

LIBRETTO FOR ORCHESTRA Members of the New Philharmonia Orchestra, Harold Farberman, conductor

LIBRETTO FOR ORCHESTRA, written during 1948-1949, was completed in the composer's twenty-third year. Conceived as a music-drama without words or plot, the work is based on a freely organized alternation of rich instrumental colors, a wide range of harmonic moods and textures and a purely kinetic approach to rhythmic energy. Although most of the melodic materials are derived from a loose network of twenty or more individual 12-tone rows the essential vocabulary of the work is freely chromatic rather than serial. The "Libretto," as the name implies, is structured as a continuity of many short, contrasting episodes, each reflecting the cogency of a theatre piece. There are no pauses between movements; instead, each section flows into the next through a series of kinetic transitions which for the most part feature one solo instrument. The work begins very introspectively and builds towards a huge climax about two-thirds of the way through. The final portion recedes from a near-violent crescendo to become somber and reflective. A pointillistic episode, ending with an extended unaccompanied bass-line in the cellos and basses, brings the work to a quiet close.

DIVERTIMENTO FOR ORCHESTRA

Stuttgart Philharmonia, Harold Farberman, conductor

The DIVERTIMENTO FOR ORCHESTRA is an immediately accessible piece. While it makes substantial use of 12-tone elements, it never adheres strictly to the compositional rules of the form, and perhaps for this reason, its harmonies are less austere, its appeal less cerebral than more absolute 12-tone forms. Kupferman is the first to admit that this is an eclectic work, but if there are stylistic reminiscences of Bartok and Stravinsky, the Divertimento also contains much that is distinctly Kupferman. The strong thrusts of melodic energy, the highly inventive handling of rhythms, the vague (subliminal, if you prefer) undertones of jazz are all important characteristics of his energetic musical personality.

"My main objective in the Divertimento," said the composer recently, "was to explore color in a great variety of forms – quickly shifting instrumental colors, the byplay of rhythmic patterns, active splashes of color in the orchestrations, changing hues caused by sudden alterations in tempi or the size of the performing ensemble."

Significantly, Kupferman did not emulate many of his colleagues among the younger generation of composers, who achieve unusual coloristic effects by means of "offbeat" instruments and unorthodox performing methods. Rather, he took the infinitely more challenging route of achieving this remarkable study in sonority with a classical orchestra, and a smallish one at that. The brass is limited to a pair of horns, and the percussion to tympani (used in the last movement only). The colors, in other words, have not been brushed on as an afterthought; they well up out of the music itself, forming an integral and striking part of its overall texture.

CHAMBER SYMPHONY

Prisma Chamber Players of Copenhagen, Harold Farberman, conductor

As a searching composer, Meyer Kupferman looks upon many of his early scores as exploratory,

experimental pieces which helped shape the direction of his musical growth. Three of the works recorded here, fall into that category: all were written when he was in his early twenties and, as properly befitting youthful adventures in composition, they differ dramatically from one another in concept, in form, in sound. They are thus doubly fascinating, both as links in the chain of creative events that molded Kupferman's mature style and – even more importantly – on their own merits as valid works of art.

THE CHAMBER SYMPHONY, dating from 1950, is the most ambitious piece of the trilogy. Cast in the formal mold of the 12-tone system, it is especially intriguing, technically, because of the extensive use of what Kupferman calls "rotating tone-centers," that is, a progression of 48 separate tonal bases operating within the overall framework of atonality. Musically, its pages are vitalized by darting melodic figurations and vividly fluctuating rhythms, but at times the music also reveals a surprisingly deep fount of lyric expression.

The Symphony is scored for flute (also piccolo), oboe, bassoon, French horn, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin and double-bass, with the instruments used primarily in a soloistic, even virtuosic manner. Ensemble blends never last long – they are deftly swept aside by exploding solo motives – and even the rhythmic momentum is subject to effective instrumental interruptions (as, for instance, when violin and bass unexpectedly emerge for a lyrical cadenza of sorts, in the otherwise galvanic finale).

"Each of the four movements of the Chamber Symphony," says Kupferman, "is an abstraction of a particular temperament." The shifting textural balances of the first movement are the cool, introspective aspects of reflection.

In the second movement the sudden contrasts of tempi, configurations and instrumental timbres find their sources in the dramatic. Lyricism is the essence of the third movement with its extended melodic lines and the sustained, quiet groupings of sounds. The bassoon cadenza at the end of this movement sums up its linear qualities and establishes the basis for the entrance into the Finale. In this movement speed and symmetry combine with a certain playful spirit of adventure to convey a temperament unmistakable sanguine.

ATTO (...the smallest particle) FOR ORCHESTRA The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Paul Freeman, conductor

ATTO...The Smallest Particle...for Orchestra is one of a series of experiments in explosive miniatures which the composer has written for different ensembles, each lasting approximately one minute. Here we have an atomic concentration of orchestral force. "This tiny one minute form," says the composer, "is like a big blockbuster symphony encapsuled in an ice-cube and melting into nothing during its one moment in the sun!"

MASK OF ELECTRA Jan De Gaetani, mezzo-soprano; Ronald Roseman, oboe; Joel Spiegelman, electric harpsichord

MASK OF ELECTRA, scored for mezzo-soprano, oboe and electric harpsichord, is a dramatic serial piece, based on the composer's "Infinities" tone row (g, f, a flat, c flat, b flat, d, f sharp, e, c, e flat, a, c sharp). The theatrical nature of the work requires the singer to wear a special costume for its presentation and to move through a fixed pattern of stage lighting and positions related to the placement of the other two performers on the stage.

The work opens with a dark, brooding chord in the electric harpsichord, immediately transformed into an explosive overture of erratic configurations and electrical pulsations. The oboe is heard, intense and agitated like the sound of impending evil. Electra enters, walking as though in a trance. The music becomes more lyrical, even tranquil, as Electra is visited by the elemental sensations of the outer world. Suddenly the music erupts into fiery clustered sounds as Electra recalls the murder of her father. She vows vengeance. The oboe, a capella, intones the "Muss es Sein?" motif (Beethoven), then continues into an expressive, wide-ranged melodic solo, while the silhouette of Electra is seen in a position of silent meditation. Electra is gripped with terror as the ghost of her father looms up before her. A dissonant syncopated ostinato leads to a climactic cluster produced by the electric harpsichord. Three hysterically florid vocal figures, supported by unusually pulsating passages in the oboe and harpsichord, bring the work to its end on Electra's words, "Let there be vengeance in the wind."

- Notes by Robert Sherman

MASK OF ELECTRA (words by Meyer Kupferman)

Their voices surround me, Love and death without a God In the silence of time.

Outside, the rivers of memory are revived, The lovely sun, pretending each day - dreams itself to sleep. Feel the kiss of gentle moonlight Offering love to the stars.

To die, like the king of shadows, Through poison, Betrayed into sleep. My soul cries vengeance! Heart, bursting with hate, I will defy death And break the silence of evil.

Whose face do I see through this veil of terror? Ghost of my world, Of my father.

Let there be vengeance in the wind!

MEYER KUPFERMAN

MEYER KUPFERMAN was born in Manhattan in 1926. He received his education at the High School of Music and Art and at Queens College. He is entirely self-taught in music composition. He has been Professor of Chamber Music and Composition at Sarah Lawrence College since 1951, where he also served as chairman of the music department for five terms. Mr. Kupferman has been awarded grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Aaron Copland Fund and the Jewish Music Commission. He is a virtuoso clarinetist who has premiered over sixty solo and chamber works composed especially for him. Kupferman is an unusually prolific composer and has an impressive output of work in all forms: 7 operas, 12 symphonies, 9 ballets, 7 string quartets, 10 concertos and hundreds of chamber works. His strong interest in jazz has been abundantly shown by such "classical-jazz" compositions as CONCERTO FOR CELLO AND JAZZ BAND, SONATA ON JAZZ ELEMENTS, TUNNELS OF LOVE, ADJUSTABLE TEARS, JAZZ INFINITIES THREE, JAZZ STRING QUARTET, and MOONFLOWERS BABY, a solo clarinet jazz work which has received international acclaim as a result of Charles Neidrich's spectacular performances throughout the Soviet Union, Europe, Japan, and the USA. He has received commissions from the Saidenberg Little Symphony, from the Hudson Valley Philharmonic for his JAZZ SYMPHONY in 1988 and SYMPHONY NO. 10, FDR in 1982, the Chappaqua Symphony for WINGS OF THE HIGHEST TOWER, and the Louisville Orchestra, which commissioned and recorded his FOURTH SYMPHONY in 1956. The American Composers Orchestra premiered his CHALLENGER in 1984 and the Pro Arte Orchestra of Boston recorded his CLARINET CONCERTO for CRI.

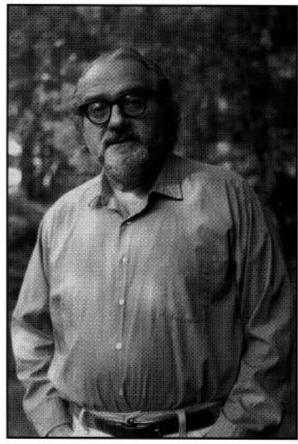
A forty year retrospective of his keyboard music was performed during a nine concert tour by pianist Christopher Vassiliades. Some of his experimental works in tape-gestalt form includes such pieces as Celestial City. Angel footprints, Super-flute and Illusions. Among his film scores are such pictures as BLACK LIKE ME, HALLELUJA THE HILLS, BLAST OF SILENCE and the Truman Capote film TRILOGY, which includes the famous, A CHRISTMAS MEMORY. The music of Meyer Kupferman is deeply rooted in atonality. His early experiments with 12-tone cromaticism in the late 40's and early 50's however, already bore the imprint of a stylistic mix, a crossing of tonal vs. atonal harmonies and athematic vs. thematic melodic elements. The year 1961 marks the start of his thirty year CYCLE OF INFINITIES, a series of over forty major orchestral, chamber, solo and full production operatic works, all based on the same 12-tone row. His many experiments with classical-jazz compositions also grew out of this same Infinities tone-row (like JAZZ STRING QUARTET, TUNNELS OF LOVE, MOONFLOWERS BABY and JAZZ SYMPHONY).

Kupferman's FANTASY SONATA, for violin and piano, commissioned by the Library of Congress, was a first in his "gestalt" works that dominated his stylistic forms in the 70's. The quicksilver, rapidly changing designs that characterized his gestalt pieces, were clearly an outgrowth of his early experiments which combined tonal and atonal resources. These freedoms are still very much in evidence in Kupferman's rich musical imagination.

In the summer of 1990 the Lithuanian National Symphony recorded his JAZZ SYMPHONY and CHALLENGER (Soundspells Productions CD 104). Mr. Kupferman made the heroic trip to Lithuania for that purpose during the time of the Russian blockade. In the 1991-92 season he celebrated his 65th year with the premiere of his seventh opera, THE PROSCENIUM and several piano retrospectives with pianists Morton Estrin, Kazuko Hayami, Svetlana Gorokhovich and Christopher Vassiliades. Kupferman's book, ATONAL JAZZ, a two volume, in-depth study of new chromatic techniques in contemporary jazz was released in 1992 by Dorn Publications. His CONCERTO FOR GUITAR AND ORCHESTRA was commissioned by the Orquesta de Baja California and premiered in Mexico in 1994 with Roberto Limon as guitar soloist and Eduardo Garcia Barrios, conductor.

Most recent commissions are his new CHACONNE SONATA for flute and piano, written for Laurel Ann Mauer, PIPE DREAM SONATA for solo guitar commissioned by Robert Phillips, ICE CREAM CONCERTO and FLAVORS OF THE STARS both for the virtuoso ATRIL⁵ Contemporary Ensemble of Mexico, HOT HORS D'OUEVRES for the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and HEXAGON SKIES for guitar and orchestra commissioned by the Orquesta de Baja California and guitarist Roberto Limon.

More recent Kupferman projects soon to be recorded are FLIGHT OF ORESTES for six saxophones, BANNERS for orchestra, AMONG THE WINDY PLACES for bassoon, violin and viola and GOING HOME for guitar quartet.



Meyer Kupferman



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The works on this CD are reissues from selected Serenus recordings. Slight imperfections in the sound are as a result of the condition of the original master tapes from which the transfers were made.

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The Orchestral Music of Meyer Kupferman Vol. II

1. Libretto for Orchestra (21:13)

Serenus SRS 12025 Members of the New Philharmonia Orch. conducted by Harold Farberman

Divertimento for Orchestra

Serenus SRE 1017 Stuttgart Philharmonia, conducted by Harold Farberman

- Allegro Molto (5:28)
- 3. Adagio (3:50)
- 4. Alegro Moderato, Allegro Molto (5:05)

Chamber Symphony Serenus SRF 1017 Prisma C

Serenus SRE 1017 Prisma Chamber Players of Copenhagen, conducted by Harold Farberman

- 5. = 50 (7:00)
- 6. . = 72 (3:49)
- 7. . = 56 (6:13)
- 8. = 104 (3:37)
- 9. Atto for Orchestra (1:23)

Serenus SRS 12081 The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Paul Freeman

10. Mask of Electra (9:00)

Serenus SRS 12034 Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano Ronald Roseman, oboe

> Joel Spiegelman, electric Harpsichord

Soundspells Productions extends special thanks to the New York Public Library Music Division for its care and concern for the original tapes of these Kupferman works.



