

ROBERT ERICKSON (1917–1997)
AURORAS
BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT
RAFAEL POPPER-KEIZER, CELLO
GIL ROSE, CONDUCTOR

80682-2

1. *Night Music* (1978) 19:21
2. *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* (1954) 14:23
3. *East of the Beach* (1980) 13:34
4. *Auroras* (1982, rev. 1985) 22:20

TT: 69:58

All compositions published by Smith Publications.

Born in Michigan but for most of his life a true Californian, **Robert Erickson** (1917–1997) had a reputation as a maverick. His musical path was never a straight line, nor, really, a line at all but a landscape, with ranges of features rather than mere points of interest. Composing was the central activity of his life. He thought as a composer and as a composer engaged wholeheartedly in so many other musical pursuits: presenter, administrator, and author, and most significantly and influentially as an especially gifted and sympathetic teacher. He was a profound and original musical thinker who embraced the expressive possibilities of all music, from the Western classics and moderns of his own early education to Indian and Balinese traditions and all manner of contemporary experimentation, as long as it served a musical purpose. All these activities fed back into his music. When encountering his work, one doesn't need to know more than one hears: what's important are the sounds one encounters and the expressive journey they suggest for each listener.

Robert Erickson lived the first part of his life in Michigan among members of a musically active extended family, learning piano and violin. Attending high school in Marquette, Michigan, band and community music gatherings provided a further broadening of his musical world. A year out of high school he moved to Chicago, where he became acquainted with a group of people centered at Park House, an experiment in community living that attracted intellectuals and artists. Here he met his future wife, the artist Lenore Alt, as well as an older musician, Frank Kearney, and Ben Weber and George Perle, two composers his own age. Kearney furthered Erickson's knowledge of and interest in the classical repertoire, while Weber and Perle joined Erickson in exploring the recent and current masterworks of Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg. (Perle, of course, went on to become the leading expert on Berg's work, and both Perle and Weber became successful composers.) Erickson began studying formally with Wesley La Violette, who was already working with Perle and Weber, and the three started a concert series to program the new music they otherwise knew only from scores.

In 1939 Erickson began a prolific correspondence with the recently arrived European refugee composer Ernst Krenek in response to his book *Music Here and Now*. Krenek would soon become the younger composer's most significant mentor. Following a period making a living as a ceramicist in rural Michigan, Erickson and his wife moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where Krenek taught at Hamline University. Erickson earned his master's degree there, and his connection to a composer of Krenek's stature ultimately led to a performance of his orchestral work *Introduction and Allegro* by the Minneapolis Symphony under Dimitri Mitropoulos. In St. Paul, Erickson also met one of his most ardent future champions, the conductor Thomas Nee, and began his teaching career at St. Catherine's College. His progress was interrupted for a time by Army service in Louisiana, but poor eyesight kept him in administrative work stateside.

In 1953, following a year in New York City where Erickson completed his first book, *The Structure of Music*, with funds from a Ford Fellowship, he and his wife picked up and moved to California. It was here that Robert Erickson really came into his own in all facets of his career, the somewhat patchwork career he had so far maintained for fiscal survival blooming into a mosaic of complementary facets of a musical career. One of his most important long-term relationships was as music director, then board member, of the new San Francisco radio station KPFA, which in part satisfied his interest in concert promotion and advocacy of new music. He taught briefly at San Francisco State and UC Berkeley before joining the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory. His activities and teaching there had a great impact on the lives of many younger musicians and on San Francisco's new concert music scene. Among younger musicians in his orbit were Terry Riley, Pauline Oliveros, and Morton Subotnick, each of whom went on to highly successful, off-the-beaten-track careers of their own.

In his own music, Erickson initially worked in a style influenced by the contemporary European masters that held his fascination, including Berg and Schoenberg as well as Krenek. Although he was never really a serialist, the twelve-tone method colored his harmonic language and contrapuntal textures. His early works, such as the *Introduction and Allegro* for orchestra, the Piano Sonata, and the String Quartet No. 1, reveal a strong respect for the traditions of his predecessors. The expressionistic, rhapsodic *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, the earliest piece on this program, employs motivic retrograde and inversion and other such techniques not exclusive to but frequently encountered in the twelve-tone method. In fact we can find similar techniques in Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 1, written more than a decade before the development of the twelve-tone method. This piece seems to stand as a particular model for the *Fantasy*: the harmonic and melodic sonority of the perfect fourth, which dominates Erickson's piece, is prevalent in Schoenberg's seminal post-tonal work.

Erickson wrote the *Fantasy* in 1954, partly as a reaction to the death of his Park House mentor Frank Kearney. Ernst Krenek led the premiere with the Hamburg Radio Symphony in Hamburg later that year, and it was quickly taken up by the San Francisco Symphony. In a single movement of about fifteen minutes' duration, the piece can be seen as three big sections, A-B-A. An opening recitative in slow and free tempo, the cello well in the foreground with light accompaniment, primarily in the orchestra strings, takes about a third of the piece. The second section, although not always propulsive in its meter, is marked "Fast and Intense" at the start. The soloist for the most part keeps to the tempos established by the orchestra, which has a far more active and colorful role than in the first part. The final section is a return to the opening mood, but with far greater participation from the large and colorful orchestra.

The *Fantasy* was one of the first works Erickson wrote upon arriving in San Francisco, and it arguably hailed the end of a period of reliance on older models. By the end of the 1950s Erickson was deeply involved in the kinds of theatrical and perceptual experimentation of which John Cage was the most famous instigator. The use of technology in music, including pre-recorded and live electronic sound, was a part of many of concerts presented by Erickson and his San Francisco Conservatory colleagues. Erickson, fascinated by sound of any kind, built chiming sound sculptures that grew seemingly of their own volition and constantly tested materials for their use in new pieces, sometimes working with ancient or traditional tuning systems. *Cardinitas '68* was written for some of these hand-assembled instruments. Improvisational passages and graphic notation opened the door to a high degree of trust in Erickson's many performing colleagues. Particularly notable in his works of the 1960s are the Concerto for Piano and Seven Instruments, a thorny, frenetic modernist work from 1963 that includes improvisation but otherwise bears comparison to Berg's Chamber Concerto; *Ricercar à 5* for trombone with four tracks of pre-recorded trombone, written for Stuart Dempster; and *Ricercar à 3*, a similar work for double bass written for Bertram Turetzky. The large-scale orchestra work *Sirens and Other Flyers III* loomed in the middle of the decade; his *Pacific Sirens* (1969) for orchestra incorporates pre-recorded and manipulated ocean sounds.

As with many artists, the 1960s for Erickson were a period of expansion beyond the strictures of traditional media, performance, and even audience, which led to a reconsideration of musical means in the following decade. In 1965 he had been asked to help found the music department of the University of California-San Diego, and he joined his old Hamline classmate Will Ogdon there beginning in 1967. He remained at UCSD for the rest of his teaching career, until his official retirement in 1987, although his health by that time—he suffered from the degenerative muscle disease myositis—had long since limited his mobility and required frequent hospital stays.

Erickson's tenure at UCSD was even more influential than his time at the San Francisco Conservatory. With Ogdon and others he established an atmosphere of freedom, encouragement, and sympathy that, at first, aimed at community and a continuing, interactive learning environment in which both *faculty* and students could explore music together, rather than relying on the old model of master and pupil. He continued to explore musical possibility. He traveled with his wife in 1974 to Indonesia, where he was able to witness gamelan performances, and later in the decade spent time in Japan. He wrote his second book, *Sound Structure in Music*, in 1974, drawing on his observations of a vast range of work from the Western concert music tradition as well as world music. In fact, in the last two decades of Erickson's works we find many examples of a deliberate radical limitation of materials and simplification of surface, including use of pentatonic scales, drones, and vast swaths of stasis, in part in order to allow the listener to focus attention on other aspects of the music—timbre, especially, or the detail of a single melodic line.

One of his most conceptually striking pieces of the middle of the decade was *White Lady*, an exercise in *Klangfarbenmelodie* that can be seen both as an homage to *Farben*, the third of Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* (1909), and Erickson's own exploration of tone color in an orchestral setting. A related work is *Rainbow Rising*, inspired by Erickson's contemplation of the shifting, yet stable, colors of a rainbow he observed from his house in Encinitas. His musical concerns are reflected (perhaps literally?) in the titles of many of his later works, which refer to different phenomena of light and/or nature: in addition to *Rainbow Rising* and *White Lady*, we have *Auroras*, the string quartet *Solstice*, *Night Music*, and *Summer Music*, among others.

Erickson wrote the quirkily gorgeous *Night Music* in 1978 on a commission from the SONOR ensemble of the University of San Diego, and its premiere was led by Bernard Rands on May 24, 1978. Erickson wrote, “The music takes advantage of the special skills developed by members of the SONOR Ensemble at the University of California, San Diego, in its use of microtones, hockets between two or more instruments, and the highly inflected melodic writing. Time flows free and unmetered or in a kind of rhythmic polyphony that has worked its way into my music over the past seven or eight years.” It takes little imagination to link the heterophonic, harmonically consistent foundation and looped rhythmic patterns of this piece, combined with the melodic complexities (specifying “approximate” quarter-tones) of the solo excursions, to a myriad of folk-music traditions; many of the percussion sounds seem extracted from gamelan. The small ensemble is specifically deployed onstage in two wings with the amplified trumpet at the rear, the apex of the V. (The other players are flute, clarinet, bass/E-flat clarinets, trombone, two percussion, cello, and two double basses.) The virtuosic, infectious effervescent trumpet part is closely related to that of Erickson’s loony solo trumpet piece *Kryl* (1977). The piece is a single movement of about eighteen minutes; from a drone harmony based on F, the middle section shifts to a C drone, and the end, in a long, pleasant repose, returns to F.

The title of Erickson’s *East of the Beach* for orchestra refers to the composer’s physical and spiritual grounding in the home he shared with his wife north of San Diego in Encinitas—the house from which he saw the rainbow of *Rainbow Rising*. It was commissioned by the conductor Tom Nee, the old friend since his St. Paul days, who led the premiere with the New Hampshire Festival Orchestra on August 12, 1980. Its temporal and conceptual proximity to *Night Music* is immediately evident in the presence of drones, in which we can also hear the timbre-shifts of *White Lady* and *Rainbow Rising*. The hocket texture (instruments combining to create a kind of rhythmic-melodic mosaic) might again suggest gamelan. The composer writes,

“*East of the Beach* was composed for the New Hampshire Festival Orchestra, a ‘classical’ orchestra with winds in pairs and a small body of strings. There are three interconnected sections: constantly changing timbre of a single pitch; an adagio; and a fast finale. The first section uses composite attacks to occasionally mask the identity of the instruments involved. The second has two long passages of what I call simultaneous variation, the variants of the theme producing at times a sort of ‘not quite counterpoint.’ The final section is hocketed throughout, to make a texture of broken instrumental color behind the long lined melodies. I was much involved in tone color and rhythm in this composition, but the tonal organization, simple and complex at the same time, was very intriguing to me, and carries hints for future pieces. The title comes from the place where I live, not far from the Pacific Ocean.”

East of the Beach is about fifteen minutes long. (Interestingly, Erickson’s biographer, Charles Shere, suggests that it might be possible to combine this piece, *Night Music*, and another work, *Garden*, to make a three-movement symphony—although the differences in scoring might make this highly impractical.)

Along with more “exotic” musical models, beginning in the later 1970s or so Erickson, like many other composers at the time, began to reexamine with greater interest some of the classics of the Western orchestral repertoire, and in particular the symphonies of Mahler and Sibelius, for the lessons one could learn from their broad, world-encompassing movements. *Auroras*, written in the two years after *East of the Beach*, dedicated to Thomas Nee, and premiered by him with the American Composers Orchestra in New York City on February 27, 1984, exhibits not only many of the characteristics found in *East of the Beach* and *Night Music* (drones, microtonal melodies, hocket, timbral shifting, pentatonic scales) but also some taste of Erickson’s new interest in the ultra-late Romantics, for example in the remarkable melodic string writing that emerges following the opening drones. In contrast and complement to such familiar passages are the sonorities of some of Erickson’s homemade percussion instruments, tube drums with a deep, resonant sound and metal rods, first used in the 1966 *Roddy*, with an ethereal, high-pitched ring.

Auroras is a single movement, about twenty-two minutes in length, but much more internally varied than either of its close predecessors on this program. It might be tempting to hear it as a summing-up: as he revealed in a lengthy program note in the score, he was deeply concerned about the onset of his health woes and contemplating matters of mortality. “As it happened, just at the period when I was full to the brim with these preoccupations, I was invited to California State College in Turlock to lecture. At the Divine Gardens motel I awakened at about 4:30 A.M. to the sound of birds, lots of them, varied voices, including some that were new to me. They were concentrated in shrubs and trees surrounding a large fountain area in the center of the restaurant. There were enough birds, hundreds, to produce textures of orchestral size and density, all singing against the sort of silent background that, in modern times, is becoming very rare. I hadn’t heard birds against such silent backgrounds since I was a boy, and perhaps that was the trigger that brought bird orchestra, things divine, living and dying, closer together, to make a ball of feeling in my belly that was the whole non-verbal source of the musical action of AURORAS . . . I did not follow a literary program or dramatic scenario—I composed the ball in my belly.”

Certainly the idea of a bird orchestra never seems as explicit as in Messiaen’s music, or even Respighi’s. Upon revising the score in 1985, Erickson added another note that applies just as well to all of his music: “I think of my music as simple; easy for listeners though not so easy for the performers. AURORAS is expressive music—music of feeling. For me its meanings are non-verbal and non-visual—musical. Nevertheless they are as precise, definite and rich in detail as visual and verbal meanings, and for me deeper too, close to ultimate things.”

Erickson’s tenure at UCSD was celebrated with great fanfare, including a concert of his music, in 1987 on the occasion of his retirement, but the composer’s health had by that time nearly immobilized him and he was unable to attend. For a few years he continued to compose, with difficulty, writing his last work, *Music for Trumpet, Strings, and Timpani* for the SONOR ensemble, in 1990. He died on April 24, 1997.*

—Robert Kirzinger

Robert Kirzinger is an active composer who writes frequently for the Boston Symphony Orchestra program book and is editor of the program book for the annual Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music.

*Two valuable sources of information about Robert Erickson’s life and music are *Music of Many Means*, a kind of dual-volume including an autobiographical sketch by Erickson as well as close assessment of individual works by John McKay, volume 17 of the Composers of North America Series (Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995) and Charles Shere’s *Thinking Sound Music* (Fallen Leaf Press, 1995).

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A few years ago I produced a series of radio programs, partly inspired by a certain naïve curiosity as to whether there was, or could be, such an animal as an archetypal California composer. It was a fool's errand, as I quickly learned after interviewing dozens of composers all active in the state, all totally unlike in personality and musical outlook. A state that could welcome Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, Ernest Bloch, Harry Partch, Lou Harrison, Morton Subotnick, and John Adams is not a place to provide easy answers. Even so, after my theories had crumbled to dust, I realized afresh what I had probably known all along, that if the mythical beast I pursued should assume human and aesthetic form, it would be the human and aesthetic form of Robert Erickson (1917-1997).

First of all, Erickson was your typical Californian in that he came there from somewhere else, probably somewhere colder—Michigan originally, then Minnesota. A composer moving to California, from cold to warm, is likely to react strongly and personally to the new environment, to sights and sounds that the natives might take for granted. “When you come right down to it,” Erickson often said of his working methods, “what we all do is compose our environment.” Thus, the “oceanic night” of his *Night Music*, the spirit of dawning at some nondescript Valley motel in *Auroras*. Although he taught, in his time, several generations of California composers, Erickson himself was never as well-known as he deserved to be. In an only slightly joking speech he described himself as a recluse, a simpleton, a novice with no idea what his music might be worth, caring nothing about aesthetic judgments, with no business sense, incapable even of balancing a checkbook. That may all be true, but I also happen to regard Robert Erickson as the finest composer active in his day, and the most influential in this state in any day.

We start with studies with the magisterial Ernst Krenek at Minnesota's Hamline College. From Krenek Erickson had learned the structure and philosophy of the middle-European twelve-tone writing that had emigrated to America in the 1930s. “I had really given up the twelve-tone technique long before most people got started,” he told me almost in our first meeting. “But I was still writing a freely atonal kind of music that somehow tended disconcertingly toward tonality; it was very puzzling to me. And I was floating back and forth, probably still trying to find myself by drifting, certainly drifting away from the rigorous kind of Schoenbergian idiom, at any rate. And I had just finished in New York a book on counterpoint which ended up being a book on listening, I guess—and I had written counterpoint out of my system in that book. After I wrote that thing I didn't write counterpoint any more until quite recently. But that turned me in a sort of different direction, away from rigorous, imitative counterpoint. Probably, that's the main thing that happened at that time.”¹

There were other concepts as well. From Schoenberg and his disciples had come the idea of the *Klangfarbenmelodie*, the notion of succession of tone-colors in a melodic line constituting a “melodic” line in itself; then there's the device of “hocket,” a piquant medieval invention breaking up the melody into little points of color. Listen for both of these elements, delightfully used, in *Night Music* and at the start and, again, near the end of *East of the Beach*.

¹ From Alan Rich: “Composers in California,” Program No. 5, KUSC-FM, Los Angeles, 1982.

Bob landed on me, or I on him, sometime in 1954. We were both teaching music here and there in the Bay Area, and had found extra employment in the studios of KPFA, which was just starting up as the non-commercial, listener-supported, freely-expressive media outlet it still is. Together we planned the music; Bob pushed for live concerts by the area's composers—who included the likes of LaMonte Young and Terry Riley; I filled in with records, mostly classical, from my own collection. Gradually we shared our outlooks and experiences. I had recently come back from my fellowship year abroad, and had ransacked the second-hand music shops of Vienna for a library of four-hand piano arrangements of practically the whole classical repertory. Bob had just produced his aforementioned book “The Structure of Music, A Listener's Guide,” and it fitted right in for the two of us to start a methodical exploration of the Haydn string quartets on the KPFA studio piano. At the same time the music that Bob brought to the KPFA studios—Pauline Oliveros, with her meditative near-silences on her accordion, Morton Subotnick in the early stages of his electronic exuberance—flung wide open the boundaries of what radio listeners regarded as the standard listening experience of the time. A young firebrand named Pierre Boulez was in town, his first American visit. One of my most precious souvenirs is a tape of an hour in the KPFA studios—Boulez defending his radical new ideas against three argumentative Berkeley composers, with Bob Erickson as moderator instilling a voice of reason.

Erickson taught in U.C.-Berkeley's music department—somewhat uneasily, he told me, for a Krenek-trained composer in a department largely Boulangerie. The free-form department at San Francisco State proved a more welcoming environment; there he found a coterie of students open to suggestion, to experimentation. With his blessing, if not his active participation, the San Francisco Tape Music Center took shape and flourished. The notion of a musical event consisting of the various permutations of “noise” found its roots in a cramped studio in the very cluttered streets of midtown San Francisco, around 1960, that would, not many years later, also harbor the flower children and their beatific relatives.

Soon, however, Erickson himself would move on. In 1965 he answered the call of a search committee from U.C.-San Diego, to join with fellow-composer Will Ogdon in hopes of founding a “different” kind of music department within the walls of academe. “We wanted to start a department,” he later told me, “where composers could enjoy the kind of freedom, of respect, that musicologists enjoy at other universities.”

“Our original notions were these,” he continued. “We wanted a place for contemporary music where it would be performed and where research could be done on it, so we'd have contemporary music-performers, a composition school, and a research arm for musical experiment. The other thing in our original thought was this: let's have a place where we don't have grades and units, and we just make a folder for each student and when he's ready to go out we just send him along with that folder. The State of California had different ideas about setting up a university, so we have classes and numbers and all those things. But the free and easy—or the *integral*, a better word—kind of teaching is still going on.”²

I remember my first visit to the San Diego campus. I sat in on a class on electronic music, understanding not a word about “voltage control.” What fascinated me far more was a class Erickson had set up, which was the basic course open to music majors and non-majors—the thing called “music appreciation” on most other campuses. In the U.C.-San Diego permutation each student got a small tape recorder, and was told to bring back something, *anything* of interest. In an elementary lab the student would work that sound into a “musical” design. Erickson had set the example; some of his own compositions had been developed from his recordings of Pacific surf crashing on a beach (*Pacific Sirens*), the ripples of a Sierra brooklet accompanying a solo violin (*Summer Music*), and a speaker reading Douglas MacArthur's Farewell Speech into a trombone (*General Speech*).

² Rich, op. cit. and various remembered conversations.

Whatever effect this novel setting might have had on San Diego's students, the effect on Erickson's own music was no less profound. "Working with a music department full of modern ideas, lots of electronic gadgetry and, best of all, students and colleagues who are there only out of a passion for newness—all this becomes a massive source of new and thought-provoking material. Take the case of Ed Harkins, fabulous trumpeter but, more important, a performer willing to try out the territory beyond the normal reaches of the trumpet. So when I'm working on 'Night Music,' and there's an effect I want, I can stick my head out of my office and call out to Ed, 'Hey, can I do this?' and get an immediate yes or no. That's the kind of situation Haydn might have been working with, with that orchestra at his disposal at Esterhazy's palace.

"I think I did a lot of 'tape-plus' pieces simply because I was not around large groups of players. My desire to write for ensemble had to be satisfied on tape rather than some other way. But if I had my druthers, I think I'm likely to want to write for large orchestra ten to one over any other kind.

"I'm not going to learn by reading the pages of 'Perspectives of New Music,' but I'm going to learn something about what can be done by spending time close to people who can play well, studying their exercise books, listening outside their practice rooms, asking them questions, questions, questions. So yes, I live very close to players and much closer to performers than to other composers."³

Bob and Lenore—the painter Lenore Alt—settled in a hillside cottage in Encinitas, north of campus. In his garage he built some of his remarkable gadgetry that forged the union between electronics and the environment: a "noise organ" that could "tune" the sounds of surf into approximate musical pitches, through "organ pipes" assembled out of coffee-cans welded together. Flat, smooth river stones, some of them fairly large, collected for their pitch when struck, also found their way into several extensive compositions. Many of these "instruments" were moved to campus locations for actual concerts; most, alas, were damaged or destroyed some years later when the Music Department was moved to another location.

The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* bears the date 1953, which is also the year of Bob and Lenore Erickson's arrival in San Francisco; consider it also the landmark work that signals the end of a trend in Erickson's compositional methods, his reliance on older methods. These "methods" make themselves heard at the onset, a rhapsodic solo right out of Schoenberg's early notebook, yet bravely managed. The music gradually takes on calories; the orchestra, even more than the soloist, becomes quite animated in the second part, and everyone has a fine old time at the close. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* Alfred Frankenstein, one of the earliest American critics to consider the possibility of a fair shake to an unknown American composer, had this to say on September 19, 1955: ". . . Erickson's dramatic, complex, beautifully orchestrated and unfailingly interesting *Fantasy* was especially instructive to hear, since this composer has had few performances hereabouts, clearly knows his business, and has a great deal to say. . . ."

Night Music was composed and first performed in May 1978, by SONOR, the U.C.-San Diego experimental ensemble. "The music takes advantage," Erickson wrote, "of the group's special skills: the use of microtones, hockets (see above) between two or more instruments and in highly inflected melodic writing. Time flows free and unmetered, or in a kind of rhythmic polyphony that has worked its way into my music over the past seven or eight years. The composition stems neither from the 18th-century *Nachtmusik* tradition nor from the Mahlerian evocation of it. It invokes the kind of night that belongs to dreaming, an oceanic night."

³ Rich, op. cit.

One time, when I hadn't visited Bob for a couple of years, he opened his office door and beckoned me in. "C'mon in," he said, "I want you to hear something." He sat me down, and gave me my first hearing of *Night Music*. I'm sure I didn't move a muscle. I play it now, when anyone tries to tell me there's no beauty left in new music.

East of the Beach, its proud composer wrote in 1980, "was composed to fit the instrumentation of (the late) Tom Nee's New Hampshire Festival Orchestra, a 'classical' orchestra with winds in pairs and a small body of strings. There are three interconnected sections, or movements: a constantly changing timbre of a single pitch, an adagio and a fast finale. I was much involved with tone color and rhythm in this composition, but the tonal organization, simple and complex at the same time, was very intriguing to me, and carries hints for future pieces. The title refers to the place where I live, not far from the Pacific Ocean."

"I think of my music as simple," wrote Erickson in a note attached to *Auroras* in the 1985 revision, "easy for listeners though not so easy for performers." That might certainly apply to this, his last major orchestral work, stirring in its impact and certainly not easy on its large orchestra. Its score embraces many of the techniques of his late works: drones and some hocketing (as in *East of the Beach*) and the "bending" of trumpet tones (as in *Night Music*).

Not long after the completion of *Auroras*, Bob was stricken with a severe attack of a muscular disability, a form of lupus, that ordained his spending his last years mentally alert but on his back. He continued to compose; a Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Harp, music of sweet and resigned peace, seals what is, for me, a loving friendship.

—Alan Rich

Alan Rich writes for Bloomberg News; So I've Heard: Notes of a Bicoastal Music Critic (Amadeus Press) is the most recent of his several books.

The **Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP)** is widely recognized as the premiere orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to commissioning, performing, and recording music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Gil Rose, BMOP's mission is to illuminate the connections that exist naturally between contemporary music and contemporary society by reuniting composers and audiences in a shared concert experience. In its first decade BMOP established a track record that includes more than seventy concerts, more than fifty world premieres (including more than twenty commissioned works), two Opera Unlimited festivals of contemporary chamber opera with Opera Boston, twenty CDs, and, most recently, its own record label. BMOP launched BMOP/sound in March 2008. The orchestra's recordings have been widely acclaimed by the international press, including *The Chicago Tribune* ("Best CDs of 2004"), *Time Out New York* ("Best CDs of 2004"), *The Boston Globe* ("Best CDs of 2003"), and *The New York Times* ("Best CDs of 2003"). BMOP is a nine-time winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Orchestral Music and recipient of the prestigious John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music.

Gil Rose is recognized as one of a new generation of American conductors shaping the future of classical music. His orchestral and operatic performances and recordings have been recognized by critics and fans alike. In 1996 he founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and since 2003 he has been the Music Director of Opera Boston, conducting a wide range of repertoire from Mozart to today's most important operatic works. Active as a guest conductor, Mr. Rose has conducted the American Composers Orchestra, Chataqua Opera, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Netherlands Radio Symphony, the National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and the National Orchestra of Porto, as well as several appearances with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. He has premiered more than fifty works and released more than twenty CDs of 20th- and 21st-century orchestral and operatic repertoire and is the Executive Producer of the newly launched record label, BMOP/sound. His world premiere recording of the complete orchestral music of Arthur Berger was chosen by *The New York Times* as one of the "Best CDs of 2003." In 2007 Mr. Rose received Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music Award for his exemplary commitment to new American Music.

Cellist **Rafael Popper-Keizer** is one of Boston's most eminent freelance musicians. His career routinely encompasses everything from continuo in 17th-century motets to solo recitals to avant-garde improvisation to indie rock. Mr. Popper-Keizer is an alumnus of the New England Conservatory, where he studied with Laurence Lesser; and of the Tanglewood Music Center, where he performed to great acclaim from Mstislav Rostropovich and Joel Krosnick, and had the opportunity to understudy for Yo-Yo Ma in open rehearsals of *Don Quixote* with Seiji Ozawa. Mr. Popper-Keizer appears regularly with the Boston Modern Orchestral Project, Emmanuel Music, the Chameleon Arts Ensemble, Winsor Music, Monadnock Music, and the Ibis Camerata, and has enjoyed guest appearances with the Fromm Chamber Players, the Boston Trio, Firebird Ensemble, Walden Chamber Players, Boston Musica Viva, and John Harbison's Token Creek Festival, among others. Labels for which he has recorded include Albany, Arsis, Bridge, Capstone, Helicon, Musical Heritage Society, New World Records, Intrada, and Zimbel.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Chamber Concerto*. Hartt Chamber Players, Ralph Shapey, conductor. CRI SD 218. (LP)
- End of The Mime*. New Music Choral Ensemble I, Kenneth Gaburo, director. CRI SD 325. (LP)
- Garden*. Laura Martin, violin; Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London, conductor. New World Records 80603-2.
- General Speech*. Stuart Dempster, trombone. New World 80541-2.
- Kryl*. Edwin Harkins, trumpet. New World/CRI NWCR 616.
- Pacific Sirens*. Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London, conductor. New World Records 80603-2.
- Piano Concerto. Keith Humble, piano; University of Illinois Contemporary Chamber Players; Edwin London, conductor. New World Records 80603-2.
- Postcards*. Carol Plantamura, soprano; Jürgen Hübscher, lute. New World/CRI NWCR 616.
- Quoq*. John Fonville, flute. New World/CRI NWCR 616.
- Ricercar à 3 for Double Bass*. Bertram Turetzky, double bass. New World/CRI NWCR 616.
- Ricercar à 5 for Trombones*. S. Dempster, L. Dwyer, F. Harmantas, L. Newton, P. Vander Gheynst, trombones. New World 80563-2.
- Sierra*. Philip Larson, baritone; SONOR Ensemble of UC-San Diego, Thomas Nee, conductor. New World/CRI NWCR 616.
- White Lady*. Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London, conductor. New World Records 80603-2.

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