MEYER KUPFERMAN

IMAGES OF CHAGALL

SUMMER MUSIC & SOUND PHANTOMS #7

Performed by: BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE Cygnus Ensemble Ithaca Players

Soundspells roductions DIGITAL RECORDING

CD 103



NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Images of Chagall, commissioned by the Petchek Foundation for the Bronx Arts Ensemble, was completed in 1987. Inspired by five paintings of Chagall, Kupferman (who is also a painter) has interpreted through his own musical language an equivalency to the shape and color world of the paintings.

Blue Circus illustrates the various acts which are performed in a circus. It is great fun and utilizes humorous percussion effects and marching fanfares for the brass. Of particular interest is the central section which features a solo for the E-flat clarinet: soaring above independent ostinati distributed throughout the rest of the ensemble, this passage is intended to illustrate the painting's high wire artist who pirouettes far above the rest of her fellow performers. It bursts with musical color and multi-layered orchestration, evoking the dizzying strangeness of this circus scene. The Green Violinist, in sharp contrast, features a violin solo characteristic of a Yiddish

song: the painting, illustrating a violinist playing for pennies in the shtetl, inspires a musical illustration which is the most haunting of the movements.

Between Darkness and Light, explores the contrast between musical ideas of opposing character: fast driving sections are alternated with slow, sustained passages of equal power.

Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law, is a brooding portrait of this Biblical hero initiated by the bass clarinet in its lowest register. Modes and gestures of ancient Jewish music are suggested throughout Moses' theme. An energetic dance of the Golden Calf is heard as he ascends the mountain and a powerfully explosive passage illustrates his anger at the Israelites upon his return.

I and the Village, begins as a bassoon solo followed by a duet and trio creating the impression of gathering townspeople. Here again, the brushstrokes and colors of the painter find a musical equivalent in playful arabesques and delicate timbral effects. The body of the movement then reprises Blue Circus, asserting Kupferman's notion that the circus is indeed the village. Beyond these descriptions, however, the piece is first and foremost a statement of music. Kupferman, like Moussorgsky before him, has created an original, deeply personal composition.

NOTES ON THE MUSIC continued

Summer Music, completed in the summer of 1987 and dedicated to William Anderson, was commissioned by the Bar Harbor Festival for the Cygnus Ensemble and was premiered the same year. Because the commission was for a summer program, Kupferman decided to compose a light, lyrical piece rightfully reflecting the mood of summer. Written in his gestalt style, that is containing many different musical languages which have been reconciled into a single stylistic identity, Summer Music contains many sections which more often than not juxtapose sharply contrasting harmonic and stylistic idioms.

The instrumentation of Summer Music is worthy of special note, the most striking aspect of which is the presence of two amplified guitars. The amplification serves to enhance the acoustic presence of these instruments as well as exaggerate their overtone series, thus contributing to a very much larger-than-life sound quality. The writing for the two guitars creates a kind of "super-guitar" capable of executing thick chords of more than six notes when playing in rhythmic unison and, when playing independently, of dovetailing relentless ostinato passages. Very often the guitars play in parallel seconds, enabling the performance of consecutive harmonies otherwise impossible. In many places the guitars are pitted against the flute and cello, which have more melodic material and serve as the sustaining voice of the work. Contained herein are many of Kupferman's favorite compositional devices such as the pentatonic and modal material which permeate numerous areas. There are also quite a few energetic ostinati and double ostinati, rhythmic gestures incorporating quasi-jazz elements and unusually outrageous melodies expressing visionary flights of fancy. Here is a work in which the composer gives himself a summer holiday by exploring his most beloved stylistic dialects.

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

continued

Sound Phantoms #7, written for Kupferman's own concert series entitled "Music by My Friends", was premiered at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1980 with the composer as saxophonist.

Scored for B-flat soprano saxophone and percussion, the work is written in Kupferman's gestalt style consisting of several long sections which are eventually laid into contrast with one another. Opening in a "phantom"-like way with powerful, atmospheric material for both instruments, sharply contrasting episodes begin to unfold. Among these are a humorous passage featuring the quica imitating the sound of the human voice and a modal, folklike melody which seems to be an earlier incarnation of Blue Circus. A long soprano saxophone cadenza contains yet another abrupt stylistic shift into the language of J.S. Bach or Teleman (humorous in itself if it were not so oddly beautiful), followed in turn by a wild and resonant percussion cadenza consisting of mostly unpitched instruments. To experience a work such as this is to be reminded of the contemporary literary movement dubbed Fabulism which weaves surprising shifts of genre and strange humor through darkly fantastic macabre tales.

Here, as in all of Kupferman's works, a genuine freshness abounds through his use of unexpected, wildly divergent musical means. It becomes a virtuoso performance for the composer as well as the instrumentalists.

- Notes by Christopher Vassiliades -

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Images of Chagall

The Bronx Arts Ensemble, conducted by the Composer

Gerald Tarack, violin; Dean Crandall, bass; Paul Gallo, clarinets; William Scribner, bassoon; Ronnie Carson, trumpet; Clifford Haynes, bass trombone; Jan Hagiwara, percussion.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble, formed in 1972 by bassoonist William Scribner, is the Bronx's only fully professional chamber music group and chamber orchestra. Performing over one hundred concerts each season at numerous educational and historic sites in the borough, the Ensemble has been in residence at Fordham University (Bronx Rose Hill Campus) since 1979. One of the most dynamic chamber ensembles in the Northeast, the BAE maintains a core group of virtuoso players who enjoy bringing challenging music to the general public. As a result of its special qualities, the BAE has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (which has helped to fund its performance on this recording), the Petchek Foundation, the C. Michael Paul Foundation and is the recipient of the Encore Award from the New York City Arts and Business Council. Many notable soloists have played with the BAE which regularly presents world premieres by many outstanding composers, including Meyer Kupferman.

Summer Music

The Cygnus Ensemble

Tara Helen O'Connor, flute; John Whirfield, cello; William Anderson, Oren Fader, guitars.

The Cygnus Ensemble was formed in 1985 by guitarist William Anderson as a means of promoting contemporary chamber music and specifically chamber music with guitar. Cygnus has since performed widely in the Northeastern United States, receiving praise for its first-rate performances and unusual instrumentations. Cygnus has been heard on National Public Radio's "Performance Today", on KPFA (Berkeley, Calif.) and live on WGBH's "Chamber Works" (Boston).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS continued

Sound Phantoms #7

Steven Mauk, soprano saxophone; Gordon Stout, percussion.

Steven Mauk is renowned as a saxophone virtuoso, teacher and scholar, serving as Professor of Music/Instructor of Saxophone and Chair of Graduate Studies in Music at the Ithaca College, School of Music, as well as maintaining an active concert schedule. One of the foremost authorities on the soprano saxophone, Dr. Mauk is often invited to present lectures, recitals and articles dealing with this member of the saxophone family. Numerous composers have dedicated works to him, and his performances with the soprano have helped in the recent acceptance of his instrument as a solo voice.

Gordon Stout is currently Associate Professor of Percussion at the Ithaca College, School of Music. A composer as well as percussionist who specializes on marimba, he has recorded extensively and many of his own works have become standard repertoire for marimbists worldwide. His association with trumpeter Robert Levy led to the creation of "The Wilder Duo" which has gained extensive recognition through the creation of over 25 new compositions by American composers for this instrumentation. In 1983 he performed in France, Germany, Holland and Belgium and has been described as the Rubenstein of the marimba.

Marc Chagall, <u>Green Violinist</u>, 1923 – 1924, Oil on canvas: Gift, Solomon R. Guggenheim, 1937, Collection Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Photo: David Heald, Photograph © 1990 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

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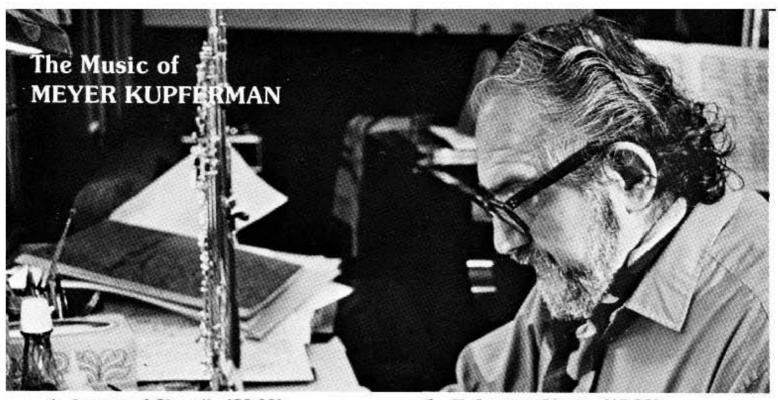
Soundspells Productions gratefully acknowledges the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum for permission to reproduce Marc Chagall's Green Violinist.

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Images of Chagall and Summer Music are published by Soundspells Productions (ASCAP).

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- 1. Images of Chagall [33:33] Bronx Arts Ensemble Conducted by the Composer
 - Blue Circus (11:18)
 - The Green Violinist (1:36)
 - 3 Between Darkness and Light (4:42)
 - Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law (9:53)
 - 5 I and the Village (6:24)

- 2. 6 Summer Music [15:32] Cygnus Ensemble
- 3. 7 Sound Phantoms #7 [19:31] Steven Mauk, Soprano Saxophone Gordon Stout, percussion



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