

## **AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA**

**ROBERT MILLER, piano**

**GUNTHER SCHULLER, conductor**

### **JOHN HARBISON**

#### **PIANO CONCERTO (1978)**

JOHN HARBISON (b. Orange, New Jersey, 1938) is one of twelve composers commissioned for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Centennial Celebration. In August of 1979 his *Winter's Tale* was produced by the San Francisco Opera Company, and earlier the same year his one-act opera *Full Moon in March* was presented by the Boston Musica Viva (it has been recorded for CRI). Recent orchestral compositions include a *Violin Concerto* (1980), *Descant Nocturne* (on a lullaby by the late Seymour Shifrin — 1976), and *Diotima*, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, premiered by the Boston Symphony in 1977, and subsequently performed by the Portland (Maine) Symphony, the Milwaukee Symphony, and the Orchestra of the Twentieth Century. He is Professor of Music at M.I.T. He writes:

“The PIANO CONCERTO began in the margins of another piece, and it wasn't until one third of the first movement had appeared that I began to give full attention to it. At that point phrases existed like lines for a poem not yet assigned their special place in the flow. The phrase which forms the piano's third entrance became the predominant image; the movement became a fantasy upon that melody, with the piano's first two phrases assuming a more introductory character. answered by orchestral refrains. The expressive goal for the movement is the solo 'cadenza.' which meditates on motives from the main melody. introducing some new thoughts at its climax.

“The notion of a fantasy need not suggest looseness, but a kind of discovered form with its own rigors and rewards.

“The second movement presents a more straightforward continuity, exploring more openly the colors of the solo instrument and the orchestra. The complementary ideals orchestra-as-piano and piano-as-orchestra, so appealing to the composers of the early nineteenth century are recalled here from a new vantage point. The mystery and magic of the piano lie in the pedal, and the 'romanticism' for this concerto lies in its diffusion of piano pedal sonorities through the whole orchestra.

The concerto is dedicated to Robert Miller, who gave its first performance in May 1980 with the American Composers Orchestra, Gunther Schuller conducting. Hovering behind the dedication is the fine spirit of my first composition teacher, Mathilde McKinney, who taught both Miller and me piano, and introduced us in 1954.”

On September 28, 1980, Harbison's PIANO CONCERTO won first prize at the Kennedy Center-Arthur Friedheim Award concert over 50 orchestral works premiered during the year.

### **DAVID STOCK**

#### **INNER SPACE (1973)**

DAVID STOCK (b. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1939) studied composition with Nikolai Lopatnikoff, Arthur Berger, Andree Vaurabourg-Honegger and Alexei Haieff. He is conductor of the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble and the Carnegie Civic Symphony, and is director of the WQED-FM New Music Project. His compositions have been performed throughout Europe and the United States. He has served on the faculties of Antioch College, the New England Conservatory, Carnegie-Mellon

University, Brandeis University, the Cleveland Institute of Music and, in 1980-81, the University of Pittsburgh. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, three Fellowship Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and grants and commissions from the Ella Lyman Cabot Trust, the Paderewski Fund for Composers, the American Music Center, Boston Musica Viva, the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony, San Andreas Fault, the Orchestra of Our Time and the Pittsburgh Chamber Music Society. His *QUINTET FOR CLARINET AND STRINGS* appears on CRI SD 329. He writes:

“INNER SPACE was written during a period of change and growth in my life and is to a great extent conditioned by it. It was begun in the spring of 1971, but because of several interruptions, was not completed until the fall of 1973.

“As a conductor and a former trumpet player, I have always thought of the orchestra as my natural home. I had temporarily abandoned it with great reluctance, and returned to it with pleasure. Primarily because of the difficulties involved in obtaining performances, I had not written an orchestral work in eight years; therefore, my original plan was to make INNER SPACE playable by the many fine part-time professional and semiprofessional ensembles that proliferate in the U.S. As the work developed, however, it became clear that the musical material demanded treatment beyond the technical means of such orchestras.

“INNER SPACE was first performed in October, 1976 by the New England Conservatory Symphony Orchestra under Gunther Schuller in Jordan Hall, Boston, as part of World Music Days of the League of Composers — International Society for Contemporary Music.”

The AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA was founded to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the American Composers Alliance. Francis Thorne, the Executive Director of the Alliance, and I, its President, in consultation with Dennis Russell Davies, the Music Advisor, asked flutist Paul Dunkel to contract the best free-lance musicians who perform new music in New York City.

The first concert, which took place on February 7, 1977 in Alice Tully Hall, attracted a large and distinguished audience and was very well received in the press. “The debut concert of the new orchestra turned out to be an unqualified success. It was one of those occasions when the right conductor, the right musicians and the right repertoire all came together in the right hall, and everything worked” wrote Tom Johnson in *The Village Voice*. After such a brilliant start, it was evident that the American Composers Orchestra should become a permanent fixture on the musical scene. The three concerts of the second (first full) season in 1977-78 were conducted by James Dixon, Davies and Gunther Schuller; of the third by Davies, Lukas Foss and Jose Serebrier; and of the fourth by Davies, Ainslee Cox and Schuller. Schuller conducts the ACO on CRI SD 384, Dixon on 401 and Davies on 410.

- Nicolas Roussakis

GUNTHER SCHULLER, a professional French horn player from the age of sixteen, was the soloist with the Cincinnati Symphony in the premiere of his own *Horn Concerto* in 1943. From 1944 to 1959 he played with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, finally resigning in order to devote full time to composing. Schuller has received commissions from major orchestras, and his music is widely recorded, including works on CRI SD 144 and 423. He has a continuing interest in jazz, and coined the phrase “third stream” for music that fuses jazz and concert music. As a conductor, he has made guest appearances with many major American and overseas symphony orchestras. Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* opened on Broadway in October 1975 with Schuller conducting. He conducted the first recording of the American Composers Orchestra on CRI SD 384. From 1967-1977 he was President of the New England Conservatory, and in June 1979, was elected President of the National Music Council.

ROBERT MILLER's musicianship, technique and precision are matters of awe in new music circles. He mastered the theoretical aspects at Princeton University (with Milton Babbitt and Edward T. Cone), having mastered the pianistic ones with Mathilde McKinney and Abbey Simon. Among the many composers who have written works for him are Babbitt, George Crumb, Mario Davidovsky (*Synchronisms No. 6*, which won the Pulitzer Prize), Stefan Wolpe and Charles Wuorinen. Miller has appeared throughout the United States, in Europe and Latin America and at the Tanglewood, Aspen and Berlin festivals, and has made many recordings including CRI SD 257, 293, 306, 319, 342 and 419 as soloist. He is also a graduate of Columbia Law School and a practicing lawyer.

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*