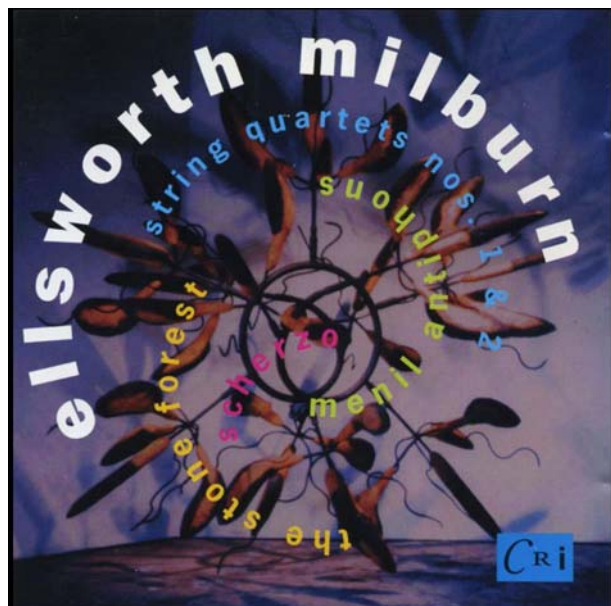


# Music of Ellsworth Milburn



- String Quartet No. 2 (1998) ..... (16:01)  
 Lark String Quartet: Eva Gruesser, violin; Robin Mayforth, violin; Anna Kruger, viola; Astrid Schween, cello
1. Scherzo for piano (1989) ..... (3:14)
  2. *The Stone Forest* for piano (1989) ..... (3:38)  
 John Hendrickson, piano
  3. *Menil Antiphons* for 8 players (1989) ..... (14:31)  
 Lisa Waters, flute; David Peck, clarinet; William Ver Meulen, first horn; Roger Kaza, second horn; Richard Brown, percussion; Brian Connelly, piano; Kenneth Goldsmith, violin; Norman Fischer, cello; Larry Rachleff, conductor
  4. String Quartet No. 1 (1974) ..... (20:01)  
 Concord String Quartet: Mark Sokol, violin; Andrew Jennings, violin; John Kochanowski, viola; Norman Fischer, cello

Total playing time: 57:28

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## Notes

String Quartet No. 2 (1988) was begun in 1978 at the request of Ronald Patterson, first violinist of the Shepherd Quartet and Concertmaster of the Houston Symphony. When Mr. Patterson left to join the Monte Carlo Symphony in Monaco, the quartet disbanded, and the piece went on the shelf so that I could make time for other work. Over the years I worked on it as time permitted, and completed it in November 1988 for a premiere by the Blair String Quartet.

It is in four connected sections, slow-fast-slow-fast, with sections three and four being developments of one and two. With the exception of the diatonic theme in the second slow section, all the melodic material is derived from the opening viola solo. Strong contrast of consonance and dissonance is characteristic of much of my music, and this is exploited in the harmonic vocabulary of the piece.

String Quartet No. 2 was commissioned with the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Scherzo (1989) is based on a short motive from Brahms's Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40, which is heard in several almost literal statements as well as in various permutations of it. The music digresses from the motive considerably, but always returns to it as a kind of structural pillar. *The Stone Forest* (1989) is a translation in reverse of the subtitle of Beethoven's Sonata in C, Op. 53, "Waldstein", and the piece is a condensation, almost an implosion of the main ideas from the first movement. These pieces were commissioned by and are dedicated to John Hendrickson, who performs on this recording.

*Menil Antiphons* (1989), the first work commissioned by Houston's Da Camera Society, was written to take advantage of the acoustical and architectural properties of the Menil Collection, Houston's newest art museum. In the first two-thirds of the piece, the horns are separated from the core ensemble, creating the antiphonal effect suggested by the title. In addition, the Christmas antiphon "Puer natus est" is embedded

in the texture, in the crotales played by various members of the ensemble in the final section.

String Quartet No. 1 (1974) was written for the Concord String Quartet. Like String Quartet No. 2, it is in four connected sections, slow-fast-slow-fast, and the two pieces share some pitch material as well. I find this structure (inspired by Bartók's String Quartet No. 3) to be very malleable in terms of proportions and allows for a continuity of thought that is sometimes elusive in pieces with separate movements.

While there are similarities between my two quartets, there are also distinct differences. The first quartet is dense, somewhat more lyrical, and more compact. There is some aleatoric exploration in the first as well, including a rather serious game toward the end, in which the players must initiate a gesture, forcing the others to respond, or respond to a gesture initiated by another. And the first is atonal, while the second is centered on the pitch "D."

String Quartet No. 1 was also commissioned with the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

— *Ellsworth Milburn*

**Ellsworth Milburn** received his musical education at U.C.L.A., Mills College, and the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, where he subsequently taught for five years. Currently he is professor of music and chairs the composition and theory department at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston. In an earlier phase of his career he played jazz and was music director for The Committee (1963–68), San Francisco's improvisational theater company, and composed music for radio, television, and film.

As a composer he has received four grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Presser Foundation Grant for publication of his First String Quartet, ASCAP Awards, and residencies at MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. Among others, he has received commissions or performances from the Houston

Symphony, the Springfield (MO) Symphony, the Pardubice (Czech Republic) Chamber Symphony, the Concord, Blair, and Lark String quartets, the Da Camera Society, and the Concert Artists Guild. His music has been featured on National Public Radio's "Performance Today," and has been recorded on CRI, Grenadilla, and Summit labels.

**John Hendrickson**, piano, is active as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator. He received a Solo Recitalist Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and is equally at home in traditional repertoire and performing the music of leading contemporary composers. His concert appearances include recitals at New York's Merkin and Weill Recital halls, London's Wigmore and Royal Festival halls, and the Terrace Theater in Kennedy Center. He currently serves as artist-in-residence for the School of Music at Houston Baptist University.

**Lisa Philby Waters**, flute has studied with Anne Giles, Thomas Nyfenger, and Carol Wincenc, and is a candidate for the doctor of musical arts degree at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University. She won First Place in the 1990 New York Flute Club Competition, and has performed extensively throughout the United States and Japan; she currently holds the position of second flute in the Charleston Symphony Orchestra.

**David Peck**, clarinet, received the bachelor of music degree in clarinet and composition from the University of Southern California. He joined the Houston Symphony as associate principal clarinetist in 1975. In 1985 he assumed the post of principal clarinetist of the San Diego Symphony and subsequently rejoined the Houston Symphony as principal clarinetist in 1991. He is currently associate professor of clarinet at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University.

**William Ver Meulen**, horn, became principal hornist of the Houston Symphony in 1990, and is also a member of the Houston Symphony Chamber Players. He previously played with the orchestras of Chicago, Columbus, Honolulu, Tanglewood, Colorado Music Festival, Kansas City, and St. Paul. He has recorded Mozart's four Horn Concerti with Christoph Eschenbach and the Houston Symphony. He is associate professor of horn at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University.

**Roger Kaza**, horn, is associate principal hornist of the Houston Symphony. Formerly a member of the Vancouver, Kansas City and St. Louis Symphonies, he was also principal hornist of the Boston Pops under John Williams. A frequent recitalist as well, he has played and given master classes at the University of Michigan and Eastman Schools of Music, and has appeared as a guest artist for the International Horn Society.

**Richard Brown**, percussion, is professor of percussion and chair of the winds, brass, percussion, and harp department at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University. In New York City he worked in recording studios playing for film scores, recordings, radio and television commercials, and Broadway shows, including the 1980 revival of *West Side Story*. He is principal percussionist of the Grand Teton Music Festival and the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra.

**Brian Connelly**, piano, is artist teacher of piano at the Shepherd School of Music. He has performed works as diverse as Messiaen's complete *Vingt Regards sur L'Enfant Jésus*, the complete song cycles of Schubert, quintets of Brahms and Schumann, and the *Études* of Debussy. He has shared solo recitals with jazz pianist Marcus Roberts and with Pulitzer Prize winning composer William Bolcom.

**Kenneth Goldsmith** is violinist of the Mirecourt Trio and professor of violin at the Shepherd School of Music. As a recitalist and soloist with orchestra, he has toured and given master classes in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China. He has recorded extensively, as a soloist and with the Mirecourt Trio and the Lyric Arts String Quartet, and has embarked on a compact disc series for Music and Arts of America featuring new American music and the standard literature for piano trio.

**Norman Fischer** is one of this country's foremost cellists, and first established his reputation with the Concord String Quartet, which recorded over forty works and premiered over fifty compositions. With pianist Jeanne Kierman, the Fischer Duo was selected as artistic ambassadors for the United States Information Agency, and completed a tour of South America in the fall of 1996. He has taught at Dartmouth College and the Oberlin Conservatory, and is currently professor of violoncello at the Shepherd School of Music.

**Larry Rachleff** is professor of conducting and music director of Rice University's Shepherd School Orchestras. He is also music director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic and Chicago's Symphony II. Previously he served on the faculties of the Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Southern California, where he also was conductor of the Opera Theater. He has appeared as guest conductor with such orchestras as the Houston Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New World Symphony, the Louisiana Philharmonic, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and has performed with major soloists.

**Lark String Quartet** has become one of the world's most sought-after string quartets. Winners of the Gold Medal in the 1991 Shostakovich International String Quartet Competition and the 1990 Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the Lark Quartet has also won top prizes in the London, Melbourne, Paolo Borciani, Karl Klinger, and Banff competitions. The Lark Quartet is currently the string quartet in residence at Ohio University in Athens. This unique residency, funded in part by a major grant from Chamber Music America, is the first of its kind in the region. Previous residencies include Dartmouth College, San Diego State, Florida Atlantic, and Florida State Universities.

Concord String Quartet was established in 1971 with an initial emphasis on contemporary repertoire that was later expanded to encompass the entire spectrum of the genre. The quartet deputed at Dartmouth College where it held a residency from 1974 to 1987. The Quartet made a number of recordings, including music of Tison Street, Leslie Bassett, Betsy Jolas, and George Rochberg for CRI.

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## Production Notes

Digitally remastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Joseph Yannece, engineer at Trutone Studios, Hackensack, N.J.

String Quartet No. 2 was recorded in Houston, in Stude Hall at Rice University, February 11, 1996 by Andrew Bradley and edited by Rodney Meyers.

Scherzo, *The Stone Forest* and *Menil Antiphons* were recorded in Houston, in Stude Hall at Rice University, May 29, 1997 by Andrew Bradley and edited by Rodney Meyers.

Originally released on CRI SD 369:

String Quartet No. 1: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded in Hanover, New Hampshire, March 14, 1977 by David Hancock. Original recording was made possible by grants from the Publications Revolving Fund and the Shepherd School of Music of Rice University, Houston, Texas.