

AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS AWARD RECORD

ROBERT STARER

ANNA MARGARITA'S WILL (text by Gail Godwin)

Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano; Karl Kraber, flutist; Stephen Kates, cellist;

Paul Ingraham, hornist; Donald Sutherland, pianist

ROBERT STARER was born in Vienna in 1924. He received his musical education at the State Academy in Vienna, the Conservatoire in Jerusalem and the Juilliard School in New York. He has been living in New York since 1947 and became an American citizen in 1957. During World War II he served with the British Royal Air Force. More than 80 of his compositions are published. Among his stage works are three operas and ballets for Martha Graham, Anna Sokolow and Herbert Ross. His symphonic works have been performed by major orchestras under such eminent conductors as Mitropoulos, Bernstein, Leinsdorf, Steinberg and Comissiona. The author of *Anna Margarita's Will*, Gail Godwin, has written four novels (among them *The Odd Woman* and *Violet Clay*) and a collection of short stories, all published by Knopf.

ANNA MARGARITA'S WILL may be considered a dramatic monologue or a continuous song-cycle. Anna, a woman of wealth, not old yet, has decided to make her will, since she has no natural heirs except her frivolous cousin Loulie, also rich. She speaks of people, dead and alive, who have shaped her. She reads from her mother's diary, quotes her father, her college love, a married lover's wife and, finally, Lourie. Having disposed of all her possessions in fantasy and said a last farewell to her dearest ghosts, she discovers to her surprise she is ready to begin life anew.

ANNA MARGARITA'S WILL is the fourth collaboration between Gail Godwin and Robert Starer. *The Last Lover*, a one-act opera, had its premiere at the Caramoor Festival in 1975; *Journals of a Songmaker* for baritone, soprano and orchestra was commissioned for the final concert of William Steinberg as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony and premiered by him in 1976; *Apollonia*, a full-length opera, was given a studio production by the Minnesota Opera Company in 1979.

DANIEL PERLONGO

RICERCAR

Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble (James Whipple, bassoonist; James Wilson, clarinetist; Linda DiAdamo, oboist); David Stock, conductor

FRAGMENTS

James Walker, flutist; Ronald Leonard, cellist

DANIEL PERLONGO (b. Gaastra, Mich., 1942) won his academic degrees at the University of Michigan, where he studied with George Balch Wilson, Leslie Bassett and Ross Lee Finney and at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome with Goffredo Petrassi. He has received a Fulbright Fellowship, a Prix de Rome and the 1975 American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters award that made this recording possible, as well as prizes for individual works, several of them for orchestra. He teaches at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. This is his first appearance on CRI. He writes:

“RICERCAR for oboe, clarinet and bassoon is a set of 64 variations on a cycle of seventeen eighth notes. The work is a continuous movement divided into two sections, slow and fast. The pitch material is derived from minimal melodic ideas which evolve through a rigorously applied variation procedure. The fabric is contrapuntal, with periodic occurrences throughout the work of homophonic areas where parallel pads move in

different intervallic sonorities. The dialectic of the work lies in the interplay of temporal and chromatic aspects. This interplay is achieved by shaping the chromatic material so that it can be transformed from an expression of the temporal cycle to a disguised form of this cycle. Periodically, the tension accumulating from this play of pitch with time and pitch against time climaxes and is released. RICERCAR was written in 1976 and premiered by the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble.

“FRAGMENTS for flute and cello is a one-movement work in which I was concerned with the relationship of two parts moving from an area of linear independence, where the lines are juxtaposed in an almost collage-like manner, to areas where the two parts move in parallel to participate mutually in the coloring of a single line. The work was written while I was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome, for an exchange concert with the French Academy. It was premiered there in 1972 by Pierre-Yves Artaud on flute and Alain Mounier on cello.”

PHYLLIS BRYN-JULSON is the latest toast of the concert world and of record producers alike. She has not only an enchanting sound, but also a commanding musicality that makes everything sound easy and right. She may be heard on CRI SD 294, 301, 343 and 364. The PITTSBURGH NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE, well known for its flexibility and excellent performances by its members, is conducted by David Stock, a composer in his own right, who appears on CRI SD 329 and 440.

This record is sponsored by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters as part of its music awards program. Four cash awards and a CRI recording are given annually to honor and encourage promising composers and to help them continue their creative work; Daniel Perlongo and Robert Starer were winners in 1975 and 1979, respectively.

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ANNA MARGARITA'S WILL

by Gail Godwin

I, Anna Margarita Wells, of seventeen Schoonmaker Lane, hereby make my will and testament. I am not about to die. I am not even old, yet; I am, as they say, of sound body and mind. I don't have any children; nor brothers and sisters. And since I do have property, some acquired and much inherited, I am troubled by the thought that it would all go to my cousin Loulie in Alabama who does not need it and would feel more inconvenienced than grateful.

Often lately, at the sunset hour, I look out at the hills tintured orange with the fading light and I call up the people in my life to whom I would like to leave something of myself, people who have given me what can never be returned.

Some of those who gave the most are already gone. I scarcely remember my mother who gave me life, the most precious gift of all. She left me a box of photographs chronicling her beauty and a diary in which she wrote in purple ink:

“I'll just die if he does not come.

“I'll just die if he does not love me.

“I'll just die if he does not marry me.”

He came. He loved. He married her. She died anyway.

My father gave me courage. My father gave me nerve:
“Go at your fences straight, girl.
Don't slow down, once you've started.
Look up. That's right, never look down.
And when it comes time for the leap, go forward to meet it.
And never flinch.”

The night my father died, Sister Ursula sat at my bed all night. The other nuns filed in, one by one.
“Remember you still have God,” they chanted, each in turn.
“Remember you still have me,” Sister Ursula said and stroked my head. She is still alive but there is nothing I may leave her; her vocation precludes possessions.

It would be fun, and wicked, to leave Rudolf a thing or two. His wife would open the letter:
“Oh Rudy, dear, who is this Anna Margarita Wells?
I don't believe I know this Anna Margarita Wells.”
No, dear lady, but I know you. Many is the time I've driven by your house at night and seethed at the two of you in there, sitting on top of all your history. You, unaware of your husband's forays into “timelessness,” as he put it, with me. It would be fun to leave you a valuable house, on the condition that you live in it and see things from my side.

And Franklin, my college love, with his rich eloquent voice and dangerously high ideals, He walked me up and down the botanical gardens.
“Drink deep, Anna Margarita.
Drink deep, or don't drink at all.
Refuse to accept anything less than your best self.”
But at age forty Franklin had drunk so deep he reached the bottom of the well, where he saw his own reflection. It was the reflection of a second-best self. He went to the corner bar, bought everyone a drink and announced,
“Time, gentlemen, time,”
went to his room and took his life. Poor Franklin, you would not have been consoled by my mundane bequests.

Who then? Who among the living would welcome a legacy from Anna Margarita Wells?

Small bequests are easy: My library to John who lives in books. My paintings to Natalie, who loves them for themselves; not to Clare, who covets them as an investment. My boat to Jeremy, on the condition that, for once in his life, he'll sail someplace he's never dared to go. My harpsichord to Nicholas; my cat to Andre, on the condition she will not alter him.

That stills leaves Cousin Loulie with the bulk of everything. I can hear her now:
“Oh, Lordie, look what Cousin Anna's done. Cousin Anna's left me her estate. That's sweet of her, but really, that emerald necklace would have been enough. What good to me are houses in the North, with all that snow and all that crime? I'm touched, of course, but really, that emerald necklace would have been enough. Poor Cousin Anna, sitting up there through those cold, lonely winters with all her ghosts. Poor Cousin Anna. I had the news of her passing just when I got back from my world cruise. In Leningrad I cut off a man's necktie in a restaurant. 'It's much too wide for fashion,' I said; 'waiter, bring the scissors.' I almost died laughing.”

That's enough now, Louie is right: I've lived too long with ghosts, with those who are no more, with things that did not come to pass.

But while there is still light left, and there is some, yet, I will go down to the stream and plant a willow tree, in hopes of all that still might be, so I can watch it grow while I live.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)