

GUNTHER SCHULLER
Of Reminiscences and Reflections

New World Records 80492

For a half-century now, as composer, conductor, instrumentalist, scholar, educator, administrator, jazz historian and general activist, Gunther Schuller has been a unique and indispensable factor in our musical life. The three works on this disc, all composed within the space of a few months in 1993 and '94, can hardly fail to be recognized as music of intensity, power and compassion, and indeed Schuller has acknowledged that they have a profound personal significance for him: two of the works bear loving testimony--in the most direct sense--to a unique and irreplaceable factor in his own life.

Schuller met Marjorie Black in Cincinnati in 1943, when they were both 17 years old. He had just become principal horn in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; she was a student at the Cincinnati College of Music, an accomplished pianist and singer, engrossed in music but without professional aspirations of her own. Margie and Gunther were not separated from that time until her death in November 1992. They married in 1948, and throughout their 49 years together she was his unflinching source of stabilization and inspiration, of encouragement and understanding, his splendid companion in shared joys, sorrows and enthusiasms that blurred or eliminated the boundaries between personal and professional life. Their closeness is reflected even in the names Schuller gave his business enterprises: the publishing companies Margun and Gun-Mar, the record label GM. But when the Pulitzer Prize was finally awarded to Schuller (at so late a point in his career that many assumed he was receiving it for the second time), it was something he could not share with her; the work for which he received it was in fact the first of his memorials to her.

Schuller had not put such personal images in his music before. He was truly devastated by the loss of his wife; but the impact that at first brought a total halt to his creative activity eventually led to its resumption with redoubled energy and on a new level of expressiveness. He recalls that:

I couldn't compose at all for ten or eleven months, and sometimes wondered if I would ever be able to compose again. I had nearly a dozen commissions lined up at the time, and I began contacting the various organizations and individuals to tell them I was emotionally blocked up and couldn't fulfill the commissions; fortunately, they all told me they'd wait for me to put myself back together, and suddenly, in September or October 1993, the blockage seemed to disappear and I began composing again. *Of Reminiscences and Reflections* was the first product of this new energy. I actually set it all down on five mornings scattered over a period of 17 days. I had never composed anything so quickly; after all those months the music just poured out of me.

It was for this work that Schuller received the Pulitzer Prize in 1994. It was commissioned by the Louisville Orchestra, which gave the premiere under the composer's direction on December 2, 1993, and is scored for woodwinds in fours, 15 brass (including six horns), timpani, five percussion, and the usual strings. Schuller has provided this description:

It is in effect a symphony for large orchestra in five sections, which are played without interruption [but are marked] by clearly discernible changes in tempo, orchestration,

texture and mood. Impelled by an enormous initial rush of orchestral sound, the first section (marked *Maestoso*) exploits the full range of color and multiple textures offered by the modern symphony orchestra. A quieter episode, featuring first a duet for English horn and contrabassoon, then the muted strings, brings Part I to a cadential close and leads without pause to Part II, a driving, energetic *Allegro* whose middle phase is given over to the percussion section, in turn aided and abetted by the brass instruments...

Parts III and IV represent respectively the "slow movement" and "scherzo" of the "symphony." Both sections exploit the woodwinds: in somber duets (two bassoons, two English horns, two bass clarinets, etc.) in the first instance, in four-part consorts (of flutes, oboes, etc.) in the second (scherzo). In Part V, a partial recapitulation of the opening "movement" leads to a climactic ending, ablaze with trumpets, timpani flourishes and the coloristic brilliance of the full orchestra.

This was the first work in which I conveyed in musical terms my feelings about my life with Marjorie. All five sections contain various allusions and references to some of the great works we experienced and enjoyed together over the many years--either in performance or recordings or on the radio. These allusions, however, are very subtle; I'm sure so subtle most listeners will not even be aware of them. You might say this is my "Enigma Variations," in a sense.

The Past Is in the Present, commissioned by the Barlow Endowment in celebration of the centenary of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, was composed with similar speed and took the form of a somewhat more overt memorial gesture than *Of Reminiscences*. This was perhaps inevitable because of the connections with Cincinnati and its orchestra, as Schuller indicated in his note for this work's premiere, given in Cincinnati on March 25, 1994, under Jesús López-Cobos. He advises also that this music represents a sort of extension of the preceding work on this disc (the orchestration is the same, except for reducing the horn complement from six to five), and the very title of the earlier piece is invoked (though without being noted as such) in his description of this one:

The Past Is in the Present, composed during ten days in February 1994, is a work with many personal connections to Cincinnati . . . It is also a commemorative work, a work of reminiscences and reflections (many of a private nature) going back to my long ago late-teenage days in Cincinnati, where I played principal horn with the orchestra (1943-45) and met my late wife, to whose loving memory this work is dedicated. Part *requiem*, part *jubilatio*, the four-movement composition expresses a generally tranquil, reflective mood, a mixture of happy Cincinnati memories and feelings of profound loss.

In the first movement the motto *Requiem aeternam* can be heard in various rhythmic guises, initially in the bass drum against hushed, sustained string harmonics, later intoned in softly muted brass. The opening calm gives way suddenly to a brighter, happier mood, as various woodwinds--primarily an oboe--blend with glistening strings and percussion backgrounds. The movement builds to a trumpet-dominated climax, subsiding via a lyric solo for horn (my own instrument) to resignation and quiet reflection.

The second movement is a kind of *berceuse élégiaque*, expressed in the long-limbed melodic lines of the first violins and their flowing, undulating accompaniment. Although the work is composed in a highly chromatic, atonal melodic/harmonic language and is a "twelve-tone" piece in technique and concept, it allows for many "tonal" shadings and reminiscences; again "the past is in the present," as in the quiet C major ending of the second movement.

The more jubilant third movement, a combination *Tuba mirum* and *Libera me*, incarnating the text "Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death," is set forth initially in the brass instruments. A variant of the famous *Dies irae* chant, so beloved of Rachmaninoff and Liszt, also enters the thematic fray. Over a climactic percussive episode--a collision of duple and triple rhythms--the music gradually subsides, to relax to an ethereal calm, a distant bass drum rumble the only reminder of the earlier solemnity.

The final movement, tender, tranquil and reflective in mood, features an extended melody, heard first in the cellos (later from a solo bass), and brings the work to a quiet close, filled with resignation. The last sounds depict life and breath ebbing quietly away, as a final distant bell note drifts off into eternal silence.

While the Organ Concerto flowed from the same burst of creative energy that produced the other two works recorded here, it is in no sense a memorial gesture. Since Schuller had written a concerto or two for virtually every instrument in the orchestra, including the contrabassoon and double bass, it was only a matter of time till he got round to producing one for the organ, which he did in 1994 in response to a commission from the Calgary International Organ Festival. The Concerto was introduced on October 14 of that year; James Diaz was the soloist, with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Mario Bernardi conducting, and it is that performance that is recorded here. Once again Schuller provided a brief note of his own:

My Concerto for Organ and Orchestra is in three movements, contrasting not only in tempo, mood and character, but in the way the organ functions in the overall ensemble. In the first movement the organ is very much a part of the orchestral texture, often even submerged within it, emerging from it only briefly in some virtuoso "cadenza" passages. Thus the "King of Instruments" is pitted continually against the full forces of the modern symphony orchestra.

By contrast, in the second movement, entitled *Meditation*, the organ is clearly the primary soloist, with the orchestra accompanying lightly, sporadically, adding subtle colorations that underscore the music's generally meditative mood. The movement's continuity is also characterized by numerous silent measures. It is as if the music were occasionally resting and breathing, the silences an integral part of the music.

The last movement, marked *Scherzando*, offers a constant lively interplay between the soloist and various orchestral choirs and groupings. This builds eventually to a considerable climax, in turn culminating in a *maestoso* coda, in which again the full *pleno* organ--its first use in the work--is set off against the entire orchestra at full force.

In addition to the solo instrument, the score for the concerto calls for triple woodwind, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (requiring four to five players), harp and strings.

—Richard Freed

Richard Freed has been writing and broadcasting about recorded music for nearly forty years. He has been a staff critic for The New York Times and record critic for the Washington Post. Currently he is program annotator for the Saint Louis and National Symphony Orchestras and consultant to the music director of the National Symphony.

MARIO BERNARDI, Principal Conductor of the CBC Vancouver Symphony since 1983 and Conductor Laureate of the Calgary Philharmonic, studied in Italy at the Venice Conservatory, and at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto. He made his operatic debut in 1957 with the Canadian Opera Company and was appointed Music Director at Sadler's Wells Opera in 1966. In 1969, Mr. Bernardi became Music Director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, a position he held for 13 years. He made his United States debut in 1967 with the San Francisco Opera, and has appeared with the New York City Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, the Washington Opera, the Canadian Opera Company, the Wolftrap Festival, the Calgary Opera, and the Santa Fe Opera. Mr. Bernardi has appeared with the symphonies of San Francisco, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Indianapolis, Houston, Columbus, and Winnipeg. He has recorded for HMV, RCA, CBS, and CBC Records.

THE CALGARY PHILHARMONIC was formed in 1955 by merging two existing groups, the Alberta Philharmonic and the Calgary Symphony. The Calgary Philharmonic has gained international recognition through its extensive recordings, national CBC broadcasts, and touring. In 1992, the CPO embarked on its first international tour, performing at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, Place des Arts in Montreal, Carnegie Hall in New York, The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and Symphony Hall in Boston. The CPO is the orchestra for the Calgary Opera and Alberta Ballet, as well as community and school concerts. The orchestra offers a wide spectrum of the musical experience, from the works of great composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms to Broadway show tunes, pops favorites, and kids concerts.

JAMES DIAZ studied with William Haller before attending the University of Michigan, where he studied organ with Robert Glasgow and piano with Dickran Atamian, graduating summa cum laude in 1993. He then earned a Master of Music degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Todd Wilson. He has served as organist of historic St. John's Episcopal Church, Detroit, and is currently assistant organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights. Mr. Diaz was invited to play in the 1994 Calgary International Organ Festival Competition, where he captured both the Gold Medal and the Concerto Prize. As part of the Concerto Prize, he was featured soloist for the official premiere of Gunther Schuller's Concerto for Organ and Orchestra, and it is this performance which is heard on this recording.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra. K. Pasmanick, bassoon; Saarbrücken Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester; Gunther Schuller, conductor. GM Recordings GM 2044.

Concerto No. 1 for Horn and Orchestra. R. Todd, horn; Saarbrücken Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester; Gunther Schuller, conductor. GM Recordings GM 2044.

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. J. Rosenblum Kirstein, piano; Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; M. Rudolf, conductor. GM Recordings GM 2044.

Farbenspiel (Concerto No. 3 for Orchestra). Louisville Orchestra; L. L. Smith, conductor. Louisville LCD 003.

Journey Into Jazz. Skitch Henderson, narration; John Lewis, piano; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Orchestra USA; Gunther Schuller, conductor. Columbia CS 9047.

Music for Brass Quintet. New York Brass Quintet. Composers Recording CRI 144.

Recitative and Rondo. Robert Davidovici, violin; Steven De Groot, piano. New World 80334-2.

Rush Hour. Joe Lovano, tenor sax. Blue Note CDP 7243-8-29269-2-4.

Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee. Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra; Antal Dorati, conductor. Mercury (Living Presence) 434329-2 FM.

Spectra. Chicago Symphony Orchestra; James Levine, conductor. Deutsche Grammophon 431698-2.

String Quartet No. 2. Emerson String Quartet. New World 80453-2.

Symbiosis: Music for Violin, Piano, and Percussion. Anahid Ajemian, violin; Maro Ajemian, piano; Walter Rosenberger, percussion. GM Recordings GM 2007.

Triplum I. New York Philharmonic; Leonard Bernstein, conductor. Columbia MS 7052.

Vintage Dophy. Eric Dolphy, alto sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute; Phil Woods, sax; Benny Golson, sax; Edward Armour, trumpet; Don Ellis, trumpet; Jim Hall, guitar; Lalo Schiffrin, piano; Richard Davis, bass; J. C. Moses, drums. GM 3005.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Babbitt, Milton. "Gunther Schuller." *Musical America International Directory of the Performing Arts*, 1995 edition. New York, K-III Directory Corp., p. 20-26.

Carnovale, N. *Gunther Schuller: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1987.

Schuller, Gunther. *The Compleat Conductor*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1996.

----. *Early Jazz*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1968.

----. *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1986.

----. *The Swing Era*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1988.

Of Reminiscences and Reflections and *The Past Is in the Present* were recorded in the Studio of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hannover, Germany, on November 21 and 22, 1994. Concerto for Organ and Orchestra was recorded live in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, Calgary, Canada, as part of the Calgary International Organ Festival on October 14, 1994.

Producer: Gunther Schuller (*Of Reminiscences and Reflections*; *The Past Is in the Present*); Ralph Thurn (Concerto for Organ and Orchestra)

Engineer: Frank Lipp (*Of Reminiscences and Reflections*; *The Past Is in the Present*); Jeff Rolland and Darcy Clarke (Concerto for Organ and Orchestra)

Cover design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc., NYC.

***Of Reminiscences and Reflections* was commissioned by the Louisville Orchestra.**

***The Past Is in the Present* was commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.**

The Concerto for Organ and Orchestra was commissioned by the Calgary International Organ Competition 1994.

This recording was made possible with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts

and the New York State Council on the Arts, and Francis Goelet.

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

©1995 ©1995 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

**GUNTHER SCHULLER (b. 1925) 80492-2
OF REMINISCENCES AND REFLECTIONS**

1 *Of Reminiscences and Reflections* (1993) (16:24)

Radio-Philharmonie Hannover des Norddeutscher Rundfunk; Gunther Schuller, conductor

The Past Is in the Present (1994)

2 Mvt. 1 (4:50)

3 Mvt. 2 (3:48)

4 Mvt. 3 (3:23)

5 Mvt. 4 (8:16)

Radio-Philharmonie Hannover des Norddeutscher Rundfunk; Gunther Schuller, conductor

Concerto for Organ and Orchestra (1994)

6 Mvt. 1 (5:34)

7 Mvt. 2 (6:45)

8 Mvt. 3 (3:02)

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra; Mario Bernardi, conductor; James Diaz, organ

All compositions published by Associated Music Publishers (BMI).

**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.