

**The Flight Into Egypt
and other works by
JOHN HARBISON**

New World Records 80395

**LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
ANDRE PREVIN, Conductor**

**CANTATA SINGERS AND ENSEMBLE
DAVID HOOSE, Conductor**

**LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC NEW MUSIC GROUP
JANICE FELTY, Mezzo-soprano
ROBERTA ANDERSON, Soprano
SANFORD SYLVAN, Baritone**

A few years ago a German presenter asked me for my "artistic Credo," which seemed a characteristically European request, but in the spirit of international cooperation I furnished the following: "to make each piece different from the others, to find clear, fresh large designs, to reinvent traditions." Grand and general though it is, the statement seems a good place to begin describing the music on this record.

At the beginning of *The Flight Into Egypt* is an oboe melody, long and florid, even rather exotic and forlorn, which is imitated by the other reed players. Many points of imitation based on this music follow, moving steadily closer together until the Old Testament lament "In Rama." Thereafter the fugal imitations spread gradually apart again, as the dramatic narrative reaches a certain resolution. Subtitled a 'sacred ricecar' (ricecar meaning something in the texture to be searched out), the piece constantly hides and reveals its loyalty to the first elaborate oboe melody that guides the whole journey.

A different large-scale idea is present in *The Natural World*, an inward, pastoral piece, which begins with a bony counterpoint (like late winter before things begin to leaf out) and very gradually fills out in texture. The final image of the spray of milkweed pods send breath and blood to the last remaining pockets of yet unvisited musical space.

The Concerto for Double Brass Choir and Orchestra, public, blunt, and ceremonial, is based on an entirely different set of premises. It defines itself by the elemental simplicity of its material. The first of the three Inventions grows from a motive, the downward fourth G-D. The two brass choirs cannot agree on the location of this motive (Choir II prefers it a half-tone lower) and this conflict determines the destiny of the movement, fatalistic and unresolved. The second Invention centers on a chord C-E-flat-A, which is the still center around which lyrical solos glide. Eventually the chord moves, leading to the polychoral climax of the entire piece. In the third movement an ancient cadence pattern (upper line tracing G-F-sharp-E-G) is sent back and forth between the choirs, the result resembling a cross between the Venetian sonority explorations of Gabrieli and the modern jazz "cutting session," in which two competitors try to outdo each other.

Sketches for all the pieces preceded their commissions, but the institutions and friends involved in their conception have defined my musical life over many years. The *Flight* began in a conversation with colleagues about Christmas texts. We talked about the counseling experience during Christmas season at Emmanuel Church, Boston, where we were all involved as musicians—a time when need, isolation, and anxiety increase. We agreed that the darker side of Christmas needs representation, especially now, as the distance widens between the privileged and the less fortunate. The piece, which won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1987, became the first in the Cantata Singers' distinguished series of commissions, and they entered completely into its spirit.

The Natural World began as a return letter to the Wisconsin setting where I do most of my composing. Beginning in 1984, one song was composed each summer. It was commissioned for the players with whom I worked most closely during those years, the members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group.

The Concerto for Double Brass Choir was composed to celebrate the brass section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, whose playing I admired greatly during my residency there. They are worthy successors of the first Italian brass ensembles (of the seventeenth century), whose sounds I imagined as I walked in Genoa, where the piece was written.

These pieces were composed over a five-year span, and share a commitment to spontaneity, naturalness, and memorability. Their surfaces may be more transparent than their substance. Their apparent simplicity is an invitation to wade in, but the hope is that some will also feel an undertow.
—John Harbison

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Mirabai Songs*. Dawn Upshaw, soprano; Orchestra of St. Luke's, David Zinman conducting. Nonesuch 79187.
- Mirabai Songs*. Janice Felty, mezzo-soprano; Collage; John Harbison conducting. *Variations*. Rose Mary Harbison, violin; David Satz, clarinet; Ursula Oppens, piano. Northeastern NR230.
- Symphony No. 1. Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa conducting. New World 80331.
- Ulysses' Bow*. Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Andre Previn conducting. *Samuel Chapter*. Susan Larson, soprano; Collage, John Harbison conducting. Nonesuch 79129.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Harbison, John. "Six Tanglewood Talks." *Perspectives of New Music*, Spring/Summer 1985, Fall/Winter 1985.
- . "Facing Rock Reality." *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. V, 1990.
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- Simeone, Lisa. "Music is like love and sex." Interview with John Harbison. *Cadenza*, December 1988.
- Swift, Richard. "John Harbison." *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, eds. New York and London: Macmillan, 1986.

The Flight Into Egypt

(Matthew 2:13-23, King James Version)

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in the city of Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

The Natural World

Where We Must Look for Help

(Robert Bly)

The dove returns; it found no resting place;
It was in flight all night above the shaken seas;
Beneath ark eaves
The dove shall magnify the tiger's bed;
Give the dove peace.
The split-tail swallows leave the sill at dawn;
At dark, blue swallows shall return.
On the third day the crow shall fly;
The crow, the crow, the spider-colored crow,
The crow shall find new mud to walk upon.

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On the Road Home

(Wallace Stevens)

It was when I said,
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter.
The fox ran out of his hole.

You....You said,
"There are many truths,
But they are not parts of a truth."
Then the tree, at night, began to change,
Smoking through green and smoking blue.
We were two figures in a wood.
We said we stood alone.
It was when I said,
"Words are not forms of a single word.
In the sum of the parts, there are only the parts.
The world must be measured by eye."
It was when you said,
"The idols have seen lots of poverty,
Snakes and gold and lice,
But not the truth;"
It was at that time, that the silence was largest,
And longest, the night was roundest.
The fragrance of the autumn warmest,
Closest, and strongest.

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Milkweek

(James Wright)
While I stood here, in the open, lost in myself,
I must have looked a long time
Down the corn rows, beyond grass,
The small house,
White walls, animals lumbering toward the barn.
I look down now. It is all changed.
Whatever it was I lost, whatever I wept for
Was a wild, gentle thing, the small dark eyes
Loving me in secret.
It is here. At a touch of my hand,
The air fills with delicate creatures
From the other world.

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The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1919 by William Andrews Clark, Jr., has included among its directors Artur Rodzinski, Otto Klemperer, Zubin Mehta, Carlo Maria Giulini, and Andre Previn. The orchestra has toured extensively in the United States, Europe, and the Orient. The

Los Angeles Philharmonic can also be heard on New World 80228, *Works of John Alden Carpenter, Henry F. Gilbert, Adolph Weiss, and John Powell*, and New World 80373, *Works of Harold Shapero*.

Andre Previn was music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from October 1985 through April 1989. He has also served as music director of the Houston, London, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. Previn studied composition with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and conducting with Pierre Monteux. He began his career in Hollywood's film studios as conductor, arranger, and composer, and won four Academy Awards for his outstanding achievements in film. Previn's chamber, vocal, and orchestral compositions have been performed in the United States and abroad by Vladimir Ashkenazy and Dame Janet Baker, among others.

The Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group was formed in 1981, an outgrowth of the Orchestra's ongoing commitment to contemporary music. Since its inception, the ensemble has presented its own very successful series of concerts each season, which have included numerous local, United States, and world premieres. The ensemble has been under the artistic direction of three distinguished composers--William Kraft, John Harbison, and, currently, Steven Stucky--all of whom have served in the capacity of Los Angeles Philharmonic composer-in-residence.

Janice Felty appears as Dorabella in Peter Sellars's production of *Così fan tutte*, which will be televised on *Great Performances* in the 1990-1991 season and released on laserdisc. She has sung with the opera companies of San Francisco, Santa Fe, and Washington, D.C., and with the National Symphony and Handel and Haydn Society. Felty has recorded John Harbison's *Mirabai Songs*, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Passages*, and Tod Machover's *Valis*. Future plans include John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the opera companies of Brussels, Lyons, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

The Cantata Singers and Ensemble was founded in 1964 to prepare and present what was then a long-neglected repertoire--the cantatas of J.S. Bach. Since that time, the group has expanded its repertoire to include works from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, presented in a subscription series in Boston. The organization is dedicated to adventurous programming, including the commissioning of new works. The group has recorded motets of Heinrich Schutz and cantatas of J.S. Bach, as well as works by American composers Irving Fine, Seymour Shifrin, and John Harbison, who is also a former music director.

David Hoose, music director of the Cantata Singers and Ensemble, is also chairman of the conducting department at Boston University, where he is music director of the Boston University Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra Chamber Players, the KBS Symphony Orchestra (Korea), the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra Regionale Toscana. Hoose, highly respected for his performances of twentieth-century music, received the Dmitri Mitropoulos Award in Conducting. As a horn player, he was a founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning Emmanuel Wind Quintet.

An active performer in the Boston area, soprano **Roberta Anderson** specializes in early music and oratorio. For many years she performed, recorded, and toured extensively with the Boston Camerata. Ms. Anderson has appeared as soloist with Ensemble Abendmusik, Banchetto Musicale, Emmanuel Music, the Master Singers, the Spectrum Singers, and Friends of Dr. Burney, among others. In addition, she has performed at the Boston Early Music Festival, with the Handel and Haydn Society, and with the Monnaie Dance Group/Mark Morris in Brussels.

Sanford Sylvan's vocal gifts have gained him distinction in a wide range of repertoire. He has participated in many world and U.S. premieres, including John Adams's *Nixon in China* and *The Wound-Dresser*, which Adams wrote for him. He has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the Boston Symphony. In the productions of Peter Sellars and Craig Smith, Mr. Sylvan has portrayed Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, and Jimmy in Weill's *Little Mabagonny*. He has also performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra Chamber Players and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. A gifted recitalist, Mr. Sylvan tours the U.S. with pianist David Breitman.

John Harbison (b. 1938)

1- *The Flight Into Egypt* (12:32)

The Cantata Singers and Ensemble

Roberta Anderson, soprano

Sanford Sylvan, baritone

David Hoose, conductor

The Natural World (14:40)

2- Prelude (3:26)

3- Where We Must Look for Help (2:49)

4- On the Road Home (4:05)

5- Milkweed (3:59)

The Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group

Rachel Rudich, flute*; David Howard, clarinet; Elizabeth Baker, violin; Barry Gold, cello; Bryan Pezzone, piano*

Janice Felty, mezzo-soprano

John Harbison, conductor

(*guest artists)

Concerto for Double Brass Choir and Orchestra (20:01)

6- I. Invention on a Motif: Tempo giusto (6:39)

7- II. Invention on a Chord: Cantabile (8:43)

8- III. Invention on a Cadence: Molto allegro (4:23)

The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

Brass Choir I: Thomas Stevens, Rob Roy McGregor, trumpets; Jerry Folsom, Carol Drake, horns; Ralph Sauer, trombone; Jeffrey Reynolds, bass trombone

Brass Choir II. Donald Green, Boyde Hood, trumpets; William Lane, Robert Watt, horns; Byron Peebles, trombone; Norman Pearson, tuba

Andre Previn, conductor

The Flight Into Egypt recorded May 31, 1990, at Methuen Memorial Music Hall, Methuen, Massachusetts.

Producer: Elizabeth Ostrow

Engineers: John Newton, Henk Kooistsra

Editing: Brad Michel

The Natural World recorded November 14, 1989, at Little Bridges Auditorium, Claremont College, California.

Producer and engineer: Joseph Magee

Recording engineer: Fred Vogler

Editing: Joseph Magee

Concerto for Double Brass Choir and Orchestra recorded May 1, 1990 at Royce Hall, UCLA, California.

Producer: Robert Woods

Engineers: Jack Renner, Joseph Magee, Fred Vogler

Editing: Joseph Magee, Dave Collins

All works published by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Cover photograph: David Michael Kennedy

Cover design: Bob Defrin

This recording was made possible with grants from Francis Goelet; and from the Dean's Office of the M.I.T. School of Humanities and Social Sciences (The Natural World); The National Endowment for the Arts (The Flight Into Egypt); and the Meet the Composer Orchestra Residencies Program (Double Brass Concerto), which is funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Hewlett Foundation, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Eleanor Naylor Dana Charitable Trust, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

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The Flight Into Egypt was commissioned by the Cantata Singers and Ensemble, with assistance from the Alfred Nash Patterson Foundation. The Natural World was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The Concerto for Double Brass Choir and Orchestra was jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Meet the Composer Orchestra Residencies Program.

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