

## MARIO DAVIDOVSKY

Three Synchronisms for instruments and electronic sounds

NO. 1 FOR FLUTE (1963) *HARVEY SOLLBERGER (flute)*

NO. 2 FOR FLUTE, CLARINET, VIOLIN, 'CELLO (1964) *Sophie Sollberger (flute), Stanley Drucker (clarinet), Paul Zukofsky (violin), Robert L. Martin ('cello), Efrain Guigui (conductor)*

NO. 3 FOR 'CELLO (1964-65) *ROBERT L. MARTIN ('cello)*

## HARVEY SOLLBERGER

Chamber Variations (1964) for twelve players and conductor

*The Group for Contemporary Music – Columbia University, GUNTHER SCHULLER (conductor)*

MARIO DAVIDOVSKY (b. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1934) pursued his initial musical studies in Argentina, working in composition with Guillermo Graetzer, Teodoro Fuchs, Erwin Leuchter, and Ernesto Epstein. In the United States he has studied with Otto Luening and Aaron Copland. Since coming to the United States in 1958, Mr. Davidovsky has won more than a dozen major awards, fellowships and commissions, among them two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, a Koussevitzky Foundation commission and a Fromm Foundation commission for the Synchronism No. 2 recorded here.

While Mr. Davidovsky's reputation has rested largely on the works composed in connection with his association with the electronic music center at Columbia and Princeton universities, his catalog of compositions includes a considerable variety of scores for non-electronic media – chief among them being two string quartets, a clarinet quintet, *Planos* for orchestra, *El Payaso* ballet suite, and *Serie Sinfónica*. A 1965 Fromm Foundation commission has resulted in Mr. Davidovsky's composition, *Inflexions* for 14 Players.

Concerning the Three Synchronisms recorded here, Mr. Davidovsky notes that “They belong to a series of short pieces wherein conventional instruments are used in conjunction with electronic sounds. The attempt here has been made to preserve the typical characteristics of the conventional instruments and of the electronic medium respectively – yet to achieve integration of both into a coherent musical texture.”

“In the planning and realization of these pieces,” Mr. Davidovsky notes further, “two main problems arise – namely proper synchronization (a) of rhythm and (b) of pitch. During the shorter episodes where both electronic and conventional instruments are playing, rather strict timing is adhered to. However, in the more extended episodes of this type, an element of chance is introduced to allow for the inevitable time discrepancies that develop between the live performer(s) and the constant-speed tape recorder.

“To achieve pitch coherence between the conventional instruments which use the 12-tone chromatic scale and the electronic medium which is non-tempered, use is made of tonal occurrences of very high density – manifested for example by a very high speed succession of attacks, possible only in the electronic medium. Thus, in such instances – based on high speed and short duration of separate tones, it is impossible for the ear to perceive the pure pitch value of each separate event; though in reacting, it does trace so to speak a statistical curve of the density. Only in a very few instances have tempered electronic pitches been employed in the Synchronisms. Throughout all three pieces, the tape recorder has been used as an integral part of the instrumental fabric.”

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HARVEY SOLLBERGER (b. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1938) has enjoyed a reputation as one of the most brilliant young flutists specializing in contemporary music; and his winning of the Joseph Bearnese Prize in Musical Composition (1963), of a 1964 Fromm Foundation commission for composition of the Chamber Variations recorded here, and of the 1965 Institute of Arts and Letters grant, has signaled Mr. Sollberger’s emergence as a creative artist of comparable stature.

Mr. Sollberger studied composition at the University of Iowa with Eldon Obrecht and Philip Bezanson, continuing at Columbia University under Jack Beeson and Otto Luening. He is currently a member of the Columbia University music faculty and co-director of the Group for Contemporary Music at Columbia University.

Besides the Chamber Variations, Mr. Sollberger's catalog of compositions includes a Grand Quartet for Flutes, Five Songs to texts of Juan Ramón Jiménez, Two Oboes Troping, and *Musica Transalpina* for soprano, baritone, and six instrumentalists.

Mr. Sollberger writes as follows concerning his Chamber Variations: "The variations alluded to in the title of my composition should not be thought of as a group of set pieces derived from and following in the wake of a 'theme.' The variation idea here is more one of continuous cyclic expansion based on the simultaneous and successive confrontations of originally 'fixed' musical occurrences that become subject gradually to various transformation procedures. In the course of its motion away from initially fixed norms of continuation — these norms involving among other things tempo, metric structure, instrumental function, patterns of repetition — activity often occurs in the form of layered or multi-level structures which simultaneously juxtapose different phases of the total development. Such construction is facilitated by the division of the ensemble — exclusive of the piano — into two groups comprised of (A) flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, cello, percussion I and (B) piccolo-alto flute, oboe, bassoon, viola, contrabass, percussion II; partitioning is further extended to include the formation of a short-lived trio consisting of the first group's flute and cello combined with the piano. As the work progresses its complexion changes from the original soloistic orientation to an increasingly abstracted ensemble texture of interrelated pitch, attack, timbre, and intensity patterns. Associated with this is in turn a gradual transition from conventional rhythmic notation to a form of spatial notation having none of the former's limitations with regard to the indication of subdivided beat.

"If, to this point, the function of the instruments has been heard to be changing, changes, too, have been seen in the case of the primary visual component of the performance, the conductor. From conventional 'time-beating' at the outset of the piece the conductor's initiative (still kept, though, within the traditional custodial limits of his craft) is gradually extended to include — beyond the increasing frequency of tempo and meter changes — responsibility for the direct regulation of each event as it occurs. Thus, at the end of the work, time is not 'beat' by the conductor; it is, rather, measured as the duration between individual and composite events which occur upon his direct cue. Through all of this there continues to exist certain invariable elements, e.g. the piano's gravity-defying cascades which begin halfway through the piece, and the alto flute melody I afterwards learned I had borrowed from *Tosca* ("Vissi d'arte"), against which, perhaps, the processes of change embodied in the work can better be perceived.

“A word remains to be said about the performance of this piece. From a purely technical point of view, a performance such as the one on this recording would not have been possible as little as five years ago. By that time the demands of much new music so far exceeded the capabilities and understanding of those in the ‘public’ concert world whose traditional role it had been to perform and present new works, that composers resolved to take direct action themselves. One response to this problem was the formation in 1962 of the **GROUP FOR CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY** – and subsequently of other university-based ensembles patterned after it – which provided a setting under university sponsorship for the cooperative endeavor of composers and performers dedicated to the pursuit of a new degree of excellence in the performance of contemporary music. Under the directorship of Charles Wuorinen and myself the Group for Contemporary Music has functioned continuously since 1962; during that time it has presented performances of over 100 twentieth century works including 40 first performances. The Group for Contemporary Music has also given concerts at colleges and universities around the country and on radio and television. Participants in this recorded performance, in addition to conductor Gunther Schuller, include Gerardo Levy (flute), Sophie Sollberger (alto flute and piccolo), Josef Marx (oboe), Efrain Guigui (clarinet and bass clarinet), Donald MacCourt (bassoon), Jeanne Benjamin (violin), Scott Nickrenz (viola), Peter Rosenfeld (‘cello), Kenneth Fricker (contrabass), Charles Wuorinen (piano), Raymond Des Roches and Richard Fitz (percussion).”

NOTES PREPARED BY D. H.

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*Through joint committees of selection, these societies every year award fifteen grants to young artists in recognition of distinction and promise. Four of these awards go annually to composers, in addition to the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award given every third year to an established composer of distinction.*

*In the spring an exhibition of the works of award winners in painting and sculpture is held at the Academy building. In 1956, it was decided to inaugurate a series of recordings with the similar purpose of calling attention to the works of award winners in music. This release, presented in*

*collaboration with Composers Recordings, Inc., offers works by 1965 award winners, Mario Davidovsky and Harvey Sollberger.*

DOUGLAS MOORE

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