

Works by Joseph Schwantner, Jacob Druckman, Stephen Albert  
New World 80381-2

by Bernard Jacobson

Modern music is not what it was. From the refreshingly relaxed viewpoint of the 1980s, what was once hailed as *avant-garde* now decidedly *derrière*. The traditions of Western music are regaining their status as patrimony, and tonality itself has taken on new life. In Jacob Druckman's words, "This is a very exciting transition moment in music—the looking backward. It is the first sign of release."

Of the three composers recorded here, it is **Jacob Druckman** (born in Philadelphia in 1928) who has changed the most in his approach to composition. After years of involvement with serial techniques, it was in *Windows* (winner of the 1972 Pulitzer Prize for music) that he began to readmit elements of the musical past into his work. Since then, pieces like *Mirage* (1976) and *Aureole* (1979) have played with materials borrowed, respectively, from Debussy and Bernstein. The more distant past, in the shape of the 17th-century Italian composer Pier Francesco Cavalli, has provided a jumping-off point in several other works.

Scored for a fairly large orchestra, including electric piano and electric organ, *Chiaroscuro* was commissioned by Lorin Maazel and the Cleveland Orchestra in honor of the United States Bicentennial, with the help of a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. It received its first performance on April 14, 1977, just four weeks after the score was completed. Here the influence of the Italian past is metaphorical, rather than specifically musical.

The titles of Druckman's works—*Incenters*, *Windows*, *Aureole*, *Prism*—often display an interest in visual or spatial concepts. This time, he set out to give musical expression to the Italian Renaissance sense of *chiaroscuro*—*chiaro* means "clear" or "light," *oscuro*, "obscure" or "dark." The effect is gestural, strongly atmospheric, full of sudden flashes of color and lowering banks of shadow. Putting aside traditional formal patterns, the composer creates a cogent replacement for them through his keen sense of music as an art that subsists in time: the "light" and "dark" elements are placed, now in simultaneous juxtaposition, now in telling isolation, in the shape of individual timbres and sharply differentiated modes of vibration.

*Afertonos of Infinity*, commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra, was completed in November 1978, and premiered by Lukas Foss and the American Composers Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall in New York City on January 29, 1979. In this work, which won **Joseph Schwantner** (born in Chicago in 1943) the 1979 Pulitzer prize for music, the time element takes center stage in a fascinatingly paradoxical way. Indeed, the very title is a paradox, combining as it does the notion of infinity with the notion of "after"-ness. Schwantner has fashioned a piece with passages of suspended animation

alternating with others where the rapid succession of chords or the onslaught of dynamic percussion create a poetic illusion—but only an illusion— of movement.

In such a style, “slow” and “fast” are equally illusory. There is something of the rapt mysticism of Olivier Messiaen in this music, with its tintinnabulating processions flecked with high harmonics, its gnomic outbursts of solemn, statuesque brass, its recurrent “celestial choir” passages sung by the orchestra members, and its telling use of tuned crystal glasses—“You can hear them,” Schwantner observes, “but you can't put your finger on the sound.” The piece takes its shape from a poem, written by the composer himself, a “kind of “creative generator” that provides “a wellspring of extramusical images and ideas to which I would attempt to find appropriate musical analogues.” But instead of the specifically Roman Catholic imagery favored by Messiaen, it is the pantheism of a Whitman or a Coleridge that Schwantner's lines evoke:

Dreams from a dark millenium—  
    empyrean visions, vague myriad tendrils floating  
        on an eternal voyage,  
        journeying primordial pathways  
        through cosmic cauldrons,  
        to afterworlds beyond the edge of  
        forever.  
    celestial voices echo the lost dreams  
    of the children of the universe—  
    the aftertones of infinity.

**Stephen Albert**, born in New York City in 1941, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1985 for his symphony *RiverRun*, completed the previous year. Albert's work sounds more obviously distant from old fashioned serialism than does that of his two colleagues. His brush with serialism was perhaps less intense, and certainly his rejection of it more rapid, than theirs. While he shares their readiness to take inspiration from extramusical sources— several of his works are settings or interpretations of James Joyce—it is his revitalization of thematic melody and traditional rhythmic articulation that makes his music more immediately accessible to a lay listener. But though *Into Eclipse* is classical in its sense of musical time, the direct way it moves from point A to point B should not prevent us from noting the subtleties of Albert's style. His blend of diatonic harmony with expressive chromatic inflections and of irregular rhythms with ostinato figures, striking a nice balance between dynamic and static elements, creates a language of vivid ritual feeling that is especially apt to his subject here.

Based on Seneca's *Oedipus* in an adaptation by the modern English poet Ted Hughes, *Into Eclipse* spans an expressive range, from agitation and horror to the self-blinded king's eventual inward-turned resignation. A song cycle laid out in five movements, it was composed in 1980-81 and also exists in a version for tenor and chamber ensemble. The full orchestral version recorded here was premiered on September 8, 1986 by Gary Lakes with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony; it was revised in January 1989.

—Bernard Jacobson

*Bernard Jacobson, a former music critic for the Chicago Daily News, is program annotator and musicologist for the Philadelphia Orchestra, and author of The Music of Johannes Brahms and Conductors on Conducting.*

**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 of music 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.

**LEONARD SLATKIN** has been music director of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra since 1979. He made his conducting debut with the Youth Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall in 1966, and his European debut in 1974 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Slatkin conducts major orchestras and opera companies throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and has enjoyed a continuing association with orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, and the Minnesota Orchestra. Slatkin has recorded extensively with the Saint Louis Symphony (including two New World discs) and with other orchestras.

**GERARD SCHWARZ** is music director of the Seattle Symphony, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, and the New York Chamber Symphony, and serves as principal conductor of the Waterloo Festival in Stanhope, New Jersey. Schwarz has premiered contemporary works by more than twenty-five composers throughout his career, including David Diamond, Henri Lazarof, and Alan Hovhaness. He began his musical studies with piano lessons, and later studied trumpet with William Vacchiano. Schwarz has recorded for the Delos, Nonesuch, Angel, and New World labels, among others.

**GARY LAKES** has been acclaimed world-wide both as heldentenor and one of the leading interpreters of the great romantic tenor roles. His performances at the Metropolitan Opera include Don José in *Carmen* and Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, an opera he has recorded with James Levine and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. His recording of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, also with James Levine, won the 1988 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. He has appeared as guest soloist with such conductors as Georg Solti, Riccardo Muti, Lorin Maazel, and Daniel Barenboim.

**THE JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA** is comprised of over 100 students from around the world, and performs a full season of orchestra, opera, and dance programs at Juilliard. The orchestra has performed in Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and on tour abroad. Its first tour of the Far East was made in June 1987, where the orchestra performed in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Japan.

## **INTO ECLIPSE**

### **I. Prologue and Riddle Song**

Show us a simple riddle  
Show us lift everything aside

Show us a riddle

What has four legs at dawn  
Two at noon three at dusk

And is weakest when it has most?

“I will find the answer” is that an answer?

Show us a riddle

“I will find the answer” is there an answer?

Show us the answer

## **II. Oedipus I**

And I was happy fleeing from my father  
Fleeing, yes, but unafraid  
Till I stumbled, as God in heaven saw me,  
I stumbled on this kingdom.  
Fear came after me  
It followed me  
The fear, someday, I'd kill him  
I would kill my father.

And worse! That other worse!

What could be worse?

The words stick  
It is not possible.

My father's bedchamber  
My mother's bed  
I would marry my mother

Murder him!

The dog star the lion  
One on top of the other

A double madness

Everyday closer!

I was terrified—I was so terrified  
But the fear came with me  
It followed me  
And it grew till it now surrounds me  
Fear, my shadow  
I stand in it  
Like a blind man in darkness.

Oedipus!  
Get out of this land  
Get away from these cries  
This unending funeral.

Oedipus!  
This air that you've poisoned  
With the curse that you carry.

Oedipus—get away!  
Oedipus—run!  
As you should have done long ago  
The truth is not human  
It has no mercy  
Do not force it  
Away from these cries  
This land of death.

Oedipus! Oedipus!

### **III. A Quiet Fate**

If only our fate was ours to choose  
You would see me on quiet waters  
Whose airs are gentle  
Full sail but a light wind

No more than a breath  
Easy voyage that is best  
No blast no smashed rigging  
No flogging downward into cliffs  
Under surge  
Nothing recovered

No vanishing  
If Fate were ours to choose.

Give me a quiet voyage

Neither under cliffs  
Nor too far out  
On the black water  
Where the depths open  
The middle course is the safe one

The only life  
Easily on  
To a calm end  
Surrounded by gains.

#### **IV. Ghosts**

I see things in darkness moving  
Many pale masks lifted sinking  
I see writhing things  
And they come!

A growing sound a humming  
That seems to silence everything  
Like a vast flock of autumn starlings

A rushing gloomy wind of twitterings  
Beating up at the light  
Swirling back and round and round

They came  
A growing sound

And they come grabbing at the earth  
The tree roots at our clothes

In their pale ghostly voices  
Till at last one of them  
Lays hold of the earth  
And clings there  
His face pressed in the earth  
“I am the man you murdered  
Your father  
I shall break your heart

O men O men drive him away  
O men O men take the earth from him  
His father will take the light!”

#### **V. Oedipus II**

All is well

I like this darkness  
My father has been paid  
What he was owed  
All is well.

I wonder which god I've pleased  
Which of them has brought me peace  
Given me this dark veil for my head  
Pleasant

The light that awful eye  
That never let me rest  
And followed me everywhere  
All is well  
At last you've escaped it  
You killed your father  
It's abandoned you  
It's left you to your new face  
The true face of Oedipus

From Ted Hughes' adaptation of Seneca's Oedipus. Reprinted with permission of Mr. Hughes and by arrangement with G. Schirmer, Inc.

**THE JUILLIARD AMERICAN MUSIC RECORDING INSTITUTE (JAMRI)** was created as an independent entity within The Juilliard School in November 1987. Through a regular release of recordings by The Juilliard Orchestra and its conductors, it promotes the distribution and preservation of twentieth-century concert music by American composers. The JAMRI program thus seeks to build a recorded archive of distinguished American orchestral music. Projects are selected by an artistic committee of prominent musicians and are overseen by Juilliard's President, Joseph W. Polisi, and the school's dean, Bruce MacCombie. JAMRI's first joint project with New World Records was completed in 1988 and features Aaron Copland's *Connotations*, William Schuman's *In Praise of Shahn*, and Roger Sessions's suite from *The Black Maskers* (80368-2).

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#### **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Jacob Druckman

Davis, Peter G. Review of Horizons '84 in *New York*, June 25, 1984, p. 60.

Wierzbicki, James. Liner notes, *Aureole*, New World 80318-2

Joseph Schwantner

Ramey, Phillip. Liner Notes, *Magobunda*, Nonesuch 79072.

Stephen Albert

Dreier, Ruth. "Musician of the Month: Stephen Albert." *Musical America*, September 1985.

Humphrey, Mary Lou. Essay in G. Schirmer, Inc. brochure on Stephen Albert.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Jacob Druckman

*Dark Upon the Harp.* Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; New York Brass Quintet. CRI SD-167.

*Aureole.* St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin conducting. New World 80318-2

*Incenters.* Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, Arthur Weisberg conducting. Nonesuch H-71221.

*Other Voices.* American Brass Quintet. New World 80377-2.

*Prism.* New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting. New World 80335-2.

*Windows.* Orchestra of the Twentieth Century, Arthur Wiesberg conducting. CRI S-457.

Joseph Schwantner

*Consortium I; Consortium IV.* Boston Musica Viva, Richard Pittman conducting. Delos DCD-1011.

*Consortium VIII: Sparrows.* Lucy Shelton, soprano (on *Sparrows*); Twentieth Century Consort, Christopher Kendall conducting. Smithsonian Collection N-022.

*Diaphonia intervallum.* Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, Arthur Weisberg conducting. Nonesuch H-71221.

*Magabunda.* Lucy Shelton, soprano; St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Nonesuch 79072.

*Wild Angels of the Open Hills.* Jubal Trio. CRI SD 497.

*Wind, Willow, Whisper. . .* Da Capo Chamber Players, CRI SD 441.

Jacob Druckman

*Flower of the Mountain.* Lucy Shelton, soprano; New York Chamber Symphony of the 92nd Street Y, Gerard Schwarz conducting. Nonesuch H-79153-2.

*Into Eclipse* (chamber ensemble version). David Gordon, tenor; Twentieth Century Consort, Christopher Kendall conducting. Nonesuch H-79153-2.

*RiverRun.* National Symphony, Mstislav Rostropovich conducting. Delos DCD-1016.

*To Wake the Dead.* Lucy Shelton, soprano; Twentieth Century Consort, Christopher Kendall conducting. Smithsonian Collection N-027. Delos DCD-1016.

Producers: Elizabeth Ostrow (*Chiaroscuro*, *Aftertones of Infinity*); Judith Sherman (*Into Eclipse*).

Engineers: John Newton, Henk Kooistra

*Chiaroscuro* recorded November 18, 1988; *Aftertones of Infinity* recorded February 13, 1989, both at the Juilliard Theater, New York. *Into Eclipse* recorded April 13, 1989, at the Manhattan Center, New York.

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Leonard Slatkin appears courtesy of RCA Victor Red Seal, a division of BMG Classics.

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THE JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA

1. **Jacob Druckman:** *Chiaroscuro* (15:03)

(publ. Boosey and Hawkes, Inc. )

Lukas Foss, conductor

2. **Joseph Schwantner:** *Aftertones of Infinity* (14:45)

(publ. C. F. Peters Corp. )

Leonard Slatkin, conductor

**Stephen Albert:** *Into Eclipse* (30:01)

(publ. G. Schirmer, Inc. )

3. I. Prologue and Riddle Song (6:42)

4. II. Oedipus I (3:21)

5. III. A Quiet Fate (7:14)

6. IV. Ghosts (4:56)

7. V. Oedipus II (7:19)

Gary Lakes, tenor; Gerard Schwarz, conductor

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