

CRI SD 528

John Melby/James Tenney

John Melby

*Concerto for Violin, English horn, and Computer-Synthesized Tape* (21:02)

Gregory Fulkerson, violin; Thomas Stacy, English horn

David Liptak, conductor

James Tenney

*Saxony* (23:52)

David Mott, saxophone

**John Melby** was born in 1941 in Whitehall, Wisconsin; he was educated at the Curtis Institute of Music, the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, which awarded him a Ph.D. in composition in 1972. His composition teachers included Vincent Persichetti, Henry Weinberg, George Crumb, Peter Westergaard, J.K. Randall, and Milton Babbitt. Melby's music, especially those works for computer-synthesized tape, both with and without live performers, has been performed widely. He is the recipient of many awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, First Prize in the 1979 international Electroacoustic Music Awards in Bourges, France, and the Academy-Institute Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Melby is currently a professor of music at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Melby's works may be heard on CRI recordings: SD 310, *91 Plus 5 for Brass Quintet and Computer* performed by the Contemporary Brass Quintet, Roman Pawlowski, conductor and on SD 364, *Two Stevens Songs*, performed by Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano.

### Notes on the Music

"My *Concerto for Violin, English horn, and Computer Synthesized Tape* is one in an ongoing series of concerti for instruments and tape. Others in this series include concerti for violin, cello, viola, flute, piano, and English horn. These compositions all share several points in common: they are all in one extended movement, each one has a cadenza designed to extend the development of the thematic material which has occurred earlier in the piece, and all of them are modeled to a certain extent on the late nineteenth-century concerto, although the pitch and rhythmic materials as well as the timbral characteristics are certainly very much of the twentieth century. This composition was written for Gregory Fulkerson under the auspices of a Guggenheim Fellowship during 1983 and 1984. The tape part was realized on an IBM 4341 digital computer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, using the MUSIC360 language for digital sound synthesis. Digital/analog conversion took place at the Department of Speech and Hearing Science at the University.

"The combination of live voices or instruments with tape has interested me for many years, beginning with my now withdrawn opera *Quietus*, written in 1968-70, and continuing through a large number of pieces, culminating with this concerto series. Such a combination (live-plus-tape) presents its own set of problems, different from those that a composer deals with in writing for soloist and orchestra. Most notable of these is the fact that at least up until the present, an electronic accompaniment has been rhythmically inflexible, making it necessary for the soloist to follow it, rather than the other way around (as in a traditional concerto, for example). This problem has been solved by some composers by writing music in which it does not matter whether or not the performer and tape are together except at certain important structural points. In my music, since the soloist is, most of the time, structurally integrated with the tape, synchronization is of the utmost importance. Therefore, the tape part in one of my pieces is often much more precisely notated than may be usual. The degree of control necessary in making a tape of the sort that allows this to happen is one of the chief attractions that the computer holds for me, since I can specify durations and attack patterns very much more precisely than it would be possible to do in an analog studio. I am also fascinated by the way in which the computer can perform certain transformational procedures which fit very well into my basically Schenker-derived method of composition.

“As a composer, I have a certain aversion to providing program notes about my pieces, a feeling which is shared by many, although certainly not all, of my colleagues. I feel that such notes often do more harm than good, since they sometimes predispose the listener to certain modes of listening which are inappropriate to the content of the work. Therefore, I would ask the listener, if possible, to disregard what I or anyone else may have to say about the piece and just listen, which, after all, is all that any composer can ask of his or her audience.”

—*John Melby*

**James Tenney** was born in 1934 in Silver City, New Mexico, and grew up in Arizona and Colorado, where he received his earliest musical training as a pianist and composer. He attended the University of Denver, The Juilliard School of Music, Bennington College (B.A. 1958), and the University of Illinois, where he received his master’s degree in 1961. His teachers have included Eduard Steuermann, Chou Wen-chung, Lionel Nowak, Carl Ruggles, Lejaren Hiller, Kenneth Gaburo, and Edgard Varèse. In the early 1960s he was active in the field of electronic and computer music, working with Max Mathews at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the development of programs for computer sound generation and composition. Long active as a performer and theorist as well as a composer, Tenney was co-founder and conductor of the Tone Roads Chamber Ensemble in New York (1963–70), and has performed with the ensembles of Harry Partch (“The Bewitched” 1960), John Cage, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass. He has composed some seventy works for a variety of media, and is the author of numerous articles on acoustics, computer music, and musical form and perception. He has received grants and awards from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Fromm Foundation. He has taught at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, the California Institute of the Arts, and the University of California. Tenney is currently professor of music at York University in Toronto. This recording marks the debut of his work on CRI.

### Notes on the Music

Saxony: a fine soft woolen fabric  
—*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*

“The score of *Saxony* specifies a temporal sequence of ‘available pitches’ to be used by the player as the basis for improvisation. This improvisation may be quite free rhythmically, expressively, even stylistically, but it is completely controlled, harmonically, by the fact that pitches given are those of the first 32 harmonic partials of a low E-flat. A cumulative tape-delay system is used to create both a rich vertical sonority and a complex polyphonic texture via canonic replications of the player’s melodic improvisation. The piece was commissioned by the Ontario Arts Council and first performed by Don MacMillan in 1978.”

—*James Tenney*

### Performers:

**Gregory Fulkerson**, violin, has enjoyed a flourishing career as a recitalist and concerto soloist since winning the 1980 International American Music Competition at the Kennedy Center—the first violinist to win this competition. Fulkerson has toured extensively in the United States and abroad, appearing with, among others, the orchestras of Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Sacramento, and Chattanooga. He has also performed with the American Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, and in 1986 he debuts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Ricardo Muti, in the premiere of Richard Wernick’s Violin Concerto.

A pioneer of contemporary music for violin as well as an eloquent exponent of the standard repertoire, Fulkerson has discovered and given the world premieres of concerti by Roy Harris and John Becker (the former has been recorded with the Louisville Orchestra). He has recorded solo works of Copland, Ornstein, Glass, and Wernick, as well as chamber pieces with the Marlboro Festival and the New York New Music Ensemble. He was artist-in-residence at the Festival of New American Music (1983) at California State University in Sacramento and is a regularly featured guest at the Grand Teton Festival. Presently on the faculty of Oberlin College, Fulkerson has been profiled in the *Grove’s Dictionary American Music Supplement*. This recording marks his debut on CRI.

**Thomas Stacy**, English horn, has been heard as a guest soloist with many orchestras, including the National Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, and in over forty appearances with the New York Philharmonic, where he is resident English hornist. A native of Arkansas, Stacy graduated with distinction from the Eastman School of Music. He has demonstrated several oboe family members on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." Composers such as Persichetti, Skrowaczewski, Noon, Hampton, Farberman, Roseman, Hodgkinson, Caltabiano, Deak, and Blake have written works especially for Stacy, many of which he has recorded on the Spectrum, Desto, and Grenadilla labels. This record presents his debut on CRI.

**David Liptak** a composer and pianist, is a member of the composition faculty of the University of Illinois. He studied at the Eastman School of Music with Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, Eugene Katz, and Joseph Schwantner, receiving his D.M.A. in composition in 1976. His compositions cover a wide range of instrumentation; his works are published by Dorn Publishers and the American Composers Alliance. At Illinois, Liptak directs the Contemporary Chamber Players, a professional ensemble that performs new music from Illinois and elsewhere.

**David Mott** is a saxophonist/composer known for his use of extended instrumental techniques through both his performances and his compositions. He frequently tours both the United States and Canada as a soloist on the baritone saxophone. Having taught at the Yale School of Music, where he received his advanced degrees, Mott now teaches performance and composition at York University in Toronto, Canada.

This record was made possible by a grant from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Four cash awards and a CRI recording are given annually to honor and encourage promising composers and to help them continue their creative work. James Tenney was a winner in 1982; John Melby was a winner in 1984.

Melby: *Concerto for Violin, English Horn, and Computer-Synthesized Tape*,

Produced and edited by John Melby

Recorded by Rex Anderson

Recorded at the Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 20, 1985.

Tenney: *Saxony*,

Produced and edited by James Tenney

Recorded by Paul Hodge; Recorded at The Music Gallery, Toronto, May 1984.

This is a composer-supervised recording.

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*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*