranging from early twentieth-century “classics” to newly commissioned works, consists of leading instrumentalists noted individually and in ensemble activities for outstanding accomplishments in contemporary music. Since its debut at Town Hall In 1972, Speculum Musicae has toured the United States and Europe to enthusiastic acclaim, and has received numerous awards, including the first Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award. It may be heard on CRI 301, 350, 363, and 427. **Donald Palma**, double bassist and sometime conductor of Speculum Musicae, is a native New Yorker and a graduate of The Juilliard School. A former member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, he was co-founder and conductor of the Los Angeles Group for Contemporary Music. He has conducted at the White Mountains Festival in New Hampshire, and has led Speculum Musicae in performances across the United States and in Europe. A member of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, the Composer’s Conference and the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble, Palma is also principal bass of the American Composers Orchestra and the Brooklyn Philharmonia. **Phillip Rehfeldt** (b Burlington, Iowa, 1939) holds a doctorate in clarinet performance from the University of Michigan. He is professor of woodwind instruments and musicology at the University of Redlands, and author of *New Directions for Clarinet*, a catalogue of clarinet performance practices as they have evolved in the literature since approximately 1950. He may also be heard on CRI SD 367. **Barney Childs** (b Spokane, Washington, 1926) is professor of composition at the University of Redlands. He has been associated with Phillip Rehfeldt in the performance of new music for nearly twenty years. Numerous works have been commissioned and performed through their Clarinet and Friend series. His compositions may be heard on CRI SD 253.

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Produced by Carter Harman

Portfolio:

Recorded by David Hancock, New York, May 1, 1978

Quintet:

Recorded by David Hancock, October 1979

Three Pieces:

Recorded by Marty Walker, June 1978

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(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)