

CRI SD 332
Jolas/Hiller

Betsy Jolas
Quatuor III (9 Etudes) (17:15)

Lejaren Hiller
Quartet No. 6 for Strings (23:40)

Mark Sokol and Andrew Jennings, violins;
John Kochanowski, viola; Norman Fischer, cello

Betsy Jolas was born in Paris on August 5, 1926, the daughter of American parents. She came to the United States in 1940 to complete her classical studies at the French Lycée in New York, and at Bennington College where she received a B.A. in 1946. She studied composition and theory with Paul Boepple, organ with Carl Weinrich, and piano with Mrs. Karl Ulrich Schnabel. During that period she participated in the activities of the Dessoff Choirs as a singer, pianist, and organist. Thus she became acquainted with Renaissance and pre-Renaissance music, an experience that deeply marked her musical personality.

After returning to Paris in 1946, Miss Jolas completed her music studies at the Paris Conservatoire under Darius Milhaud (composition), Simone Plé Caussade (fugue), and Olivier Messiaen (analysis). Since October, 1971, she has been teaching Messiaen's classes at the Conservatoire when he goes on tour.

Betsy Jolas has received awards from the Besançon International Contest for Young Conductors (1953), the Chicago Copley Foundation (1954), the O.R.T.F. (Prix des Auteurs et Compositeurs de Langue Française—1961), and, in 1973, the American Academy/National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, which made this recording possible.

Among her compositions are *Etats* for violin and six percussion; *Sonate à 12* for twelve solo voices; *Musique d'hiver* for organ and small orchestra, and *B for Sonata* for piano.

The composer writes:

"After *Quatuor I* for strings (1958) and *Quatuor II* for coloratura and string trio (1964), here is again a true quartet for strings.

"I have attempted in this work to present a contemporary view of some characteristic elements of string technique in the form of nine etudes, each of which, following Debussy's example, deals with one particular aspect of this technique: pizzicato, harmonics, aleatory (No. 7 is in memory of Purcell's *Fancy* on one note), vibrato, etc. Several of the movements are played without pause. Commissioned by the Kindler Foundation, *Quatuor III* was completed in September 1973. The first performance was given at the Textile Museum in Washington, January 7, 1974, by the Concord Quartet, to whom the work is dedicated."

Lejaren Hiller (b New York, 1924) attended Princeton University, where he majored in chemistry but also studied music composition with Milton Babbitt and Roger Sessions. He worked as a research chemist for E.I. duPont de Nemours and then as a professor of chemistry at the University of Illinois until 1958. During 1957, he collaborated with Leonard Isaacson to compose the *Illiad Suite* for String Quartet, the first work composed with a digital computer (his second, *Computer Cantata*, is on CRI SD 310). In 1958 he designed, built, and became director of the Experimental Music Studio of the University of Illinois. In 1968, he became the first permanent Frederick B. Slee Professor of Composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo and also co-director, with Lukas Foss, of the Center for Creative and Performing Arts. During 1973 and 1974, he was the first Senior Fulbright Lecturer in Music in Poland.

Mr. Hiller has composed more than fifty works in all media: orchestral music including two symphonies, chamber music, vocal music, electronic and computer music, and numerous scores for theater, movies, and TV.

The composer has commented as follows:

"String Quartet No. 6 is a commentary on environmental soundscapes, both pleasant and offensive. The technique I used for composing it was rather unusual, at least for me. I spent much of the summer and early fall of 1972 jotting down sketches and notes about sound patterns I frequently hear; I also recorded many of them on tape whenever convenient. Eventually I accumulated quite a variety of materials, the most interesting of which I then sorted into three basic categories: 1) sounds that originate in racket and noise such as one endures in commercial and industrial areas and to which one eventually responds with rage and exasperation; 2) sounds that originate under relatively peaceful circumstances such as, for example, sounds that drift through an open window on a summer afternoon, and 3) sounds that are relatively cheerful, if not always necessarily lofty, such as the droning that drifts up from the downstairs TV set when children tune into Saturday morning cartoon shows.

"I next arranged all this material into a skeleton plan to form a profile for the quartet as a whole. Here I made use of techniques such as chance processes (random number tables, *I-Ching* values, etc.), systematic groups and constraints such as gradually narrowing down the variety of available pitches (as in the third movement), deliberate overlaying of sounds from different sources to create a complex counterpoint, imposition of speech patterns, and so on. This then became the profile that governed the composing of the quartet itself.

"I should emphasize that the string writing is not literal transcription of the sort that Messiaen, for example, uses in his bird-call music. The performers play music written expressly for string quartet, not transcribed *musique concrète*. What has resulted are three commentaries in narrative forms that unfold completely without developments, recurrences or reworkings of the traditional sort of musical themes, textures or gestures.

"I composed this work for the Concord String Quartet, which premiered it at the New York Cultural Center In January, 1973."

Since its debut in 1971, the **Concord String Quartet** has established an international reputation as one of the major quartets of its generation. From an initial emphasis on contemporary music, the Quartet's repertoire has gradually come to encompass the entire spectrum of composition from Haydn to the present.

Now in residence at Dartmouth College, the Quartet maintains an active program of premiering new works, as the pieces on this disc illustrate, and its recordings for CRI, Nonesuch, Turnabout, and Vox have elicited unanimous critical acclaim.

The members of the Concord Quartet play on a matched set of instruments made by Sergio Peresson of Udine.

This recording was made possible by grants from the State University of New York at Buffalo and the American Academy/National Institute of Arts and Letters. The Academy/Institute annually awards prizes to four composers for achievement during the year, for which a recording is part of the prize. Betsy Jolas was a 1973 winner.

Produced by Carter Harman

Jolas recorded by David Hancock

Hiller recorded by Dondisound, Red Hook, N. Y.

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