

CRI SD 496

Encore: Wanda Maximilien, pianist

Ralph Shapey

21 Variations for Piano (1978) (28:10)

Gerald Chenoweth

Three Musics for Piano Solo (1974) (7:20)

Robert Moevs

Una Collana Musicale Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13 (1977) (11:23)

Ralph Shapey (b 1921, Philadelphia), composer/conductor, for many years active in New York City, is at present a professor of music at the University of Chicago, where he is music director and conductor of its internationally famous Contemporary Chamber Players. His work has been recognized with many important awards and commissions including the unique MacArthur Fellowship Award. In conferring the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award, George F. Keenan described Shapey's music as "exciting and dynamic . . . full of rugged power and high originality, developed over a number of years in response to an intensely personal vision, un-influenced by changing fashion." These characteristics are balanced in this work by passages of lyrical, dreamlike beauty.

21 Variations for Piano was commissioned by and dedicated to Abraham Stokman. It was started in June 1978, put aside for commitments abroad, and resumed and completed in August of that year.

Shapey says:

"*21 Variations* is a one-fabric work. All of the variations are derived from the opening statement. Each one is akin to a link in a chain. The larger overall form, however, is a four-section work comparable to a four-movement piece. Each section has its own specific set of variations, linking one to the other until finally it resolves itself in variation 21 as the coda.

"I would like to quote from a recent description of my works by Harvey Sollberger, which I believe to be both excellent and accurate: 'It is music of dramatic confrontation, setting into motion sharply profiled and contrasting blocklike units of material that do not so much evolve as generate energy and tension out of their renewed overlappings and juxtapositions. In this tactile, rough-grained music, units of thought seem to take on such physical-spatial characteristics as mass and density as they interact on separate levels and planes of the textures they generate.' "

Shapey's music may also be heard on CRI nos. 141, 232 355, 391, 423, 428, and 435.

Gerald C. Chenoweth (b 1943, Baltimore) studied theory and composition with Robert Stern, Charles Fussell, and Philip Bezanson at the University of Massachusetts, where he earned his BM (1970) and MM (1972). His studies in composition with Richard Hervig and William Hibbard at the University of Iowa led to the completion of his Ph.D. in 1975 as well as an MFA in conducting. Chenoweth is currently associate professor of music at the Mason Gross School of the Arts of Rutgers University. Since joining the Rutgers faculty in 1975, he has received several university fellowships, was twice a fellow at the Composers Conference in Johnson, VT, and was in residence at the MacDowell Colony in 1983. His activities include composing, teaching, and conducting.

Chenoweth has written music for all media, which has been widely performed in the USA and abroad. His piece for soprano and chamber ensemble, *Candles*, was recorded by Lucy Shelton and the Twentieth Century Consort, Christopher Kendall, conductor, and released on the Smithsonian Collection of Recordings.

He writes:

“*Three Musics for Piano Solo* was composed and first performed at the University of Iowa in 1974. The title refers to the basic structural aspect of the piece—the presentation, juxtaposition and conflict of three types of musical expression: bravura, leggiero and lyric. Rather than resolving these conflicting musics into some sort of synthesis, the outcome of the work is the dissolution of the two more active types and the ultimate triumph of the lyric.”

Robert Moevs (b La Crosse, WI, 1920) began musical life very early as a pianist. Training in composition was later pursued at Harvard and, for ten years, in France and Italy. In 1955, he returned to teach both theory and composition at Harvard and, since 1964, at Rutgers. He was a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome, and also has served as composer-in-residence there. He is the recipient of awards from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Institute of Arts and Sciences. Orchestral, choral, chamber, and solo music are all represented in his work. Among his commissions have been works for the Boston, Cleveland, and Milwaukee orchestras. In 1978 his *Concerto Grosso for Piano, Percussion, and Orchestra*, with amplified instruments, won the Stockhausen International Composition contest in Italy; it can be heard on CRI SD 457. Other works for piano are Sonata (CRI SD 136); *Fantasy on a Motive*, and *Phoenix* (CRI SD 404); *Sonatina* and *Ludi Praeteriti: Games of the Past* for two pianos.

He writes:

“*Una Collana Musical*, thirteen brief pieces for pianoforte, was written in 1977. These pieces, whose durations range from thirty seconds to a couple of minutes, are individual moments of varied character and compositional procedure. Their first pitches, rather as an acronym, present the circle of fifths, starting from C. No. 1, *Praeludium*, returns modified as No. 13, a *Postludium*, clasping, as it were, the necklace together. Inasmuch as they are otherwise individual entities, various selections and arrangements can be made.”

Wanda Maximilien recorded six of these pieces on CRI SD 404. The remaining seven parts of *Una Collana Musicale* are here presented.

Writing about the entire work, Bradford Gowen has written, “The complete nineteen-minute cycle is expressive, beautiful, serious, and even a bit austere. In this day of plentiful nervous- virtuosic writing, sound effect composition, and hypnotic-minimalist phenomena, Moevs’ work stands as an affirmation of linear integrity. Long, quasi-vocal ideas move confidently through effective rhythmic and intervallic shaping, but for the most part these are contrapuntal pieces. Their many strengths demand and reward the most sensitive musicianship.”

Wanda Maximilien began studying the piano at the age of six in her native Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and received her MS in performance from The Juilliard School. Her teachers were Adele Marcus and Nadia Boulanger, among others. Her interpretations of contemporary music, in her recitals in and around New York and on CRI SD 404 and 457, have been praised for their warmth, sensitivity, and commanding technique. She is an associate professor of music at the Mason Gross School of the Arts of Rutgers University.

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21 Variations:

Three Musics:

Una Collana Musicale:

All recorded by David Hancock, New York City, spring 1983.

Produced by Carter Harman and Eve Beglarian.

This recording employed hand-made ribbon microphones in pairs, spaced six feet apart, in the best available acoustical environment. Their output was fed to a 30 IPS Studer A-80 tape recorder, slightly modified for constant velocity record-playback characteristics, using half inch tape with two channels, each channel almost a quarter of an inch wide. In this way the need for conventional (and troublesome) noise reduction devices was eliminated and the resulting reproduction challenges the digital storage method so far as clarity and cleanliness of sound are concerned.

This is a Composer-Supervised Recording

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)