

## FLUTES

New World Records 80403

Works by ROBERT BEASER  
PAUL SCHOENFIELD  
JOSEPH SCHWANTNER

In 1986, three composers and three flutists met in a novel commissioning project supported by a National Endowment Consortium Commissioning Grant. Flutists Ransom Wilson, Carol Wincenc, and Paula Robison, each a longtime supporter and performer of new music, asked Joseph Schwantner, Paul Schoenfield, and Robert Beaser to write new works for flute and orchestra. On this recording, each solo artist presents the orchestral work composed for him or her, as well as a flute and piano "encore" by the same composer.

When *Afertonos of Infinity*, Joseph Schwantner's first professional composition for symphony orchestra, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1979, a world of new commissions opened up to him. Born in Chicago in 1943 and trained there at the American Conservatory and Northwestern University, Schwantner had been on the faculty of the Eastman School of Music since 1970. He then was composer-in-residence with the Saint Louis Symphony from 1982 to 1985. According to Schwantner, his piece *A Play of Shadows* represents "an attempt to mirror [Ransom Wilson's] dramatic and compelling musical personality."

Schwantner's evocative titles--*Music of Amber*, *Distant Runes* and *Incantations*, and *A Sudden Rainbow* are some of his other instrumental works -indicate a creative approach grounded in poetic imagery. "Sanctuary.../ deep forests,/a play of shadows..." is the haiku-like beginning of a brief epigraph the composer wrote in the score of *A Play of Shadows*, and the music's blend of repose and airy brilliance capture this image in sound.

The bold eight-note gesture with which the work begins, echoed by the solo flute after a long pause, generates much of what follows, and returns later to mark important points in the piece's structure. The central role of percussion -twenty-six instruments and three players--in the work's sound palette is also established in these opening bars. Variation technique, more than symphonic development, underlies what follows: a series of contrasting episodes using material introduced by the flute and taken up by the orchestra, presenting recognizable themes in moods that are by turns fiery, lyrical, dance-like, or hypnotic. Schwantner also demands virtuoso playing from the orchestra, calling often for brilliant, rapid playing, sometimes in unison with the soloist. The musical imagery of the coda is especially striking: Following a reprise of the opening measures, flute, percussion, harp, and piano weave a Debussyan texture that suggests timelessness, perhaps that of a Balinese temple, or of a rain forest touched with water drops and birdsong.

*Black Anemones* was composed in 1980 as one of the *Two Poems of Agueda Pizarro* for soprano and piano, later incorporated (with two additional songs) into the orchestral song cycle *Magabunda* (1983). Ms. Pizarro's poetry, which compounds vivid nature imagery with Latin American surrealism, has evoked music from Schwantner that ranges from the nightmarish to the tenderly lyrical. *Black Anemones* represents the latter, in a tonal setting rich in Bernsteinian chords of the ninth. On this recording, flute and piano perform the original voice and piano setting.

The recent revival of klezmer music, the festive popular idiom that came to full flower in eastern European Jewish communities during the nineteenth century, has revealed its profound influence on the styles of Gershwin, Weill, and other twentieth-century composers. Paul Schoenfield has mined this musical vein for years, both as composer and entertainer. Born in Detroit in 1947, he holds degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Arizona. He has lived on a kibbutz in Israel and was for many years a freelance composer-pianist in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Schoenfield says there are three rondos ("if you count the strophic song at the end as a rondo") in *Klezmer Rondos*, the flute and orchestra work commissioned by Carol Wincenc under the Consortium Commissioning Grant. The vivid, hard-edged sound of klezmer's cackling clarinet, wailing saxophone, biting percussion, and oom-pah bass mingles in this work with mistier evocations of life in the shtetl. Separating the first two rondos is a doina, the wailing lament over a tremolando accompaniment that Bartok found in his folk music research, ranging from North Africa to the Arabian peninsula, and which he composed an example of in his own Fourth String Quartet. The closing song, a setting of a turn-of-the-century Yiddish poem, tells with gentle irony of Mirele, a girl so beautiful she can reject all suitors; when she is old, the song says, she'll be sorry she didn't accept one.

*Ufaratsta* and *Achat Sha'alti* are selected and arranged from the composer's *Six Improvisations on Hasidic Melodies* for piano, which are derived in turn from music Schoenfield improvised at Hasidic gatherings in the mid-1980s. The texts of the original songs come from the Bible. The present flute and piano arrangement stays close to the piano original, with some elaboration of the counterpoint in the second piece. The melancholy *Achat Sha'alti* (*One Thing I Ask*, Psalms 27:4) unfolds over a persistent left-hand accompaniment figure that spans a ninth. *Ufaratsta* (*And You Shall Spread Forth*, Genesis 28:14) is a vivacious dance, full of droll syncopations, changes of meter, and rubato.

Robert Beaser was born in Boston in 1954. Shortly after graduating from Yale University in 1976, he became the youngest American ever to win the Prix de Rome. After studying in that city with Goffredo Petrassi, he became co-music director and conductor of Musical Elements, a new-music ensemble based in New York City. In 1988, he took a post as composer-in-residence with the American Composers Orchestra. His *Mountain Songs* was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1986 as "Best New Classical Composition." Other Beaser works that attracted wide attention during the 1980s include *The Seven Deadly Sins* for baritone and orchestra, and the Piano Concerto. The Chicago Symphony introduced his Double Chorus in January 1991.

When the NEA commissioning consortium turned to him in 1986 for a new work for flute and orchestra, Beaser was already working on several pieces that explored the timbres of bells, particularly *Landscape with Bells* for piano; he conceived the requested flute concerto as a one-movement work linking the flute's fantastic and lyrical character to the metallic sounds he had been working with.

*Song of the Bells* is in the shape of an asymmetrical arch, beginning in a haze of disorganized percussion sounds, slowly gathering speed, and eventually reaching a peak of motoric energy and brilliance (the tempo marking in the score is *Avanti!*), then quickly dying away to a nearly inaudible tintinnabulation. Besides the literal bell sounds emanating from the percussion section (which includes glockenspiel, vibraphone, xylophone, crotales, chimes, marimba, Mexican bean, and assorted drums, cymbals, and gongs), allusions to bells in the opening bars include horn phrases that recall the Westminster chimes ("Big Ben") and regular harp strokes, like a chiming clock. Soon after its dramatic entrance, the solo

flute plays a *languido* melody, which the first violins then take up, accompanied by improvised chirping and twittering from the soloist. After a return of the chime theme in ghostly string harmonics, dance rhythms begin to drive the music to its climax, first in gay triplet eighth notes, then in blindingly fast sixteenths. When the peak is reached, the horns sing out the Westminster chime theme above the swirl of activity; violins and the soloist then take it up as well, but tenderly, as the music fades to a tinkling in the distance.

In his song *The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water* (originally composed for soprano and piano), Beaser sets the brief W.B. Yeats poem ("...I heard the old, old men say,/All that's beautiful drifts away/Like the waters.") as a polytonal chorale, vocal phrases alternating with echo-like phrases in the piano. The melody suggests the pentatonic scale of traditional Irish music.

---David Wright

David Wright is a music journalist and program annotator whose writing appears in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* and the programs of the *Chicago Symphony*, the *Cleveland Orchestra*, and *Lincoln Center*.

## **M. Wirth:**

### **Mirele**

*Der Kremerke's Dwoirele's Techterel heisst  
Schein Mirele, Mirele!*

*Un Dwoirele sogt, as ihr einzige Treist  
Is Mirele, Mirele.*

*Die Sunn scheint bei Tog, die Lewone bei  
Nacht,*

*Un Mirele steht beidem Fenster un lacht...  
Lach, Mirele, Mirele!*

*Dos Mirele is chejnewdig, zuckerdig schejn,  
Dos Mirele, Mirele!*

*Sie hot weisse Hentelech, weissenke Zejn-  
Ach, Mirele, Mirele!*

*Die Jingelech weren far Benkschaft azsh  
blass-*

*Nor Mirele's Herzle is kelter vun Eis...  
Ei, Mirele, Mirele!*

*Var Mirele's Fensterlech drebn sich arum  
Sebt Mirele, Mirele*

*Die feinste Bochurimlech schweigendig  
stumm...*

*Hm...Mirele, Mirele...*

*Die Sunn scheint bei Tog, die Lewone bei  
Nacht,*

*Un Mirele steht bei dem Fenster un lacht...  
Ei, Mirele, Mirele!*

*Es liben nor Sifzen Himmel aroif-----  
Ach, Mirele, Mirele!  
Es nummt nischt kein Essen, es nemmt  
nisch kein Schlof-  
Oi, Mirele, Mirele!  
Es platzen die Herzer var Wehtug un  
Schmarz,  
Nor keiner kann ribren s'ferfroirene Harz  
Vun Mirele, Mirele...*

*Die Johren wie Wasserer Schwimmen  
awek,  
Seb, Mirele, Mirele!  
Es hot schoin dein Schejnkeit genummen an  
Eck...  
Oi, Mirele, Mirele!  
Schoin finster dein Ponim, geboigen dein  
Kopp,  
Un roitlich die Oigen, un groi schoin der  
Zopp...  
Groi! Mirele...Mirele...*

*Es leichten die Steren, die Lewone bei Nacht  
Oif Mirele, Mirele.  
Sie steht bei dem Fenster verumert,  
Vertracht-  
Oi, Mirele, Mirele!  
Es schwimmen die Wolken abin un aber,  
Vun Mirele's Eigelech kapet a Trer...  
Wein, Mirele, Mirele...*

The store-keeper, Dwoirele's daughter is called beautiful Mirele, Mirele! And Dwoirele says that her only solace is Mirele, Mirele. The sun shines by day, the moon shines by night, and Mirele stands by the window and laughs...Laugh, Mirele, Mirele!

This Mirele is graceful, sweetly beautiful, this Mirele, Mirele! She has white little arms, small white teeth-ah, Mirele, Mirele! The youths are ashen-pale with longing--but Mirele's little heart is more frigid than ice ---Oh, Mirele, Mirele!

Under Mirele's windows wandering about  
-she sees the finest young fellows, mute  
and silent...Hm...Mirele, Mirele...The sun  
shines by day, the moon shines by night,  
and Mirele stands by the window and laughs  
...Oh, Mirele, Mirele...

The sighs are flying up to heaven-----  
Oh, Mirele, Mirele! One cannot eat, one  
cannot sleep-Oh, Mirele, Mirele! The  
hearts are bursting with ache and pain, but  
no one can move the frozen heart of Mirele,  
Mirele!

The years flow by like waters, see, Mirele,  
Mirele! Your beauty has come to an end, oh,  
Mirele, Mirele! Your face is haggard, your  
head is bowed, your eyes are red-rimmed  
and your head is already greying. Greying,  
Mirele, Mirele!

The stars are twinkling, the moon nightly  
shines on Mirele, Mirele! She stands by the  
window saddened, and musing.-O, Mirele,  
Mirele! The clouds are wafted to and fro, a  
tear falls from Mirele's eyes,...Weep, Mirele  
Mirele...

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

##### **Robert Beaser:**

*Mountain Songs.* Paula Robison, flute; Eliot Fisk, guitar. Musicmasters MMD60115.

*Notes on a Southern Sky.* Eliot Fisk, guitar. EMI Electrola EL 2702171.

*Variations.* Paula Robison, flute; Timothy Hester, piano. Musicmasters MMD60195

##### **Paul Schoenfield:**

*Cafe Music.* Young-Nam Kim, violin; Peter Howard, cello; Paul Schoenfield, piano. Innova Recordings MN 108.

*Three Country Fiddle Pieces.* Robert Davidovici, violin; Paul Schoenfield, piano. New World Records 80334.

##### **Joseph Schwantner:**

*Aftertones of Infinity.* Juilliard Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin conducting. New World Records 80381.

*Distant Runes and Incantations.* Ursula Oppens, piano; St. Louis Symphony, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Elektra/Nonesuch 79143.

*Music of Amber.* New York New Music Ensemble, Robert Black conducting. GM 2028.

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

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **Robert Beaser:**

Robison, Paula and Eliot, Fisk. "Performance Guide: R. Beaser's Mountain Songs." *Flute Talk*, July/August 1988.

Wechsler, Bert. "The Road of the American Composer: R. Beaser Looks Beyond the Craft." *Music Journal*, Spring 1985.

### **Joseph Schwantner:**

Ewen, David. *Composers since 1900: a Biographical and Critical Guide*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1981.

Stearns, David Patrick. "Joseph Schwantner," *HiFi/MusAm*, xxix/12 1979.

**Paula Robison** has appeared with orchestras and in recital in major concert halls and music festivals in the United States, Canada, Europe, the Far East, at the United Nations, and at the White House. A First-Prize winner of the Geneva International Competition, she has a lively interest in expanding the repertoire for her instrument, and has commissioned concerti by Leon Kirchner, Toru Takemitsu, Oliver Knussen, and Robert Beaser. In February 1991, she and guitarist Elliot Fisk presented the world premiere of George Rochberg's "Muse of Fire," commissioned by Carnegie Hall as part of its centennial celebration. A founding member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Robison was for ten years co-director of chamber music at the Spoleto Festivals in Italy, Charleston, South Carolina, and Melbourne, Australia.

**Ransom Wilson** has appeared internationally with such ensembles as the Israel Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, the London Symphony Orchestra, and I Solisti Veneti, and in the United States with the San Francisco Symphony, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Symphony. His joint appearances have included collaborations with Jean-Pierre Rampal, James Galway, Jessye Norman, and The Emerson Quartet. A strong advocate of contemporary music, Wilson has commissioned new works by Steve Reich, Peter Schickele, and Joseph Schwantner. In addition, he is the music director and principal conductor of the Solisti New York Chamber Orchestra, and serves as artistic director of the OK Mozart Festival in Bartlesville, Oklahoma and as music director of the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra.

**Carol Wincenc**, long a champion of contemporary music, has presented premieres of several recent works for flute and orchestra, including Lukas Foss' *A Renaissance Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* (recorded on New World 80375), and Joan Tower's *Flute Concerto*. Recent commissions include concerti by Peter Schickele, Christopher Rouse, and Roberto Sierra. Wincenc is a frequent guest of major orchestras and festivals throughout the United States. In addition, she has recently appeared with the London Symphony at the Barbican, the English Chamber Orchestra at the Aldeburgh Festival, and at the Budapest Spring Festival, the Duisburg Festival, and the Frankfurt Annual Music Festival. Her collaborators include Jessye Norman, Elly Ameling, Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, and the Guarneri, Tokyo and Cleveland String Quartets.

**Solisti New York Chamber Orchestra** was founded in 1980 by music director and conductor Ransom Wilson. Past seasons have included a series at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, concerts at Carnegie, Alice Tully, and Avery Fisher halls, and performances with Jean-Pierre Rampal, Frederica von Stade, and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. The orchestra is a participant in the 1991-92 Mozart

Bicentennial at Lincoln Center, presenting performances of Mozart's "Der Schauspieldirector" and Salieri's "Prima la musica e poi le parole," both in new translations by Andrew Porter. Solisti New York has also performed in Italy and Germany, and serves as orchestra-in-residence at the OK Mozart International Festival in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The orchestra has recorded on the Angel/EMI and Sine Qua Non labels.

**Alasdair Neale** is the San Francisco Symphony's Affiliate Artists assistant conductor and Wattis Foundation music director of the Youth Orchestra. A native of Scotland, Neale has served as music director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra and as professor at the Yale School of Music. He has studied conducting with Otto-Werner Mueller, Andre Previn, David Zinman, Joseph Silverstein, and Sir Charles Groves. Neale has guest conducted the Springfield (Massachusetts) Symphony Orchestra and L'Orchestre Metropolitain du Grand-Montreal. His extensive experience working with young musicians includes conducting the Norwalk (Connecticut) Youth Symphony Concert Orchestra and The Juilliard School's precollege orchestra.

**Douglas Webster** gained recognition portraying the Celebrant in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. He performed the role at the Tanglewood Festival-Bernstein 70th Birthday Gala, and on a National Public Radio International live broadcast. He has also toured nationally with *Les Miserables*, performing the roles of Courfeyrac and Jean Valjean. With conductor Erich Kunzel, Webster has sung with the Detroit Symphony and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and is a featured vocalist with the Cincinnati Pops on the recording *A Disney Spectacular*. In recital, he has performed with pianist Dalton Baldwin.

**Brian Zeger** made his New York recital debut in 1983 as First Prize winner of the American Musical Scholarship Association International Piano Competition. He has performed concerti with members of the Cincinnati Symphony, the Greenwich Symphony, and the Manhattan Philharmonia, and has performed at Carnegie and Alice Tully halls and at the Aldeburgh Festival. Zeger has been a participant in the Yale at Norfolk Festival and the Aspen Summer Music Festival, and has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Arleen Auger, Eleanor Steber, Claire Bloom, and Dawn Upshaw.

## FLUTES

### **Joseph Schwantner:**

1- A Play of Shadows...fantasy for flute and orchestra (14:19)

(publ. Helicon Music Corp.)

Ransom Wilson, flute

2- Black Anemones (4:39)

(publ. Helicon Music Corp.)

Ransom Wilson, flute

Brian Zeger, piano

Paul Schoenfield:

3- Klezmer Rondos for flute, male vocalist, and orchestra (20:48)

(©Paul Schoenfield)

Carol Wincenc, flute

Douglas Webster, baritone

4- Ufaratsta (2:02)

5- Achat Sha'alti (3:22)

(©Paul Schoenfield)

Carol Wincenc, flute

Paul Schoenfield, piano

Robert Beaser:

6- Song of the Bells for flute and orchestra (13:54)

(publ. Helicon Music Corp.)

Paula Robison, flute

7- The Old Men Admiring Themselves In The Water (4:05)

(publ. Helicon Music Corp.)

Paula Robison, flute

Robert Beaser, piano

Solisti New York Chamber Orchestra

Alasdair Neale, conductor

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**NEW WORLD RECORDS  
16 Penn Plaza #835  
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820  
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685  
Website: [www.newworldrecords.org](http://www.newworldrecords.org)  
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