

Walter W. Naumburg Award Record

Joseph Schwantner

Wild Angels Of The Open Hills (1977)

Texts by Ursula LeGuin

Jubal Trio (Constance Beavon, soprano; Sue Ann Kahn, flute; Susan Jolles, harp)

1. Wild angels of the open hills
2. Angels of the shadowed ancient land
3. There
4. Coming of age
5. The hawk shapes the wind

Joseph Schwantner (b. 1943, Chicago) is Professor of Composition at the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester, and a Pulitzer Prize winner. He received his musical and academic training at the Chicago Conservatory and Northwestern University, where he completed a doctorate in 1968.

On a leave of absence from Eastman in 1982-84, Schwantner became composer-in-residence with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. He is one of six composers residing with major American orchestras in a program directed by Meet the Composer and sponsored by the Exxon Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Schwantner's works have been performed extensively by major orchestras and chamber groups throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, Canada and Mexico, at such festivals as the Holland, Ravinia, Adelaide and Bydgoszcz Festivals, the 1978 ISCM World Music Days held in Helsinki and the 1981 World Music Days in Brussels.

He has been commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation, the St. Louis Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Naumburg Foundation, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the American Composers Concerts Inc., and the American Heritage Foundation, among others. He has received many distinguished awards.

Among his recent works that have been recorded is *Wind, Willow, Whisper...*, performed by the Da Capo Chamber Players on CRI SD 441. He writes:

"Wild Angels Of The Open Hills, commissioned by the Naumburg Foundation for the Jubal Trio, was composed between June and October of 1977, with much of the work completed at the MacDowell Colony that August. The scoring includes a multiple instrumentation for each performer, a procedure consistent with other of my recent works which attempt to explore and expand the articulative, gestural and timbral possibilities of an ensemble. Besides the employment of the expanded instrumentation, the players are required at times to narrate, whistle, whisper and sing.

"The scoring includes: 1. Soprano, doubling on 2 Glass Crystals, a Suspended Triangle, Tambourine, and one small set of Japanese (tubular metal) Wind Chimes; 2. C Flute, Alto Flute in G, 6 Crotales (antique cymbals), and Wind Chimes; 3. Harp and 2 Glass Crystals.

"The work consists of a cycle of five songs with texts drawn from a collection of poems entitled *Wild Angels* by writer and poet Ursula LeGuin. The poems immediately struck a deep resonance within me and I became excited by the dramatic and musical possibilities

suggested by their vivid imagery. The work's title is taken from the first line of the opening poem in the collection.

"The texts for *Songs I* and *II* are both drawn from the initial poem in the collection, with the first stanza employed in *Song I*, and the second stanza used in *Song II*. *Songs III* and *V* incorporate complete poems while in *Song IV* the text consists of selected stanzas from the long poem *Coming of Age*.

"While each song is a separate entity with its own definite identity, they all share common musical ideas and materials. Because of the exigencies of the text, I felt that the work required a larger frame of reference than has been a part of my recent compositional milieu. For me, this perspective became an exciting exploratory path of boundless potential.

"The work is dedicated to the outstanding performers of the Jubal Trio and to the Naumburg Foundation."

Ben Johnston

String Quartet No. 6 (1980)

New World String Quartet (Curtis J. Macomber and William Patterson, violins; Robert Dan, viola; Ross T. Harbaugh, cello)

Ben Johnston (b. 1926, Macon, Georgia) is best known for his work in microtonal music, particularly in the use of the ancient "just" intonation. He received his high school education in Richmond, Virginia and his advanced education at the College of William and Mary, the United States Navy School of Music, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, University of California at Berkeley, Mills College, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He holds degrees from William and Mary, Cincinnati Conservatory and Mills. His principal teachers of composition were Harry Partch, Darius Milhaud, Burrill Phillips, Robert Palmer, and John Cage. Since 1951 he has been on the faculty of the University of Illinois where in 1983 he became Professor Emeritus of Musical Composition.

Johnston has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a grant from the National Council on the Arts and the Humanities, and Associate Membership in the University Center for Advanced Study. He has received commissions from the Paul Fromm Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, the Fine Arts Foundation of Chicago, the Polish Radio in Warsaw, and the one from the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation that made this recording possible.

The concept of microtonal complexity achieved through the most consonant and mathematically the most uncomplicated tuning procedures has underlain most of Johnston's works since 1961. The extension of tuning based on the first six partials of the overtone series (like common practice in early music, avoiding the compromise of temperament) occupied him until 1970, when he undertook an extension of tuning based on higher partials. Johnston's music is not written for electronic or other instruments of novel design to make possible the new microtonal resources. Instead, he has studied and altered the performance of familiar instruments. He writes:

"In *String Quartet No. 6*, I undertook the problem of endless melody so fascinating to late nineteenth century composers. Since it seemed to me that this concept never really met successfully the tests to which it was subjected, I was especially anxious to make it succeed in a non-dramatic, non-programmatic context. The melodic phrases are completely elided, avoiding all cadences. The punctuation, the rise and fall, and the climax placement of these lines and accompaniments are controlled by an elaborate application of proportions from the Fibonacci series. The length of the solos and their tempos are strictly proportional and

result in a gradual increase of activity up to double the initial tempo.

"With this work, too, I returned to a problem that has interested me from many angles: the integration of twelve-tone technique with the pitch procedures of extended just intonation. As in one earlier work (Two Sonnets of Shakespeare), I composed a background against which solo melody could be placed. In the quartet I used a 2, 3, 5, 7, 11 system in which hexads like Harry Partch's comprising the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th and 11th partials of an otonality (overtone aggregate) or of its inversion, an utonality (under-tone aggregate), are paired, as hexachords in a semi-combinatorial twelve-tone row which has one representative tone from each of the twelve pitch regions of the octave. All forty-eight transpositions of the row are used more than once in a giant palindrome which presents each quartet member in turn as soloist. The solos are freely composed using the tones of the harmonic content of the hexachords.

"The composition of this work was more difficult than any piece I can remember, probably because its moment-to-moment timing evokes for me the ordinary events of daily life rather than its exceptional moments."

Since its founding in 1974, the **Jubal Trio**, a unique combination of voice and instruments, has performed an impressive amount of unusual music, old and new. It has received such important recognition as the first nationwide chamber music grant from the C. Michael Paul Foundation, a National Endowment for the Arts Award (to present American concert music in museums), a Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc. grant, and, in 1977, the Naumburg Award. The Trio also appears on CRI SD 479.

The New World String Quartet, with a repertoire ranging from the standard quartet literature to premieres of contemporary American works, has been acclaimed as one of America's most prominent young ensembles. Formed in 1977, the quartet has appeared at major halls in major cities and universities. It is currently Quartet-in-Residence at Harvard University.

This recording was made possible by grants from the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation.

The music on this record was commissioned by the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation specifically for performers who had won Naumburg Performers' Awards. The Jubal Trio won the Chamber Music Award in 1977 and the New World String Quartet in 1979.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)