

Neil B. Rolnick

***À La Mode* (1984)**

Neil B. Rolnick, synthesizers

Marshall Taylor, conductor

Relâche – The Ensemble for Contemporary Music

***Real Time* (1983)**

Neil B. Rolnick, Synclavier II

Douglas Jackson, conductor

Hartt Contemporary Players

Neil B. Rolnick composes music for electronic instruments and for conventional instrumental and vocal ensembles. He performs on a portable computer music system and concertizes regularly. He has appeared as featured soloist with ensembles such as Relâche, Gerard Schwarz's Music Today Ensemble, Musical Elements and the Albany Symphony Orchestra. He collaborated with filmmaker Sandy Moore in a film/performance installation at the Whitney Museum in New York City. He performs regularly as a soloist, in a duet format with soprano Barbara Noska, and in collaboration with other composer/performers.

Neil B. Rolnick was born in 1947 in Dallas, Texas. He studied composition with Darius Milhaud at the Aspen Music School, with John Adams and Andrew Imbrie at the San Francisco Conservatory and with Richard Felciano and Oily Wilson at the University of California, Berkeley. He studied computer music at Stanford University with John Chowning and James A. Moorer, and worked as a researcher at IRCAM in Paris from 1977 to 1979. He currently teaches and directs the iEAR Studios at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Rolnick's work has been recognized by fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, New York State CAPS, the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the University of California, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. His work may be heard on the 1750 Arch label; this is his debut on CRI.

Notes on the Music

À La Mode was written in 1984, and is scored for eight instruments and synthesizer. The title is indicative of the variety of meanings of the word 'mode' which are relevant to the music. Perhaps most obviously, the harmonic language of the piece is modal.

The piece also calls upon players to perform from a variety of 'modes' or styles of notation. These modes range from strictly notated segments, to repetitions of such segments which are begun and ended by the conductor, to descriptions of musical gestures to be realized by the performers.

'À La Mode' means 'in the style,' and this music is drawn from an awareness of many different musical styles. *À La Mode* begins and ends in clear reference to the repetitive and motoric style which has crept into the mainstream of new music over the last decade. However, there are a number of other styles which are employed as well.

The use of various harmonic and melodic modes, the use of different modes of notation and performance, and the use of a variety of styles as sources for my musical materials and processes, have all been tendencies which have grown in my music over a number of years. They reflect my belief that today's culture is perhaps most unique for the inescapable fact that we are all exposed to such a wide variety of styles and influences from around the world and from throughout history. This fact makes our time of high technology and instantaneous world-wide communication heterogeneous in the extreme: we are all immersed in an indecipherable Babel of styles in all aspects of our lives. And in our music as in our lives, we make our identities by sifting through the styles and modes which we inherit, to select those modes which best suit us.

Finally, out of the multitude of meanings of the title, there remains the uniquely American gastronomical meaning: I do hope that *À La Mode* is as enjoyable and rich as a hot slice of apple pie with ice cream.

As the title indicates, *Real Time* (1983) focuses upon the interaction of real time computer generated sounds with a large chamber ensemble. The Synclavier II is a computer and a digital synthesizer which can be controlled with a traditional piano-type keyboard and an array of buttons and foot pedals. The Synclavier's role in the piece is sometimes as a soloist, sometimes as part of the ensemble. The Synclavier makes use of a very wide variety of instrument-like timbres to complement and extend the colors of the instrumental writing.

Just as the Synclavier's function in *Real Time* is integrative, so too is the musical concept behind the piece one of integration of myriad musical perspectives. The harmonic textures of "big band" music of the 1940s, along with some of the rhythmic drive which infects so much of the mid-century swing and jazz, are used to fill out a formal structure which derives from some of the solo meditative music for the Japanese shakuhachi.

Real Time was premiered December 14, 1983 at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, under the direction of Gerard Schwarz, with the composer playing the Synclavier II.

—Neil B. Rolnick

Notes on the Performers

Relâche, The Ensemble for Contemporary Music, was founded in 1977 in Philadelphia. It is an independent professional performing ensemble and producing organization devoted exclusively to the development and performance of contemporary music.

Since its founding, Relâche has actively investigated and performed music that reflects the variegated history of the 20th century, from fully notated and precisely scored compositions to works that require creative, performer realizations to electronic and intermedia pieces. Relâche maintains an active schedule throughout the Philadelphia metropolitan area with residencies at Drexel University and the Yellow Springs Institute for Contemporary Studies and the Arts, among others. The ensemble also gives presentations in high schools, tours throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and has been featured on a number of programs broadcast nationally over public radio stations. In October 1987, Relâche, in conjunction with the City of Philadelphia and participating cultural institutions, will produce the 1987 New Music America Festival.

Relâche:

Joseph Franklin, Director
Tina Davidson, Associate Director
Laurel Wycoff, flutes
Wesley Hall, clarinets
Stephen Marcucci, saxophones
John Dulik, piano
Guy Klucevsek, accordion
Charles Holdeman, bassoon
Robert Zollman, percussion
Flossie Lerardi, percussion

Hartt Contemporary Players of the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, is a mixed ensemble dedicated to the performance of the most recent contemporary literature as well as 20th century classics. Highly acclaimed for performance excellence, the Contemporary Players present a variety of concerts each season including numerous premieres. The group is involved in collaborative efforts with area arts organizations such as Hartford's Real Art Ways, and has appeared in New York, Boston and other East coast cities. The Contemporary Players have been heard on public radio and have recorded on the Opus One label.

Hartt Contemporary Players:

Ming-Hsiu You, violin
Pei Ling Wu, viola
Ann Rule, cello
Ching-Hsin Hsu, double bass
Lisa Alvarez, flute
Adriana Dal Pra, oboe
Daniel Zanella, clarinet
Mary Ann Scott, bass clarinet
Ronald Gibson, bassoon
Annette Apice, horn
Augustino Gagliardi, trumpet
Bradley Edwards, trombone
Edward Fast, percussion
Craig McNutt, percussion

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