

PIANO CONCERTO FOR LEFT HAND AND ORCHESTRA

Gary Graffman and I have been staunch friends since we met as students at the Curtis Institute in 1943. The notion of pooling our talents, however, arose only when we returned to that Institute nearly five decades later, Gary as director, I on the faculty. Now Gary, who has not made professional use of his right hand since 1980, felt an urge to expand the admirable but restricted literature of left-hand works (most of them composed long ago for the elder brother of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein), and so invited me to write something that would exploit the current student orchestra of his famous school as well as his own left hand.

The result is my fourth Piano Concerto. (The Third, written for Jerome Lowenthal, dates from 1969; the Second, for Julius Katchen, from 1951; and the First, for Eugene Istomin, lies unloved in a trunk closed in 1948.) But perhaps Concerto is too grand a title, connoting as it so often does a virtuosic struggle between soloist and orchestra. Rather, this is an "entertainment" shaped like a suite.

The eight movements are channeled into three larger sections:

Opening Passacaglia, Tarantella, and Conversation, each rapid and glittering, comprise the first section, performed with scarcely a pause. All are based on the same 12-note motive--G, C#, F#, D, Eb, Bb, Ab, C, B, A, E, F-- and its permutations. (Let me quickly add that this is indeed a motive, not a row in the Schoenbergian sense. My music is profoundly tonal, and so to my ear is all music, tonality being a law of the universe.)

Hymn, Duet and Vignette, each slow and moody, form the second section. Hymn is a tune in chords played throughout by soloist, eventually counter-pointed by all the violins in unison, and no one else. Duet stars a single cello accompanied by the piano. Vignette, a single line of the keyboard, is accompanied by winds.

Medley and Closing Passacaglia make up the last section--a free-form cadenza based on most of the preceding material merging into a ground-bass (G, Db C, F#) proclaimed by the timpani, and growing gradually from a whisper to a roar.

The Concerto was composed in twelve weeks, from January 22 to April 20, 1991, in Nantucket and New York City, and orchestrated during the following autumn for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets in B-Flat, two bassoons, two horns in F, two trumpets in C, two trombones, timpani (in the 8th movement only), bass drum, snare drum, tenor drum, tom-toms, triangle, gong, glockenspiel, anvil, metal plate, cymbals, chimes, slap-stick, vibraphone, celesta, harp, and strings.

ELEVEN STUDIES FOR ELEVEN PLAYERS

This work was written in 1959, the year I was invited to Buffalo University with the stipulations that I teach a class in composition, give a series of public lectures, and compose a sizeable chamber work with the understanding that I conduct it myself. The year was surely more instructive to me than to the University if only because: a) I had never before taught anyone anything; b) I had never given an organized speech; and c) I had never conducted an orchestra.

I learned that the teaching of composition, as distinct from performance, is a question of healthy contagion (of leading a horse to water and making him drink), but that it's an after-the-fact proposition, and that most interpretive artists, no matter how proficient, are terrified of being asked to compose. I learned that in order to give a lecture it helps to know what you're talking about, and that to spend one's life mulling over and writing down music is not the same as imparting this process in a verbally communicative manner; but if putting my musical ideas into literary order did not necessarily make me a better composer, it did make me better able to discuss what it means to be a composer. And I learned that the first requisite to becoming a conductor is an inborn lust for absolute monarchy, and that I alone among musicians never got the bug.

Indeed, I was terrified. The first rehearsal was a model of how not to inspire confidence. I stood before the eleven players in all my virginal glory, and announced: "I've never conducted before, so if I give a wrong cue, do try to come in right anyway." I had purposely notated no ritards and no accelerandos, not knowing how to indicate these with my arms. Yet I had one trump card: being the composer of the as-yet-unheard piece, I knew better than any conductor how the ideal performance should sound. Also, the soloists were my faculty colleagues, and compassionate.

The title specifies eleven players, not eleven instruments. The flute changes to piccolo, the oboe to English horn, and the two percussionists between them bang on fifteen different surfaces. Not all players are in all movements. There's a duet, a quintet, a nonet, and a number of solos. The subtitles "Bird Call" and "The Diary" come from the play Suddenly Last Summer, for which these sections were first intended. "Contest" was first heard in another play, Motel, and represented traffic. "In Memory of My Feelings" is a poem by Frank O'Hara.

Eleven Studies has been choreographed a number of times. Most of these ballets were pleasing if not thrilling, because the dancers moved as the music literally dictated, rather than using the music as a jumping-off place. So I learned nothing. But when Martha Graham, in a ballet called *Dancing Ground*, choreographed the same music in 1966 I learned something. She went against the music: When the sound was gloomy and soft her dancers were fast and frantic, when the sound was fast and frantic, the dancers stood motionless. Martha showed me how there was more in the score than I imagined: She visualized it, gave it "meaning," if you will, and made it her own.

Ned Rorem was born October 23, 1923 in Richmond, Indiana. He entered the Music School of Northwestern University at seventeen, and two years later received a scholarship to The Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. He studied composition under Bernard Wagenaar at Juilliard, taking his B.A. in 1946 and his M.A. in 1948. Mr. Rorem has composed three symphonies, four piano concertos, and an array of other orchestral works. He has also written music for numerous combinations of chamber forces, six operas, choral works, ballets, music for the theater, and literally hundreds of songs and cycles. He is the author of twelve books, including five volumes of diaries and collections of lectures and criticism. He received the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for the orchestral suite *Air Music*.

Gary Graffman, born in 1928, first began playing the piano at the age of three. He was accepted by The Curtis Institute of Music at age seven, where he studied with Isabelle Vengerova. Upon graduation, he studied with Vladimir Horowitz and Rudolf Serkin. Graffman won the Leventritt Award in 1949. He has recorded the concertos of Brahms, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and others with the orchestras of New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, and Boston. In 1979 his right hand became disabled, but he continued his career, performing works for

the left hand alone, and teaching at The Curtis Institute. Mr. Graffman is currently (1994) the director of The Curtis Institute.

André Previn was born in Berlin in 1929. By the time his family moved to California in 1939, he had studied at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik and the Paris Conservatoire. He later studied theory with Joseph Achron, composition with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and conducting with Pierre Monteux. As a teenager he began working in Hollywood film studios as a conductor, arranger, and composer, and was a musical director at MGM in the 1940s and 1950s. Previn has held chief artistic posts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the London Symphony, and the Houston Symphony, and has been guest conductor with many of the major orchestras of our time.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Garland. "The Music of Ned Rorem." *Music Journal*, 21, no. 4 (1963), p. 34.
Avey, D.H. "A Conversation with Ned Rorem." *Flute Talk*, 10: 8-10, September 1990.
Dyer, Richard. "Ned Rorem Tells All." *Boston Globe Magazine*, September 30, 1984.
Gruen, John. *The Party's Over Now: Reminiscences of the Fifties*. New York: Viking, 1972.
Hinson, Maurice. "The Piano Music of Ned Rorem." *Piano Quarterly*, no. 110 (1980), p. 14.
Johnson, Bret. "Still Sings the Voice: A Portrait of Ned Rorem." *Tempo*, no. 153 (1985), p.7.
McDonald, A.L. *Ned Rorem: A Bio-bibliography*. New York: Greenwood, 1989.
Mass, Lawrence. "The Art of Being Ned Rorem: An Interview." *Opera Monthly*, February 1990, p. 5.
O'Connor, Patrick. "Imagination Snared." *Opera News*, October 1988, p. 24.
Raver, Leonard. "The Solo Organ Music of Ned Rorem." *American Organist*, 17, no. 10 (1983), p.67.
Thomson, Virgil. *American Music Since 1910*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- After Reading Shakespeare*, for Solo Cello. Sharon Robinson, cello. Grenadilla 1065.
Day Music, for Violin and Piano. Jaime Laredo, violin; Ruth Laredo, piano. Desto 7151.
Eagles; String Symphony; Sunday Morning. Atlanta Symphony, Robert Shaw and Louis Lane conducting. New World NW 353.
The End of Summer, for Violin, Clarinet and Piano. Verdehr Trio. Crystal 742.
Lions. New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony. Werner Torkanowsky conducting. Orion 686.
Lovers, for Harpsichord, Oboe, Cello, and Percussion. Sylvia Marlowe, harpsichord, and ensemble. Serenus 12056.
Night Music, for Violin and Piano. Earl Carlyss, violin; Ann Schein, piano. Desto 7174.
Piano Concerto in Six Movements. Jerome Lowenthal, piano; Louisville Orchestra, Jorge Mester conducting. Louisville 733.
Romeo and Juliet, for Flute and Guitar. Ingrid Dingfelder, flute; Herbert Levine, guitar. CRI 394
Sonata No. 1, for Piano. Jeffrey Jacob, piano. Opus One 73.
Sonata No. 2, for Piano. Julius Katchen, piano. CRI 6007.
Suite for Guitar. Joseph Breznikar, guitar. Coronet 3115.
Symphony No. 3. Utah Symphony Orchestra, Maurice Abravanel conducting. Turnabout 34447.
Views from the Oldest House, for Organ; *A Quaker Reader*, for Organ. Catherine Crozier, organ. Delos 3076.
Water Music, for Violin and Clarinet Soli with Orchestra. Oakland Youth Orchestra, Robert Hughes conducting. Desto 6462.
Winter Pages, for Clarinet, Bassoon, Violin, Cello, and Piano; *Bright Music*, for Flute, Piano, and String Trio. New World 80416-2.

The Piano Concerto for Left Hand and Orchestra was recorded in February, 1993, at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, PA.

Producer: George Blood

Engineer: George Blood

Eleven Studies for Eleven Players was recorded in November, 1993, at Curtis Hall, The Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, PA.

Producer: George Blood

Engineer: George Blood. Special thanks to Phil McClelland and staff.

Cover art: Martin Silverman. *Diver* (1991). Bronze with patina. Courtesy of Helander Gallery, Palm Beach, FL.

Cover design: Bob Defrin

The commissioning of the Concerto was made possible by grants from the Irving S. Gilmore International Piano Festival, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation.

This recording was made possible with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Francis Goelet and the New York State Council on the Arts.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Herman E. Krawitz, President; Paul Marotta, Managing Director; Paul M. Tai, Director of Artists and Repertory; Lisa Kahlden, Director of Information Technology; Virginia Hayward, Administrative Associate; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper; Ben Schmich, Production Associate.

RECORDED ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Hamilton, Treasurer; Milton Babbitt; Emanuel Gerard; Adolph Green; Rita Hauser; Herman E. Krawitz; Arthur Moorhead; Elizabeth Ostrow; Don Roberts; Patrick Smith; Frank Stanton.

Francis Goelet (1926-1998), Chairman

© 1994 © 1994 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

NED ROREM (1923) 80445-2

TRACKS 1-8

PIANO CONCERTO FOR LEFT HAND AND ORCHESTRA (1991)

- I. 1) Opening Passacaglia (3:57)
- 2) Tarantella (2:37)
- 3) Conversation (3:55)
- II. 4) Hymn (3:37)
- 5) Duet (Wendy Warner, cello solo) (7:13)
- 6) Vignette (1:38)
- III. 7) Medley (5:37)
- 8) Closing Passacaglia (5:24)

The Symphony Orchestra of The Curtis Institute of Music; Gary Graffman, piano; André Previn, conductor.

TRACKS 9-18

ELEVEN STUDIES FOR ELEVEN PLAYERS (1959-60)

1. PRELUDE (eleven: trumpet solo) (2:08)
2. ALLEGRETTO (nine) (1:35)
3. BIRD CALL (four: flute solo) (1:30)
4. THE DIARY (six) (2:24)
5. CONTEST (five: trumpet and clarinet solos) (1:01)
6. INVENTION FOR BATTERY (two) (1:46)
7. IN MEMORY OF MY FEELINGS (ten: cello solo) (5:09)
8. FUGATO (eleven) (2:38)
9. ELEGY (eleven: English horn solo) (3:59)
10. PRESTO (five) (0:55)
11. EPILOGUE (eleven: clarinet solo) (3:41)

Elizabeth Ostling, flute; Kathy Lord, oboe; Gregory Raden, clarinet; Jack Sutte, trumpet; Anthony Lafargue, percussion; Ryan Leveille, percussion; Steven Copes, violin; Choong-Jin Chang, viola; Jeffrey Lastrapes, cello; Katerina Englichova, harp; Reiko Uchida, piano; Rossen Milanov, conductor.

Piano Concerto for Left Hand and Orchestra and Eleven Studies for Eleven Players are both published by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. (ASCAP).

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF R.A.A.M., INC.**

NEW WORLD RECORDS
16 Penn Plaza #835
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685
Website: www.newworldrecords.org
email: info@newworldrecords.org

LINER NOTES © Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.