

## **EDWIN LONDON**

### **BRASS QUINTET**

**James Darling and John Brndiar, trumpeters; Richard Solis, hornist; James DeSano, trombonist; Ronald Bishop, tubist**

### **PSALM OF THESE DAYS II**

**Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble (Deborah Kavasch, soprano; Linda Vickerman, mezzo- soprano; Edwin Harkins, tenor; Philip Larsen, bass-baritone)**

EDWIN LONDON (b. 1929, Philadelphia) studied at the Oberlin Conservatory (French horn) and the University of Iowa. His composition teachers were P.G. Clapp, Phillip Bezanson, Luigi Dallapiccola and Darius Milhaud. While on the faculty of Smith College (1960-68) he conducted the Smith-Amherst Orchestra and the Amherst Community Opera. At the University of Illinois from 1968-78, he was chairman of the composition-theory division where he founded and directed Ineluctable Modality and conducted the Contemporary Chamber Players. In 1978 he became chairman of the music department at Cleveland State University. He was a fellow of the University of Illinois Center for Advanced Study in 1969, a Guggenheim fellow in 1970 and a four- time fellow of the MacDowell Colony. He has received several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His *PSALM OF THESE DAYS III* appears on CRI SD 405.

#### **I. Allegro malinconico**

#### **II. Molto adagio quasi sguaiato ma con dolce forza**

The composer writes: "BRASS QUINTET was written in 1965 at the MacDowell Colony. Being a French horn player and having experienced some memorable moments in the trenches of jazz and erudite ensemble combat, I wanted to compose a piece which would help me understand the processes, that is, the twists and turns that my own public performance existence had taken. I realized that, not unlike the stress and strain inextricably bound to competitive athletics, brass playing often led to physical exhaustion, but had wondrous satisfactions to offer as well. In effect then, the QUINTET is dedicated to all those who have pressed (or jammed, as it were) cold metal to their flesh. The following text appears in the score and is usually read aloud between movements during concert performances:

*There is a series of central mysteries for which one explanation is as pleasantly plausible as another. The question may be asked, "Is the arm of a human being meant to throw a baseball at speeds of up to one hundred miles an hour?" One answer is, "Yes, for our national pastime is a game people play and therefore it is only natural to try to play the game as masterfully as possible." Another answer is "No, for the great strain on the sinews and nerve fibers leads to a set of pathological symptoms, a condition often referred to as the 'sore arm syndrome.'" A third answer might be, "Throwing a baseball is no more, nor less natural than any other human activity, and given the need to play hard and well, why not permit the muscles under strain to have the necessary respite in which to revitalize themselves? Why not allow the life-giving surge of freshly pumped blood the opportunity to replenish the used up storehouse of the plasmic function?"*

*This last answer is one which appeals to me, particularly on this anniversary of my father's birth. For as I am my father's son, and I am my son's father, the idea that there is a viable continuity, a chain of living, so to speak, which reinforces, reinvigorates and re- strengthens the pleasant plausibility of human existence, and makes a metalogical construct into a sensible reality, is a reassuring one. Though this occasion will soon pass out of our ken, at least for this brief moment, let us contemplate the central mystery of renewal.*

"PSALM OF THESE DAYS II was written in 1976-77 for the extraordinary talents of the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble of San Diego. This dedicated bunch had earlier presented me with a lexicon-catalogue of vocal sounds developed in their research sessions at the Center for Music Experiment (University of California at San Diego). The composition written for them is an attempt to make meaningful use of the group's adventuresome character.

"The work is one in the cycle of five known as Psalms of These Days, which owes not a little to William James' Varieties of Religious Experience. This work describes as a central guiding metaphor the effort being made by a computer, attempting, through the most rational of analytical procedures to progress toward spiritual enlightenment. Using the biblical text of Psalm 131 as phonemic material, PSALM OF THESE DAYS II acts as bridge to PSALM OF THESE DAYS III (CRI SD 405), which is more descriptive of the compulsive "sick soul."

PSALM 131 (David professeth his humility)  
Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:  
neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in  
things too high for me . . .  
Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child  
that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a  
weaned child.  
Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for  
ever.

## **LIONEL NOWAK**

**SOUNDSCAPE FOR STRING QUARTET Contemporary Quartet (Jean Ingraham and Joel Lester, violinists; Jacob Glick, violist; Chris Finckel, cellist)**

**SOUNDSCAPE FOR PIANO**

**Vladimir Haysky, pianist**

LIONEL NOWAK (b. 1911, Cleveland) did his early theoretical studies under Porter, Sessions and Elwell. Later, significant though less formal influences were Luening and Ruggles. He was working with modern dance during the '30s and '40s, and with outstanding performing colleagues at Bennington College (where he has been a faculty member for more than thirty years) — his works are therefore often written for small ensembles. These circumstances have assured timely, authoritative and frequent performances. He writes:

"Early in 1970, I remarked to a class of composition students at Union College on the questionable validity of composing today for string quartet. Later in the year, I assigned the task of writing a substantial movement for string quartet. The class, having drawn the extreme conclusion from my earlier statement, opined as how the assignment was inappropriate unless I too would satisfy it. I accepted the challenge and the result is here recorded as SOUNDSCAPE FOR STRING QUARTET.

"SOUNDSCAPE FOR PIANO was commissioned by Converse College in 1964 as part of the celebration of its 75th anniversary. The composition was meant to challenge the skills and imagination of the talented students who study at the School of Music. This particular Soundscape was the first of a series; the others are for various

small ensembles. The title is meant to suggest a panorama of sound textures and instrumental techniques which, in this instance, eventuates in something like the jagged outlines of a city — skyscrapers, tenements, parks and hub-bub."

All members of the BRASS QUINTET are Cleveland residents and all but John Brndiar are members of the Cleveland Orchestra. Formed in 1972, the EXTENDED VOCAL TECHNIQUES ENSEMBLE has done much in the way of extending traditional ideas of vocal production. They are becoming well-known for creating a unique sonic world of mesmerizing intensity and expressiveness. The CONTEMPORARY QUARTET takes its name from Manhattan's Group for Contemporary Music, where its members play individually and collectively. It is widely admired for the sensitivity and musicality which it adds to superb technical command. VLADIMIR HAVSKY was born in China of White Russian parents. He began his musical studies at the age of six and came to the United States in 1940. He has studied with Rudolf Serkin here and with Nadia Boulanger in Fountainebleau, France, and appears as a pianist and organist in the New York area.

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*