

Lukas Foss
New World 80375-2

Renaissance Concerto For Flute and Orchestra

The Renaissance Concerto was jointly commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Semyon Bychkov, Music Director, with assistance from the Cameron Baird Foundation and the Williams Gold Refining Company

Flutist Carol Wincenc has known Lukas Foss since her youth in the 1960s, when he was music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic. When she asked him to write a flute concerto for her in 1985, he was faced with the problem confronted by every composer in this genre: how to create an orchestral texture that would not overwhelm the solo instrument. Recalling that the flute “was a favorite instrument in the Renaissance and Baroque eras... [and] in ancient Greece, where the Olympic Games included flute playing,” he sought the sound he wanted in early music. The work, says Foss, is “an homage to something I love, a handshake across the centuries.” He completed the *Renaissance Concerto* on March 17, 1986.

In addition to the solo flute, this work calls for four woodwinds, four brass instruments, harp, optional harpsichord, percussion, and strings—an ensemble that can range in size from 19 to 62 instruments, depending on the number of strings. The concerto is in four movements:

I. *Intrada*. The ceremonial “entering piece” of the 16th and 17th centuries was usually a march. The present *Intrada* is something else: “part flute cadenza, part chorale, and part circus music,” the composer calls it. When the brass add their chorale, the composer specifies trumpets on high perches at opposite corners of the stage, evoking the “tower music” that, during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, was played from atop the town walls at dusk.

II. *Baroque Interlude (after Rameau)*. This scherzo is based on Rameau's harpsichord piece “L'Enharmonique.” Foss altered the tune, harmony, and structure, and scored it with a delicacy that allows even the little pedal glissandos on dying-away timpani notes to add their color.

III. *Recitative (after Monteverdi)*. Time seems to stop in this movement. The low flute notes are freely derived from a recitative in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. One body of strings gently echoes the other from offstage (canon of the harmony) and the orchestra's flute also picks up a phrase or two from the soloist; the overlapping effect is disorienting, trance-like.

IV. *Jouissance*. The incisive opening canon comes from Melville's 1612 madrigal “Musing.” The clear, spare scoring, bright with brass, the chords built up from the fourths in the Melville tune. There is a cadenza for flute and Renaissance drum, and when the music dwindles to pianissimo tapping of flute keys and the drum, the light changes, and the ghosts of Galilei, Gesualdo, and Peri briefly appear one by one. An insistent rhythm lingers as the ghostly mood returns amid eerie string glissandos. The soloist, who has been commenting volubly on all this, now does a disappearing act, walking offstage as the flute dwindles to a breathy whisper and finally to mere key-clicks. A gentle chime stroke announces the end of the séance.

Salomon Rossi Suite

Salomone Rossi, who lived in Mantua from about 1570 to about 1630, called himself “L'Ebreo,” and set a number of Hebrew texts to music in a collection punningly titled *The Songs of Solomon*. His madrigals resemble those of his contemporary Monteverdi, but some of his orchestral works point clearly to the trio-sonata form of Baroque chamber music.

Lukas Foss's *Salomon Rossi Suite*, composed in 1975 and dedicated to the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, follows the example of Stravinsky's *Monumentum pro Gesualdo di Venosa ad CD annum* in recomposing a Renaissance composer's music for modern instruments without romanticizing it.

I. A festive intrada for brass.

II. A three-way antiphonal dialogue among choirs of woodwinds, brass, and strings.

III. Harp and pedal timpani mimic lute and drum. IV. An intimate conversation, for oboes on one side and a strange and wonderful mixture of piccolo, viola, trumpet, double bass, and harp on the other.

V and VI. Parts of three Rossi pieces are combined to make a slow introduction and a lively fugal finale.

Orpheus and Euridice

The first Italian operas, of which Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo: favola in musica* is the outstanding example, were an attempt to revive the classical Greek drama. Following a different idea of “authenticity” from ours, Renaissance musicians dressed their ancient Greeks in 16th-century Italian raiment. Twentieth century listeners, on the other hand, might be drawn to the sensation of strangeness that a modern observer would surely experience in witnessing a Greek ritual of the 6th century B.C.

With *Orpheus*, a work composed in 1972 and incorporating elements of pantomime, Lukas Foss sought to evoke that feeling of an unfamiliar time and place, through the use of unusual staging and unconventional instrumental timbres. The result was not a benign trance or a Disney-like pastorella, but a celebration of the awesome power of *mousikee*, the calling of the muses, a synthesis of Apolonian discipline with the savage power of the Dionysian rite.

In 1983 Foss added an extended violin duet to the piece, creating a new work, *Orpheus and Euridice*, dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin and Edna Michell (premiered in Gstaad and Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1985). The effect of the new material is to humanize the work, to balance its alienated, otherworldly character with moments of warm-blooded passion, and to heighten the sense of loss at the end.

Although the players of this score have considerable discretion as to what pitches to play and when, Foss is very specific about the musical and visual effects he wants. [The visual effects are meant for live performance only.]

As the music begins, Orpheus (solo violin) stands on a raised portion of the stage behind the string orchestra. Flanking him are harp and chimes, whose curved shapes, Foss writes, “seem to extend his lyre, like wings!” He plays a dirge for his lover, Euridice,

on his “lyre!” Behind him, one or more oboes, representing angels of death, play menacing sounds, with their bells held close to Orpheus' head. The oboes lead Orpheus down among the string players, who represent the souls of the dead. Strange sonorities of doom are heard, made with a chime mallet on the piano's metal frame. Gently at first, then urgently, Orpheus pleads for the return of Euridice.

The soft entrance of the second solo violin signals Euridice's awakening. The moment seems to hold the entire kingdom of the dead spellbound. Then the orchestra builds up an urgent ostinato, fueling the passion of the lovers' duet as it rises to a fortissimo, marked “ecstatic!” As this wave breaks, the color suddenly drains from the soloists' tone: Orpheus has taken the forbidden look at Euridice, and she sinks back into eternal sleep. Orpheus responds with a spasm of rage and grief. The wail of the oboes again signals the approach of death, as we hear the Furies pursue Orpheus; in a sudden, violent climax, they tear him to 2 pieces. His music from the beginning of the piece is all that remains, now played on chimes and harp. The violinist-Orpheus walks slowly offstage past suspended bells, playing them with a bow as he goes. —DAVID WRIGHT

David Wright is a music journalist whose articles appear in The New Grove Dictionary of American Music and The Metropolitan Opera Encyclopedia.

YEHUDI MENUHIN is one of the most widely acclaimed violinists of this century. He has been active as a performing and recording artist, conductor and educator. Several works have been written for him, among them Béla Bartók's Sonata for solo violin and William Walton's Sonata for violin and piano. Menuhin has received numerous awards and honors throughout the world from governments, universities, and humanitarian organizations. In 1962 Menuhin founded his school at Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey, for musically talented children.

EDNA MICHELL, violin, studied with Ödön Partos in Tel Aviv before coming to the attention of Yehudi Menuhin who, along with Max Rostal, awarded her a scholarship to study with them in London. She pursues an active career as a soloist and chamber musician in the United States, Europe, and Central and South America, as well as in her native Israel. Michell founded the Adirondack Festival, the Helena Rubenstein Concerts and the Cantilena Chamber Players.

CAROL WINCENC, flute, has collaborated with many distinguished artists, among them Jessye Norman, Elly Ameling, Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma and the Guarneri and Cleveland string quartets. She was First Prize Winner of the Naumburg Solo Flute Competition in 1978. She also founded the first International Flute Festival in St. Paul, Minnesota. A faculty member of the Juilliard School and a professor at Indiana University, she has recorded for Nonesuch, Musical Heritage Society and MusicMasters.

LUKAS FOSS has been music director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic since 1971. Previously he was music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Milwaukee Symphony; he was also a professor at UCLA. He studied composition with Paul Hindemith and conducting with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute and with Serge

Koussevitzky at Tanglewood. An outspoken advocate of contemporary music, Foss has conducted most of the leading orchestras in the United States and Europe.

THE BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC has been acclaimed for incorporating contemporary music into the mainstream of symphonic repertoire. For eight of the past nine years it has received ASCAP awards for creative and adventuresome programming. The Brooklyn Philharmonic has premiered works by many composers, among them John Cage, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, Morton Gould, Krzysztof Penderecki and Steve Reich. The orchestra has recorded for CRI, Gramavision and Nonesuch.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chase, Gilbert, and David Wright. "Foss, Lukas." In *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*. H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, eds. London and New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Gagne, Cole, and Tracy Caras. "Lukas Foss." *Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982.

Kupferberg, Herbert. "Lukas Foss: Newfound Focus for the Composer-Conductor." *Ovation* 5 (April 1984): pp. 12-17.

Salzman, Eric. "The Many Lives of Lukas Foss." *Saturday Review* I., No. 8 (February 5, 1967): p. 73.

Wright, David. "Lukas Foss: The Nimble Prankster at 60." *Keynote* 6, No. 6 (August 1982): p. 8.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Baroque Variations. Buffalo Philharmonic, Lukas Foss conducting. Elektra/Nonesuch H-71202.

Capriccio for Cello and Piano. Gregor Piatigorsky cello; Lukas Foss, piano, New World NW 281.

Percussion Quartet. New Music Consort. New World 80405-2.

Psalms. Milwaukee Symphony, Wisconsin Conservatory Chorus, Lukas Foss conducting Pro Arte CDD-169.

Round a Common Center. Orson Welles, narrator; Yehudi Menuhin, violin; Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano; Cantilena Chamber Players. Pro Arte CDD-120.

The Song of Songs. Jennie Tourel, soprano; New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein conducting. CRI S-284E.

Producer: Elizabeth Ostrow

Engineers: John Newton, Henk Kooistra

Assistant engineers: Karl Held (Orpheus and Euridice), Paul Zinman (Renaissance Concerto, Salomon Rossi)

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RENAISSANCE CONCERTO FOR FLUTE AND ORCHESTRA

(publ. Carl Fischer, Inc.)

- [1] I. Intrada (4:58)
- [2] II. Baroque Interlude (3:37)
- [3] III. Recitative (5:13)
- [4] IV. Jouissance (6:43)

CAROL WINCENC, flute

SALOMON ROSSI SUITE

(publ. Editions Salabert)

- [5] I. Moderato con moto (:52)
- [6] II. Allegro (:49)
- [7] III. Andante (1:38)
- [8] IV. Allegretto sostenuto (1:10)
- [9] V. Lento (1:38)
- [10] VI. Allegro (1:20)

[11] ORPHEUS AND EURIDICE (21:31)

(publ. Editions Salabert)

YEHUDI MENUHIN AND EDNA MICHELL, violins

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC

LUKAS FOSS, conductor

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