

Gheorghe Costinescu

Jubilus for Soprano, Trumpet, and Organic Percussion (1981, revised 1984)

Nonsemantic text by Gheorghe Costinescu

Lynne Webber, soprano

Jack Hyatt, trumpet

Charles M. Smith, percussion

Gheorghe Costinescu, conductor

Trecut-Au Anii . . . / Past Are the Years . . .

for Tenor and Vocal Ensemble (1966, revised 1969)

Text by Mihai Eminescu

John Roberts, tenor

The Charlottesville New Repertory Singers

Gheorghe Costinescu, narrator and conductor

Cântul Apelor / Rivers

for Mezzo-soprano, Chorus and Orchestra (1960)

Text by Paul Anghel and Gheorghe Costinescu

Dorothea Palade, mezzo-soprano

Romanian Broadcast Chorus and Orchestra

Carol Litvin, conductor

Gheorghe Costinescu (b. 1934, Bucharest, Romania) has resided in New York City since 1969. He is active as a composer, conductor, pianist, musicologist, and educator. His compositions, consisting of chamber, choral, orchestral, and stage works, have been premiered in New York, Paris, Cologne, Bucharest and at the music festivals of Royan, Shiraz-Persepolis, and Tanglewood. His theoretical writings include essays on comparative aesthetics, studies and articles on contemporary music and a "Treatise on Musical Phonology."

Costinescu received a Ph.D. with distinction from Columbia University where he studied with Chou Wen-chung; a Post-Graduate Diploma from The Juilliard School, where his main teacher was Luciano Berio; and an M.A. in composition from the Bucharest Conservatory, where he was a student of Mihail Jora. He also studied in Europe with Nadia Boulanger, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Henri Pousseur.

Costinescu is the recipient of a Producers Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and of a music award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. He has received the Alexander Gretchaninoff Memorial Prize in Composition and the Henry Mancini Fellowship from The Juilliard School. In his native country, Costinescu was awarded the George Enescu prize from the Romanian Academy for his *Rivers* in 1965. Other awards and honors include fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and New York State's CAPS Program, as well as grants from the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, and the Ford Foundation.

Costinescu has taught at The Juilliard School, Columbia University, Brooklyn College, the New School for Social Research, and Kingsborough Community College. Since 1980, he has been a member of the faculty of Herbert H. Lehman College, where he also directs the Electronic Music Program.

This is the debut of his work on CRI.

Notes on the Music

Jubilus was commissioned by National Public Radio for its "Radio Visions" series in 1981. The first, partly improvisational, version was broadcast that same year in a program entitled "The Oldest Instrument." The final version was completed in 1984.

The text, sung by the soprano, is nonsemantic, linguistically close to Romanian, and requires vocal techniques systematized by Costinescu in his "Treatise on Musical Phonology." The trumpeter acts as the male counterpart to the male singer, while the percussionist, also male, carries the rhythmic structure that coordinates the other two performers. The term "organic percussion" refers to the fact that no instruments are used by the percussionist: he produces all his sounds by means of mouth, hands, and feet.

The composition is meant as an expression of joy, both physical and spiritual. The aspect of spiritual joy is also reflected through hints at the word "Alleluia" which can be heard at various times throughout the piece, but especially toward the end.

"More significant is the way Costinescu pits the soprano—who sings sometimes conventionally, more often in spurts or gasps, double tones, with closed mouth, even on the inhale—against a trumpet which manages amazingly to approximate the parallel vocal emissions. It is a work of enormous vitality and originality . . ."

—Robert Croan, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Trecut-Au Anii.../Past Are the Years... was completed concomitantly with the "Treatise on Musical Phonology." The treatise established a hierarchy of vocal sounds according to phonetic and pure musical criteria, with practical applications to musical composition and performance. Specific vocal emissions and articulations, as well as whispered and whistling sounds, have been chosen to suit the prolonged sonorities required by the Romanian poem.

The text is set forth in its entirety by the solo singer, while the vocal ensemble consistently reorganizes and transforms the linguistic material. Through various types of vocal production, it isolates, prolongs, superimposes and mixes sounds in a way analogous to procedures used in electronic music. Since the phonetic aspects of the original text have been systematically musicalized, the work can only be sung in Romanian. The English translation should be read before the performance, and may or may not be followed by a reading of the Romanian poem. In this recording, both are read by the composer.

This work was composed in 1966 and revised in 1969. It was originally published and premiered under the French title "Comme de longs Nuages . . .".

"Drawing upon the small chorus as an arsenal of special effects (moaning, whistling, wheezing, etc.) while the soloist sings the Romanian poem in a more or less straightforward fashion, Mr. Costinescu has built an imaginative sound surface that translates the bitter nostalgia of the text with considerable dramatic impact."

—Peter G. Davis, *The New York Times*

Cântul Apelor /Rivers was completed as Costinescu reached the age of twenty-five; it is his first work in a large symphonic form. Based on a Romanian text and intended as a lyric incantation, it was inspired by the image of a small stream expanding from its source into a full, running river; as other rivers are invoked, they join this initial one to flow in a vast panorama of landscape and peoples. After several buildups that accumulate intensity while slowing pace, almost suggesting the sea, the rivers gradually retreat to continue their everyday course.

The general form of the work is as follows:

Introduction: orchestral buildup, with strings using microtones

A: lyric invocation of the rivers, with mezzo-soprano and orchestra. The opening motive here will generate almost all ensuing rhythmic-melodic materials.

B: energetic episode, with male chorus and orchestra

A varied: with mezzo-soprano, female chorus, and orchestra

C: extended orchestral interlude based on two contrasting ideas, treated in alternating variations through expansion and accumulation of previous transformations (the percussion instruments here becoming increasingly active)

D: climactic section of the work on very prolonged sonorities, with mixed chorus and orchestra

A varied: with mezzo-soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra

E: last vocal instrumental accumulation, with mixed chorus (in microtones), orchestra and, shortly, mezzo-soprano

Coda: orchestral conclusion

The work requires a large orchestra, with triple woodwinds, two harps, celesta, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes and additional percussion instruments. The work is dedicated to Mihail Jora.

Notes on the Performers

for *Jubilus*

Lynne Webber is a vocal soloist with the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. "The soprano who turns a work's difficulties into fun" (*The New York Times*) has sung in world premieres of works by Milton Babbitt, Ralph Shapey, Morton Feldman and Robert Norris. *Jubilus* was composed bearing in mind her unusual vocal skills and musicianship.

Jack Hyatt studied trumpet with Boston Symphony principals Armando Gittalla and Robert Voisin, and made American and European recital tours while still in his teens. This "excellent soloist" (*New York Times*) has taught trumpet at Boston University, the University of Kentucky and Lehman College. He may be heard on Coronet recordings.

Charles M. Smith is a percussionist and pianist who has worked on a permanent basis for the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and has recorded extensively for film and television. Smith holds a B.S. from the City University of New York; having studied with drummer Eric Gravatt, he is also active in the jazz field.

for *Trecut-Au Anü .../ Past Are the Years...*

John Roberts, tenor, studied voice with Marion Sims at Oberlin College and sang professionally in Chicago for a number of years. He received an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Chicago. Since 1966, he has been Professor of Hindi and Sanskrit and, since 1983, Chairman of the Oriental Language Department of the University of Virginia. At the same time, he has taught voice and directed the Charlottesville Light Opera.

The **Charlottesville New Repertory Singers** were organized in 1973 by Marilyn DeReggi, the versatile soprano who has commissioned and premiered many contemporary works.

for *Cântul Apelor / Rivers*

Dorothea Palade, a leading mezzo-soprano at the Bucharest State Opera, has also made numerous appearances as a soloist with the major Romanian symphonic ensembles.

The **Romanian Broadcast Chorus and Orchestra** has become, under the leadership of its principal conductor, Iosif Conta, one of the country's most accomplished performing ensembles. The orchestra has adopted a policy of promoting works by contemporary composers of the most varied aesthetic orientations. As a result, many works have been commissioned for this ensemble which it has premiered to a knowledgeable, appreciative audience.

Carol Litvin was considered among the most gifted Romanian conductors of the younger generation when *Cântul Apelor* was recorded in 1965. Equally versatile in the contemporary and traditional repertoires, he has been one of the regular conductors of the Romanian Broadcast Orchestra while remaining active as a professor at the Bucharest Music Conservatory.

This record was made possible by a grant from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Four cash awards and a CRI recording are given annually to honor and encourage promising composers to help them continue their creative work. Gheorghe Costinescu was a recipient of this award in 1985.

Jubilus

Recorded by Lefferts Brown and Eric Marchal

Recorded at Herbert H. Lehman College, Bronx, NY, November 15, 1984

Trecut-Au Anii... / Past Are the Years...

Recorded by Donald MacInnis

Recorded at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, May 3, 1973

Narration recorded by Connie Kieltyka at the New Wilderness Studio,

New York City, December 24, 1984

Cântul Apelor / Rivers

Recorded at the Romanian Broadcast, Bucharest, Romania, June, 1965

This is a mono recording

PRONUNCIATION:

a, e, i, and *u* are pronounced as in Italian or Spanish;

ă as in English singer

â or *î* as in English tit-le (i.e., the short vowel heard between t and l)

ș as in English sharp

ț as in English tsar

An *i* coming at the end of a word is usually silent.

TRECUT-AU ANII . . .

Trecut-au anii ca nori lungi pe șesuri
Și niciodată n-or să vie iară,
Căci nu mă-ncântă azi cum mă mișcară
Povești si doine, ghicitori, eresuri,

Ce fruntea-mi de copil o-nseninară,
Abia-nțelese pline de-nțelesuri—
Cu-a tale umbre azi în van mă-mpresuri
O, ceas al tainei, asfințit de seară,

Să smulg un sunet din trecutul vieții,
Să fac, o, suflet, ca din nou să tremuri
Cu mâna mea în van pe liră lunec:

Pierdut e totu-n zarea tinereții
Și mută-i gura dulce-a altor vremuri,
Iar timpul crește-n urma mea . . . mă-ntunec.

(1883, decembrie)

PAST ARE THE YEARS . . .

free translation by Jeanne Cretzianu and Gheorghe Costinescu

Past are the years, like long clouds on the plains
And never will they return,
Tales, songs, games, sayings
No longer enchant me, as they moved me once
And brightened my brow as a child,
Barely understood, yet so full of meaning—
In vain with thy shadows dost thou surround me
O, mysterious hour of approaching evening.

Shall I wrench a sound from the past of life,
Shall I make thee, o, my soul, tremble once again (?)
In vain does my hand on the lyre slide:

Lost is everything in the remoteness of youth
And mute is the sweet voice of bygone days,
Following me, time increases ever more... I sink into darkness.

(December, 1883)

MIHAI EMINESCU (1850-1889) is, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the philosophical lyric poet who created modern Romanian poetry. Deeply influenced by the national folklore, his work reflects a mystical orientation and an abiding sense of melancholy. He has been noted for affinities with the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the Indian conception of life. "The Last Romantic." as Eminescu is called in the title of a collection of his poems published by the University of Iowa Press, is translated into many languages.

CÂNTUL APELOR / RIVERS

Romanian text by Paul Anghel and Gheorghe Costinescu (*Gheorghe Costinescu's words are in italics.*)
translated by Gheorghe Costinescu and Elisabeth Hulick (*Elisabeth Hulick's words are in italics.*)

(Mezzo-soprano solo)

Râuri, *unde călătore*, legămate peste sesuri,
Fierăstraie reci de ape, vifore de melodii,
Voi urmați căile voastre, ce se împletesc cunună,
Printre vieți, printre speranțe, printre nopți și peste glii

Rivers, ever wand'ring currents, *ever flowing over prairies,*
Tumbling rush of silver waters, mighty storms of melodies,
Blessed are your wav'ry ways, that are *weaving into crowns,*
From the *peaks into the valleys*, through the nights, and to *the towns.*

(Male chorus)

Vă-nfruntăm când mâniate nu v-ajunge albia voastră
și vă-ntindeți brațul aprig spre-a vă smulge țărături noi,
Iar furtunile albastre ale undelor stârnite
Iși aruncă lava rece peste maluri în șuvoi.

But behold, when out of anger, you no longer hold your courses,
And you stretch your mighty bodies, bound to conquer and blaspheme,
While the overflowing *vortexes* unleashed from their sources
Throw their *spinning, chilly* lava over borders, *in a stream.*

(Mezzo-soprano and Female chorus)

Vouă apelor, ce-ntr-una vă reluați calea străbună
Ce dă viață-mbelșugată și-ncântare tuturor,
Noi cu gândul și simțirea, vă urmăm spre-acele locuri
Unde râuri și fînte își găsesc menirea lor.

Dear waterways,
Who always,
Keep returning to your journeys,
That give life and give abundance and much comfort to our eyes,
We are following your traces
Aiming far toward the places
Where all waters and all beings get their *blessings from the skies.*

(Mixed chorus)

De la-izvoare,
Către soare,
Scoateți raze
Din talaze,

Fulgerile din cascade le întindeți peste zări,
Iară undele vă poartă
Spre-a uni a voastră soartă
Cu-ale lumii mări și țări.

*Water runs,
You hurl suns,
Currents flow,
You bring glow,
Lightning flashes from your cascades bring new beauty that expands,
As your wand'ring waves are tying
Rivers' fate, most gratifying,
To the planet's seas and lands.*

PAUL ANGHEL, who belongs to the generation of poets and essayists emerging in the mid-sixties in Romania, shows a keen sense of euphony and an inclination toward broad sonorities in his use of language.

He wrote the initial text titled *Cântec Apelor Țării* (*Song to the Rivers of My Country*) adhering, at the composer's suggestion, to a specific formal structure, while emphasizing the singing potential of the words. Gheorghe Costinescu later revised the text to include, besides their blessings, the devastations that rivers can bring, while referring to all rivers rather than to those of a specific country. Thus, the new English title "Rivers."

What follows is the original text as sung on this recording:

CÂNTEC APELOR ȚĂRII / SONG TO THE RIVERS OF MY COUNTRY

translated by Gheorghe Costinescu and Elisabeth Hulick

(Mezzo-soprano solo)

Râuri ale țării mele, legărate peste șesuri,
Fierăstraie reci be ape, vifore be melodii,
Vom lua lumina voastră și-o vom împleți cunună.
Peste munți, peste cămine, peste nopți, peste câmpii.

Rivers of my gracious country, ever flowing over prairies,
Tumbling rush of silver waters, mighty storms of melodies,
We will take your glittering light and will weave it into crowns.
Over peaks, and over valleys, through the dark, above the towns.

(Male chorus)

Am venit cu târnăcoape, ca sa spargem noaptea'n două
Și pe-ntinsul boltei noastre să înfigem aștrii noi,
Din furtunile albastre ale noilor turbine
Să țâșnească focul rece al luminii în șuvoi.

We have come to shatter night, with a sharpened ax in hand,
From the vasty vault of heaven, unknown stars will light the land.
Out of blue vortexes spinning, just like steel angels agleam,
Engines strike the chilly fire of the new light in a stream.

(Mezzo-soprano and Female chorus)

Ție patrie, î-ți punem, între sondele mănoase,
Între brâiele de spice și pădurile de brazi,
Sorii inimilor noastre, să-ți înalțe peste creste,
Mari drapele be lumină peste ziua ta de azi.

Now to you dear land of ours, to your rich and gentle earth,
To your forests and high mountains, there shall be a second birth.
Glowing suns from our hearts beyond craggy peaks now rise,
Golden flags to greet new days, wave a blessing from the skies.

(Mixed chorus)

Scoatem soare
Din izvoare,
Scoatem raze
Din talaze,
Fulgerile din cascade le întindem peste zări,
Punem undele să deie,
Dimineți cu noi trofeie,
Prea iubitei noastre țări

Water runs,
Hurling suns,
Currents flow.
Fires glow,
Lightning flashes out of cascades leap like torches, bursting night
Rivers' waves shall give away
New rewards, and bring the dawning
Of a clear triumphal light.

Note: Given that this initial text and its translation are no longer in use, the revised versions titled *Cântul Apelor / Rivers* are now the only valid ones.