

**BERNARD RANDS**  
**Le Tambourin, Suites 1 and 2**  
**Ceremonial 3**  
**Canti Dell'Eclisse**

**New World Records 80392**

**THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA**  
**RICCARDO MUTI**  
**GERARD SCHWARZ**  
**THOMAS PAUL, bass**

"My main motive in writing music," Bernard Rands (born in 1934 in Sheffield, England) once observed at a post-concert Philadelphia Orchestra Composer Encounter, "is to put myself in touch with areas of myself that I might not otherwise discover, and to offer audiences a similar experience."

There was a time when the penchant for human contact and cordiality of expression was not what came first to mind on encountering a Rands piece. Works like his *Actions for Six* and the two-piano *Expressions IV* spoke a relatively dry and austere language. But that was back in the Sixties, when Western music was still largely in thrall to stylistic preconceptions emphasizing intellectual control rather than emotion, when "beauty" was seen by many in the profession as an inadmissible, if not a dirty, word. The potential for a broader expressive range was always present in his work, for even in his serialist days, Rands was inclined toward the lyrical and vocal dodecaphony of his Italian teacher Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975) rather than to the histrionics of the Second Viennese School.

As a composition student in the mid-1950s, Rands developed a powerful Italian interest under the influence of his teacher at the University of Wales, Reginald Smith Brindle, himself a devotee of the Dallapiccola brand of Italian serialism that had shaped the lyricism of many of his teacher's works: from the grandly tragic opera *Il Prigioniero* to such exquisitely delicate song cycles as the *3 Poemi* based on texts by Joyce, Michelangelo, and Machado. After earning his Master of Music degree at Bangor in 1958, Rands went to Italy. He studied not only with Dallapiccola but also with Luciano Berio and Roman Vlad, and on visits to Darmstadt in the early 1960s he attended composition classes given by Bruno Maderna and by Pierre Boulez. A Harkness International Fellowship awarded in 1966 brought Rands to the United States to spend a year each at Princeton and the University of Illinois. After a period back in England, teaching at York and at Oxford, he returned to the States in 1975 and became a U.S. citizen seven years later.

Rands has taught at the California Institute for the Arts, the University of California at San Diego, Boston University, and the Juilliard School of Music in New York City. In 1988, under the auspices of the Orchestra Residency Program of Meet the Composer, he became The Philadelphia Orchestra's Composer in Residence, and in 1989 he was appointed Walter Bigelow Rosen Professor of Composition at Harvard. He has been the recipient of many major commissions and of awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, BMI, the Fromm, Guggenheim, and Koussevitzky Foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1984 Rands won the Pulitzer Prize in Music with his tenor-and-orchestra song cycle *Canti del Sole* (part of the series of vocal works that *Canti dell'Eclisse* brings to completion), and in 1986 the two suites from *Le Tambourin*, recorded here, shared first prize in the Friedheim Awards at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

*Le Tambourin* is an unfinished opera about the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh. Its subtitle is "Vincent," which is the way the artist habitually signed his work.

When Riccardo Muti and The Philadelphia Orchestra gave their first performance of the *Tambourin* suites on November 2, 1989, the composer supplied the following notes:

Completed in October 1984, each of the two suites, which may be performed separately, consists of three short movements, scored for large orchestra. The musical character of each of the individual movements was prompted by specific visual characteristics found in certain paintings and drawings by Van Gogh. Musical depiction of the paintings' subject matter was not a concern or a consideration. Rather the relationship is confined to technique in matters of harmony and dissonance, of color and light, energy and intensity of brush stroke, shape, clarity, and focus of image, and their overall formal structural deployment. Nevertheless, Van Gogh painted and drew with such fervor and passion that often the technical aspects of his work are simultaneous translations of his own inner turmoil, anxiety, rage, joy, love, and depression.

Listeners can determine to what extent a musical "transcription" of the art works carries corresponding emotive qualities:

1. *The Beach at Scheveningen*

There are two paintings of this beach--one in stormy and one in calm weather. Both use "out-of-focus," "impressionist" techniques, avoiding sharp line contrast. There are subtle transformational relationships between foreground (beach), middle ground (sea), and background (sky).

2. *Sorrow*

When Van Gogh made the drawing of Sien, he did so with two other sheets of paper below the top one, thus tracing two exact imprints of his drawing. The imprints were then worked upon, retaining an identical body outline, but in each case he made a slightly more elaborate version than the original--first adding more shading and definition of muscle and body line, and then in the third version surrounding the woman with plants and foliage.

3. *Au Tambourin*

*Le Tambourin* was a cafe/tavern/cabaret on the Boulevard Clichy, much frequented by artist and writers. Kept by Agostina Segatori (who is painted in the picture), it was a disreputable place that Gauguin called a "cut-throats' den." The painting is unusually concerned with geometric shapes--the round tables and stools, the squares and rectangles of the paintings on the cafe walls--with isolated splashes of color focusing attention.

4. *The Night Cafe*

There are two paintings of cafes at night: one an outdoor scene with light flooding from the windows, illuminating the sidewalks, chairs, and table against a starlit night sky; the other (*The All-Night Cafe*) is a desolate interior scene depicted in the most extreme color contrasts; "blood red and dark yellow with a green billiard table in the middle; there are four citron-yellow lamps with a glow of orange and green. Everywhere there is a clash...."

5. *Dance at Aries*

A complex of figures dancing, painted in somber colors with the jet-black hair and hats of the women giving a macabre quality to the social scene.

## 6. *The Church at Auvers*

Painted in bold, simple lines allied to an electric quality of color--a cobalt-blue sky and acid-green grass. A fragment of a hymn was found in the prayer book that Van Gogh used during his ministry in the Borinage (a Belgian coal-mining area where he worked as a Calvinist missionary in his twenties). That fragment helped to generate much of the musical material of the two suites.

Suite No. 1 was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation and dedicated to the late Paul Fromm. Suite No. 2 was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation and is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. The world premiere of the suites was given by the San Diego Symphony on December 14, 15, and 16, 1984, conducted by the composer.

\* \* \*

No music could do justice to Vincent van Gogh while evading the harsher side of his life. What is impressive about Rands' achievement here is the way he has penetrated beyond the violence apparent in Van Gogh's art to evoke the more mysterious "inner turmoil" referred to in the composer's note.

Mystery is indeed the most pervasive characteristic of these suites: in keeping with Rands' disclaimer of any attempt at "musical depiction of the paintings' subject matter," *Le Tambourin* focuses itself on Van Gogh's inward concerns, thus reflecting the kind of broad philosophical sympathy of Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* rather than the pictorial approach of a piece like Gunther Schuller's *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee*.

It is noticeable that the carefully selective instrumentation itself reinforces an inwardness of atmosphere. There is no trace of the sensational effects that Van Gogh's vibrant palette might have drawn from a more superficial musical mind. The prevailing tone-colors are dark and warm, though liberally flecked with brilliance. Rands says he is only now developing a taste for the incisive tone of the double-reed instruments, and he speaks of his "lifelong affection for the softer sounds of flutes and clarinets," which he regards as "a mellowing influence." Notice that there are only two oboes (and an English horn) and two bassoons (and a contrabassoon) in this score, in contrast with four flutes and four clarinets of various sizes; and although the third and fourth flutes double on piccolos, they do so only for a few measures, at the end of the *Dance at Arles*.

Commissioned by Meet the Composer and The Philadelphia Orchestra as part of the former organization's Orchestra Residencies Program, *Canti dell'Eclisse (Songs of the Eclipse)* was given its premiere by the Orchestra with bass soloist Thomas Paul and Conductor Gerard Schwarz on January 28, 1993, at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. The last in a sequence of three cycles for solo voice and orchestra, *Songs of the Eclipse* follows *Canti Lunatici (Songs of the Moon)* for soprano, completed in 1981, and *Canti del Sole (Songs of the Sun)* for tenor, which dates from 1983. All three also exist in versions for small ensemble.

As in the two previous cycles, Rands has taken his words here from a wide range of poetry sources, with texts in English, French, Spanish, German, and a variety of stages in the development of the Italian language; two of the English texts, moreover, are translations from Greek and Arabic. One twentieth-century Italian text--a striking three-line lyric by Salvatore Quasimodo, concluding with the words "and suddenly it's evening"--is used in all three of the cycles; logically and appropriately it begins the moon cycle, ends the sun cycle, and appears midway through the eclipse cycle.

The multilingual song cycle, incidentally, seems increasingly characteristic of the musical method of our time. Like Hans Werner Henze in his *Voices*, Rands clearly feels that the entire international poetic past and present constitute a valid source of inspiration -- just as, for the composers of this electronic age, all the musics of the past form a legitimate creative heritage alongside the exemplars of their own time.

Rands himself has offered this comment on the three cycles of *Canti* (ending with a word that often comes to mind when one is thinking about his music):

"The human voice, possibly the most subtle, complex, flexible and persuasive carrier of musical ideas and meanings, has always been an inspiration for, and influence upon, my entire musical thinking. In the *Canti trilogy*, literary texts (poetic virtuosity) interact with vocal and instrumental capacities (musical virtuosity) to create not a setting of words to music, but a labyrinth of relationships and connections--sometimes simple and clear, sometimes complex and mysterious."

*Canti dell'Eclisse* carries the following dedication:

To the memory of my father:  
"His death eclipsed the gayety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."  
Dr. Samuel Johnson  
(from *The Life of Edmund Smith*)

The music explores a broad gamut of textures and timbres, the vocal part itself sometimes diverging from traditional song into a rhythmically notated pattern of speech. In the Dickinson setting, this resource is combined with an idiosyncratic alternation of meters to evoke with wonderful precision the notion that "Jehovah's Watch--is wrong."

Even aside from such oddness, the rhythmic language of the work as a whole is characteristic of Rands in the way the metrical patterns constantly shift, both between measures and with smaller rhythmic units, creating a mercurial interplay that vividly reflects the frequent teasing ambiguity of topic and verbal text. And for the listener interested in seeking out links between one Rands work and another, perhaps the most striking example here is the spectrally undulating two-harp accompaniment that runs throughout the setting of Octavio Paz's *Entre ser y no ser*: marked *desolato*, and yet again built on irregularly alternating rhythmic units (different combinations of three and two within an overall 7/8 measure), it picks up where the equally macabre--Rands' own word--genre picture of the *Dance at Arles* in the second *Tambourin* suite left off.

The first work Rands wrote expressly for The Philadelphia Orchestra in his capacity as its composer in residence was *Ceremonial 3*, commissioned by Carnegie Hall in honor of its centennial, and given its premiere there under Riccardo Muti's baton on March 18, 1991. In conversation with the writer of these notes, Rands offered the following comments on the third in his series of orchestral *Ceremonials*:

"The piece aims to show the virtuosity of The Philadelphia Orchestra both individually and collectively, blending the sound in ways that cover the spectrum from conventional to unconventional groupings. This is a form of virtuosity that I'm very much interested in. It's orchestras within orchestras--not necessarily spacing them, reseating or regrouping them (although I think that does have an enormous potential if its intelligently handled), but rather,

thinking of the tracking of the sound through an orchestral layout in a different way from the nineteenth-century progression of a musical idea.

In formal terms, the piece is based on two sets of materials. There's the melodic line heard at the start on the bass clarinet; this element begins by dominating alternate sections. The even-numbered sections are built, by contrast, on a chordal succession. What happens is that these two elements begin to interact with each other. The succession, and the characteristics of the chords infiltrate the melodic line. This process gathers momentum and reaches a crossover point, where the two elements are almost identical. Then, when the melody emerges again in the last third of the piece, it has become very different harmonically."

Saluting the Carnegie Hall centenary posed special and interesting problems for Rands, who observed in 1990 before starting work on *Ceremonial 3*:

"I would like it to be a work that has a reverence for all the music that's ever been played at Carnegie Hall, from orchestral music to Judy Garland to the jazz groups, the great jazz players who have played there. In fact, at one point I did entertain the notion of asking for a list of all the premieres of works that have been done there, and somehow extracting from them some essential quality that might be woven into the fabric of the *Ceremonial*. I've decided not to do that, because there are lots of problems involved with it. But I think that's in my music anyway, because I relate very much to the music of the past."

More spontaneously and openly indeed than many of his contemporaries, Rands acknowledges the work of past composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Berg, Stravinsky, and Bartok as his indispensable meat and drink. Maybe it is to this acknowledgement and the security that goes with it that his own music, not really paradoxically, owes some of its unmistakable originality and sense of identity. But for the real reason, we must probably go back to that ultimate ground of humanness, of self, of communication which, as with any true creative artist unites Rands the man and Rands the musician.

—Bernard Jacobson

Bernard Jacobson is artistic director of the Residentie Orkest (*Hague Philharmonic*).

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*Canti del Sole; Canti Lunatici; Obbligato*. Carol Plantamura, soprano; Paul Sperry, tenor; Sonor, Bernard Rands, conductor. CRI CD 591.

"...in the receding mist..." Boston Musica Viva. Neuma 450-79.

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**The Philadelphia Orchestra**, founded in 1900, has had a long tradition of distinguished conductors and a close affinity to contemporary music. Under Leopold Stokowski, whose tenure lasted from 1912 to 1936, the orchestra presented premieres of major works by Mahler, Stravinsky, Strauss, Berg, and Shostakovich. It was the first orchestra to make electrical recordings (in 1925), the first to perform its own commercially sponsored radio broadcast over NBC (in 1929), and the first to perform a feature film soundtrack (for Paramount's The Big Broadcast of 1937). The Philadelphia Orchestra made media history when they participated in the pioneering Walt Disney cartoon feature Fantasia in 1939, for which they provided the soundtrack. Eugene Ormandy, the orchestra's music director from 1936 to 1980, continued the tradition of promoting new music by offering premieres of works by Barber, Bartok, Persichetti, and Webern. The orchestra, under Riccardo Muti, instituted a composer-in-residence program in the 1980s, and in 1989 Bernard Rands filled that post. In 1983 Wolfgang Sawallisch became the orchestra's sixth music director.

**Riccardo Muti**, born in Naples in 1941, served as The Philadelphia Orchestra's music director from 1980 through 1992. He held the same post at the Maggio Musicale in Florence from 1969 to 1982, and he led London's Philharmonia Orchestra from 1973 to 1982. He has been Music Director of Milan's La Scala since 1986. An enthusiastic supporter of contemporary music, Muti has commissioned works by a wide range of composers, including Luciano Berio, William Bolcom, Mario Davidovsky, Leon Kirchner, Shulamit Ran, Christopher Rouse, Steve Stucky, and Richard Wernick. Maestro Muti is now the Laureate Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Gerard Schwarz** marked his tenth year as Music Director of the Seattle Symphony and his sixteenth season in the same position with the New York Chamber Symphony in 1992/1993. His extensive recording projects with both orchestras, include both new and standard repertory. In the past three years, Maestro Schwarz's recordings have received nominations for nine Grammys and such other awards as *Stereo Review's* "Best Classical Album of 1989." Maestro Schwarz spends summers with Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, where he has been Music Advisor and then Music Director since 1982.

**Thomas Paul**, bass, has sung roles in opera and oratorio with the San Francisco Opera, the Greater Miami Opera, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony, and the Toronto Symphony among others. He participated in the 50th anniversary celebrations of Tanglewood, singing with the Boston Symphony. Born in Chicago, Mr. Paul has recorded for Columbia, Deutsche Grammophon, Marlboro Recording Society, Nonesuch, RCA Victor, Vox and CRI. In 1993 he was artist-in-residence at the Eastman School of Music.

**The Meet The Composer Orchestra Residency Program**, created by John Duffy, Director and President of Meet The Composer, was initiated in 1982 to foster the creation and performance of orchestral music by American composers. Through the program, composers are placed in residence with major symphony orchestras nationwide.

Resident composers write a major work to be premiered and recorded by the host orchestra, organize concerts of new music, review scores, and work with the music director in the programming of contemporary music.

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Bernard Rands  
The Philadelphia Orchestra  
Riccardo Muti, conductor  
Gerard Schwarz, conductor  
Thomas Paul, bass

1-6 - Le Tambourin, Suites 1 & 2 (26:00)

7 - Canti Dell'Eclisse (30:22)

8 - Ceremonial 3 (13:18)

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