

William Thomas McKinley

Paintings VII (1982)

Collage (Robert Annis, bass clarinet; Anne H. Pilot, harp; Frank Epstein, percussion; Christopher Oldfather, piano; Joel Smirnoff, violin; Katherine Murdock, viola; Joel Moerschel, cello)
Gunther Schuller, conductor
Frank Epstein, artistic director

For One (1980)

Richard Stoltzman, clarinet

Ramon Zupko

Noosphere (1980)

New World Quartet

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

William Thomas McKinley (b. 1938, New Kensington, PA) studied with Nikolai Lopatnikoff, Frederick Dorian, Gunther Schuller, Mel Powell, Yehudi Wyner, and Lawrence Moss. He has taught at Yale, SUNY (Albany), the University of Chicago, Tanglewood, and, since 1973, at the New England Conservatory. McKinley, also a virtuoso jazz pianist, appears in that role on CRI 275 in Shapey's *Rituals*.

McKinley has received many awards, including those from the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Concert Artists Guild, the National Endowment for the Arts (which commissioned Paintings VII for Collage), the NEA (in Jazz Composition), the Massachusetts Council for the Arts, the Naumburg Foundation, the National Flute Association, and the New England ISCM (honorable mention). Mr. McKinley's music has been played by the Chicago Symphony, the Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, the Minnesota Symphony, the New England Conservatory Symphony, the 92nd Street Y Chamber Orchestra, the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, and the Pittsburgh Symphony, as well as by distinguished chamber music performers. He writes:

"Paintings VII and For One share many musical and dramatic characteristics though a number of years separates their times of composition. Each work derives its essential energy and compositional spirit from a predominantly expressionistic musical palette which results in a widely contrasting array of emotional states. These states are juxtaposed in short rapid-fire order - often suddenly - creating at times the impression of "psychic" motion or force throughout their development.

"The gestures of Paintings VII derive from "physical" patterns, suggesting dance and improvisational movement. I would like to think of its form as "organic" - that is, evolving and yet strongly goal-oriented.

"Paintings VII creates a scenario which displays the explosive percussion talents of Frank Epstein, while at the same time articulating an overall dramatic portrait of instrumental levels. Thus, I set up the following hierarchy in terms of dramatic importance: (1) percussion, (2) bass clarinet, (3) piano, (4) violin, (5) harp, (6) cello, (7) viola. Most of the instruments are given soloistic passages of varying length which dominate the entire

group for short periods of time, thus taking over the momentary compositional direction. Nonetheless, the essential musical drive and development is distributed principally among the first three instruments (in the above order) while the others generally take on subordinate roles. The percussion dramatizes volcanic gestures — dominating and wild; the bass clarinet provides a perpetual obbligato-like blanket or undertow — rhapsodizing in a sometimes nonchalant manner and occasionally engaging in difficult cadenza-like passages; and the piano reacts in sometimes explosive fashion, also rhapsodizing, but in a manner different from the others, with unique cadenzas occurring intermittently. "Richard Stoltzman has remarked concerning my music:

'McKinley's music is traditional in the sense that all fine music is. It assimilates respected sounds and forms of history, reflects the qualities of its own ear, and forges fresh bonds with the future. I find it challenging, spontaneous, exciting, sincere, and eminently worthwhile'

"For One is an extroverted, fauvistic, and virtuostic work - a fitting companion to Paintings VII which seems to be fulfilling my hope that it will become a significant contribution to the clarinet repertoire. Because of the unavoidable fact that the single line creates its own unique effect, one is asked to hear lines which occur in different registers as multiple lines that contain many melodic levels within them. The listening experience in For One creates the same aural challenges that are encountered in listening to a solo work of Bach, wherein the perception of linear polyphony is paramount in obtaining enjoyment and the fullest understanding.

"The mastery of Stoltzman's performance brings the polyphonic levels to the foreground, helping the listener to follow the work's continuity, melodic connections, and overall dramatic progress."

Paintings VII was commissioned on behalf of Collage by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Ramon Zupko (b. 1932, Pittsburgh, PA) is Professor of Composition at Western Michigan University, where he also directs the Studio for Electronic Music. He began his musical studies at an early age, and studied at Juilliard, Columbia, and in Europe, where he lived for several years. His principal composition teacher was Vincent Persichetti.

He has composed more than 100 works, many of which include the electronic medium, as well as theatrical elements. His more than forty composition awards include a Guggenheim, a Koussevitzky Foundation Award, a Kennedy-Friedheim Award, an American Composers Alliance Recording Award, a Berkshire Music Center Commission, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. He was named a Distinguished Faculty Scholar at Western Michigan University for 1983-84.

Zupko's compositions have been performed in New York and at various festivals and college campuses throughout the country, as well as in Europe. His orchestral works have been performed by the Detroit, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Kalamazoo, Curtis, and Tanglewood Festival Orchestras. His compositions appear on CRI 375 and 425.

Zupko has become concerned with a more ecumenical approach to musical materials, which endeavors to synthesize the spectrum of contemporary compositional techniques with those of the past, as well as those of other, non-Western cultures. This approach is supported philosophically by the writings of various 20th century thinkers whose conclusions have to do with the essence of our survival as a species, particularly: the acceptance of the multiplicity of experience, and the evolution of the network of human consciousness. He writes:

"Noosphere" is an interpretation, in musical terms, of the substantive elements of the philosophy of the Jesuit priest-paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It was Chardin's vision that the 'Noosphere,' the network of communication, information, and personal aspiration that embraces the universe, is evolving into a collective mind and soul, in which all humans participate.

"The three movements of the quartet express this evolutionary process through the incorporation of various folk songs and chants which represent most of the major world cultures. The same material is employed in all three movements.

"In the first movement, 'Alpha,' the primordial state is represented: independent, elementary energies, in search of unification. The second movement, 'Convergence,' exploits the effects of unification, creating an increased interaction and inter-dependence among the materials, resulting in higher and more complex levels of organization. The third movement, 'Omega,' the ultimate state of convergence, brings the total intermeshing of the materials to the forefront. While still maintaining their identities, their main focus becomes interaction with one another, in order to achieve an intensely unified 'hyperpersonal' organization, what Chardin describes as the 'Cosmic Omega.'

"This work was written under a Faculty Research Fellowship from Western Michigan University."

IN MEMORIAM R. DOUGLAS

Collage is a chamber music group composed principally of Boston Symphony Orchestra musicians, dedicated to the commissioning and performance of 20th century music. Throughout its history, Collage has presented original and diverse programs featuring more than fifty premieres. It also appears on CRI 486.

Richard Stoltzman is an instrumental superstar. He has appeared as clarinet soloist with the world's greatest orchestras and chamber performers and has won startling success in his own concerts and records. This is his first appearance on CRI.

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 1917, the quartet has appeared *at* major halls in major cities and universities. It is currently Quartet-in-Residence at Harvard University. It also appears on CRI SD 497.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)