

The Guitar
Music of

MEYER KUPFERMAN

Vol. 1

“ECHOES FROM BARCELONA”

STRUMMING

POETICS #3



EXORDIUM

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

WILLIAM ANDERSON, solo guitar

OREN FADER, guitar

JOAN FORSYTH, piano

**Soundspells
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The Guitar Music of MEYER KUPFERMAN • VOL. 1

For a period of 15 years I have returned again and again to Meyer Kupferman's guitar masterpieces. It has also been a great privilege for me to have had the opportunity to work together with Kupferman over the years, honing my interpretations of these works. I consider him one of my most important and formidable teachers.

While Kupferman does not play the guitar himself, his writing displays a deep understanding of the expressive possibilities of the guitar. I find this music definitively guitaristic. While it is impossible to describe the full scope of his musical world, my hands-on experience with his music has left some indelible impressions: Kupferman loves to range spontaneously between extremes. Flying from the lowest register to the highest and hovering there at the top of a great parabolic arch, one wonders how long the weightlessness can be sustained! We encounter in this music extremes of register, extremes of volume, timbre, velocity, and deliberate stylistic contradictions. His guitar music is both the loudest and the softest guitar music I've ever experienced.

While the fun and flair of his music was certainly an attraction for me when I was a young musician looking for challenges, I gradually found his work to rest on some deep, rock solid musical truths. Beneath the impetuosity, the profusion of forms and contrasts one can always discover a simple musical germ: an *ur*-melody. This is an aspect of Kupferman's music which took me years to recognize. Even now I continue to discover new details which point to an uncanny structural acuity underlying the unpredictable surface design of each composition. This brings us to a little appreciated aspect of Kupferman's sensibility: his sense of structure is so deeply assimilated, operating on its own internal powers, that he is entirely free from it. It does not hold him prisoner in any way. I sense that this is the key to understanding his *gestalt* style, which is represented in a definitive way on this disc by *Echoes From Barcelona*.

STRUMMING (1988)

Here is a work which begins with a little irony. A work called *Strumming* whose first movement has only the merest hint of strumming, an occasional arpeggiated chord. A piece whose title immediately suggests the wild ride we all expect from Kupferman, but which begins instead with lyrical abstract shapes which are all derived from kaleidoscopic transformations of two notes, G and G#. The answer to the riddle emerges in the succeeding three movements where strums occur in increasing profusion, always hinging on the notes G and G#. The third little movement is daring for its predominant use of delicate flageolets and offers a very surreal setting for the few strums embedded within. *Strumming* begins in earnest with the closing movement where a G#-strum is flipped upside-down, becoming a G-strum. The chromatic harmonies yield fleetingly to diatonic (tonal) harmonies, suggesting that even in Kupferman's more stylistically pure works, there is a tendency toward his *gestalt* ethos.

POETICS #3 (1982)

In this work for two guitars we hear at first a sumptuous lyricism that floats in slow, tranquil motion. Each player then stretches his limbs, as it were, trading little cadenzas. This precipitates a long, florid and soaring tune with a slow chordal accompaniment. The heat gradually increases as jagged flights of fast notes interrupt the tune. The choral accompaniment is supplanted by an ostinato accompaniment and soon everything is ostinato, and in a swirl of notes we pass into something new, finding ourselves bedded-down in velvety-soft slow chords, caressing gestures and mind-altering flageolets.

The second movement spans the gulf between the prevailing chromatic harmonies of the work and the c minor tonality so native to the guitar. The work ends with an e-minor flourish which could almost come from Appalachian bluegrass music. The passage from one to the other is achieved only through the magic power of extreme contrasts of many kinds. To offer one example—we hear the opening material three times—twice on 33RPM and finally on 78RPM (the record player going too fast), this culminating in the loudest guitar-smashing chordal texture ever conceived. What could convincingly follow? Only the most inspired, gentle lyricism, which Kupferman astonishingly delivers in the middle section of the work.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY (1988)

After a protracted illness Kupferman wrote this piece and dedicated it to me. A probing, reflective, philosophical tone prevails. There are moments of anger, defiance, and questioning before a tender resolution is achieved. It is a work where one forgets that the guitar is the medium as we are transported into an entirely poetic realm.

ECHOES FROM BARCELONA (1975--1977)

Kupferman was in Barcelona in 1968 to do some recording and conducting. During that visit he voraciously devoured every aspect of the musical life--Flamenco, street music, cabaret music, as well as concert music. The heroic image of Barcelona and the tragedy of Guernica, the shadow of Franco's secret police hovering over all walks of life--these left a strong impression on his thoughts for a long time. Here is Kupferman's story of how *Echoes From Barcelona* came into being:

"A few years after my time in Barcelona I became deeply involved in writing music for the guitar. I suddenly found myself composing a full-scale, dramatically explosive work in my *gestalt* form based on my experiences in Spain. Gradually, after two years of struggling, experimenting, shaping and reshaping, the piece evolved into a massive, all-encompassing tour de force for the guitar. David Starobin, that wonderful, brave soul who agreed to premiere the new work, was extremely helpful in checking out all the technical challenges. My *gestalt* form here embraced a rich collection of contradictions, mostly sharply contrasting musical features like tonality and atonality, melodic or athenatic linear designs; cool, completely abstract phrases juxtaposed with folk gestures from Flamenco, and bits of quasi Baroque music. All these things living and working together for 15 minutes of real-time!"

EXORDIUM (1988)

As common as it is to combine piano and violin or piano and cello it is rare to find the guitar paired with piano. Kupferman once said early in the writing of this piece, "This combination is impossible. There is no way these two colors can live together. I give up!" I talked him into continuing and eventually he found a surprising and extraordinary way of making it work. Rather than making a delicate, sparse piano part which might give a chance for the guitar to cut through, he composed a very lavish, titanic piano part against an equally rich guitar part, treating them both like powerful forces of nature. A relentless running figuration which builds and builds to almost inhuman levels of power is contrasted by moments of very warm, human lyricism.

Music Notes by William Anderson

ARTISTS: WILLIAM ANDERSON, SOLO GUITARIST

"William Anderson is one of our finest guitar players", says *The Music Connoisseur*. The New York Times described Anderson as "a first rate player" (Bernard Holland)... "a sensitive, thoughtful player" (Allan Kozinn). Thomas May, in The Washington Post, praised his "technical and expressive virtuosity", and his "quasi-orchestral palette of coloristic effects... deftly realized as he shaped each entry with epigrammatic concentration." While his repertoire encompasses the entire guitar and lute literature, his chief interest is in the music that is coming next, and he continually astonishes his audiences with surprising new works by composers young and old from all over the world. "Anderson astonished everybody with his ability to deal with a great variety of musical idioms, his skill in utilizing the entire range of tones and moods. He stretched himself from abstract concentration...through serenity and humor...to meditative melancholy." ...Magdelene Dziadek, Ruch Muzyczny, Warsaw.

Mr. Anderson has been a soloist for the Tanglewood Festival, the Bang on a Can Festival; the Europe-Asia Festival; the Theater Chamber Players of Washington D.C.; the Brooklyn Philharmonic; the Festival International de Guitarra in Morelia, Mexico, and Die Rotenburger Guitarwoche in Germany, among many others. He has given solo recital tours in the United States, Germany, Austria, Mexico, Poland, Russia and Holland, playing classical and contemporary music including works of his own. Anderson's first solo recital in New York City was presented by The League of Composers/ISCM at Weill Hall

in 1990. William Anderson studied guitar with David Starobin who eventually brought him together with composer Meyer Kupferman. In 1994 he was presented by Music From Japan in a recital at the Asia Society in New York City.

Anderson is now co-director of the CYGNUS Ensemble, which he founded in 1985 as a means of presenting new works for guitar and other instruments. That first Cygnus concert in 1985 included Kupferman's *Poetics 3!* Cygnus is continually receiving rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic, most recently from Paul Griffiths, in the New York Times, who praised Cygnus for its "excellent concert" in January of 1998.

Echoes From Barcelona is Anderson's third solo recording. In addition to these he appears on seven other CD's including two by Soundspells Productions. His performances have been broadcast on *Performance Today*; WNYC's *Around New York*, and *New Sounds*; WGBH, Boston's *Chamber Works*; German National Radio, Polish National Radio, and Danish National Radio. Anderson teaches guitar at Sarah Lawrence College, where Meyer Kupferman brought him onto the faculty in 1986.

William Anderson's guitar: 1987 Millennium model by Thomas Humphrey

OREN FADER, GUITARIST

Oren Fader is active as a performer of classical guitar repertoire both old and new. He has performed in London, Tokyo, Munich, Amsterdam, Montreal, Russia, Mexico and throughout the United States. He has been a featured soloist with The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, North Country Chamber Players, and the Manchester Music Festival Chamber Symphony. Other performances include Music from Japan, Da Camera Houston, Parnassus, Sequitur, American Composers' Orchestra, The Riverside Symphony, Absolut Ensemble, The New Amsterdam Singers, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Festivals include Morelia (Mexico), Aspen and Tanglewood. Mr. Fader was onstage guitar soloist for the Great Lakes Theatre Festival production of Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*. He performed in the world premiere of *Bug-Mudra* by Todd Machover, using MIDI "hyper-instruments". As a member of the new music ensemble Cygnus, he has premiered many new chamber works with guitar, including compositions by Meyer Kupferman (most recently Kupferman's "Concerto for 4 Guitars and Orchestra"). Mr Fader received his undergraduate degree from SUNY Purchase and his Master of Music (Performance) degree from Florida State University. His major teachers include David Starobin and Bruce Holzman. He has recorded for Bridge, CRI, Soundspells and Audio Acoustical. Since 1994 Mr. Fader has directed the guitar chamber music program at Manhattan School of Music. This summer, he will direct the guitar program at the Brevard Music Festival in North Carolina.

JOAN FORSYTH, PIANIST

Canadian pianist Joan Forsyth is a multi-faceted musician who has received critical acclaim as a soloist and chamber music artist-- "Pianista la brava!" ..Il Corriere della Sera, Arezzo, Italy; "a big lush sound and technique to burn" ...the Vancouver Sun. Ms. Forsyth has been heard throughout Europe and the Americas in a wide range of repertoire, embracing the standard piano literature as well as the most recent works. Her prize-winning performances in the 1990 Concerts Atlantique and La Gesse competitions set in motion tours of France and Switzerland, and since that time she has maintained a lively concert schedule. She has collaborated with such ensembles as the Cassatt Quartet, CYGNUS, the New Westminster Symphony, the Westchester Philharmonic, Modernworks!, and the Theater Chamber Players of Washington D.C. She toured the Netherlands and Scandinavia with CYGNUS in a program of new American music in 1997. In 1998 she performed in Russia at the Europe-Asia International Festival of Modern Music. Her performances have been broadcast over WNYC, RAI (Italy), Danish National Radio and Polish National Radio. Ms. Forsyth also makes recital appearances with her husband, guitarist William Anderson.

In 1992, Ms. Forsyth's interest in new American music led her to form SPHERE, an ensemble devoted to contemporary music. The group produces the "American Mosaic Series" annually in Westchester, featuring celebrated guest artists and the premieres of many new works. Joan Forsyth is also the Director of the Keyboard Clinic and Chamber Music Intensive, held in Westchester, New York each summer.

MEYER KUPFERMAN

Meyer Kupferman's father, Elias Staff-Cooperman, was born in Romania in 1900. A runaway youth, he fled from his stepfather and traveled throughout Europe as a gypsy folk singer, street musician who played the accordion, wrestler, cook and baker. He was conscripted into the Austrian-Hungarian army and wounded in World War I. Elias settled in the United States with his sister Clara in the early 20's. He joined the baker's union while living in New York City and changed his name to Elias Kupferman, thus severing all connection with his hated stepfather. He married a young Russian emigré, Fanny Hoffman, whose family had been decimated by cossack raids and pogroms in Nemirov, a little Jewish village moving on the "pale" between Kiev, Odessa and Eastern Poland. Fanny's flight to America first brought her to the mid-west where she worked in the mills and factories of Kansas. Later she joined her aging aunt in New York where she found work as a seamstress. Fanny and Elias were introduced by some friends at a wedding where Elias was hired as singer and entertainer. They fell madly in love and were soon married.

Meyer Kupferman was born on July 3rd, 1926 in New York City. The little family soon moved to Brooklyn because there were more and better jobs available for bakers. Also landlords had lowered their rents on all apartments; they were, in fact, giving away three months rent-free concession on all new leases. Through the Depression and nearly the next ten years Kupferman's family moved to a new apartment each year. Thus as a child he had to attend a different school each year and make new friends as well as abandon old ones very often.

At age five he was given the violin, a study that was so premature and uncomfortable he has little memory of it. At age ten, almost as a joke or a dare while fooling around with his friends already in the school band, Meyer Kupferman began taking clarinet lessons. Music soon became an important part of his life and he became good at it. The idea of writing music grew more and more fascinating for him. Eventually he began teaching himself the piano, which provided a basis for his curiosity about composing and arranging music for his friends. As he grew older he worked as a young jazz musician in clubs and bars in the Coney Island area of Brooklyn. He lived through the "Big Band Era" which provided a source of rich stimulation for him as well as all budding musicians interested in composing or arranging jazz.

Although Meyer Kupferman was entirely self-taught in music composition he received his education in theory, chamber ensemble and orchestral music at the High School of Music and Art. He also studied at Queens College. Kupferman's father encouraged his son in music and taught him many East European, gypsy and Hebrew melodies. The flavor of these tunes not only stayed with Meyer Kupferman for the rest of his life but influenced his compositional style from time to time.

As a young composer still in his twenties Kupferman became Professor of Composition and Chamber Music at Sarah Lawrence College in 1951. He continued as member of the faculty until his retirement forty three years later in 1994. During his tenure at Sarah Lawrence College he was chairman of the music department for five terms, conducted the orchestra, chorus and chamber improvisation ensemble, taught theory and music for film and wrote many experimental theatre and dance works for performing arts students at Sarah Lawrence.

Mr. Kupferman has been awarded grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Library of Congress, the US State Department and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. He is a virtuoso clarinetist who has premiered over sixty solo and chamber works composed especially for him and his 'Music By My Friends' ensemble.

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 Neidich's spectacular performances throughout the Soviet Union, Europe, Japan, and the USA, all these works an integral part of his "Cycle of Infinities" – a series of concert and jazz works evolved from the same 12-tone row begun in 1962. He has received commissions 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, commemorating the Centennial of the U.S. Constitution, and the Nassau Symphony for his Double Clarinet Concerto. His cantata, "Comicus Americanus," was commissioned by the Kansas City Philharmonic in 1970. 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 include such pieces as Celestial City, Angel footprints, Superflute and illusions. Among his many film scores are such pictures as Black Like Me, Halleluja The Hills, Blast of Silence and Truman Capote's film Trilogy, which includes the famous, A Christmas Memory.

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 Limón as guitar soloist and Eduardo Garcia Barrios, conductor. Kupferman's brand new "Concerto for 4 Guitars and Orchestra" will be released by Soundspells in 1999.

Recent commissions are his new "Chaconne Sonata" for flute and piano, written for Laurel Ann Maurer, "Pipe Dream Sonata" for solo guitar commissioned by Robert Phillips, "Ice Cream Concerto" and "Flavors of the Stars" both for the virtuoso ATRIL Contemporary Ensemble of Mexico, "Hot Hors D'oeuvres" for the Hudson Valley Philharmonic and "Hexagon Skies" for guitar and orchestra commissioned by the Orquesta de Baja California and guitarist Roberto Limón.

In 1976 Itzak Perlman gave the New York premiere of Kupferman's "Fantasy Sonata" and Martha Graham created a new ballet based on this same violin score called "O Thou Desire," which her company took on a European tour the following year. During this period cellist Laszlo Varga premiered Kupferman's "Concerto for Cello Tape and Orchestra" which he later recorded on a Vox CD (VoxBox CDX5158). Other recent commissions are his "A Faust Concerto" for French horn and chamber orchestra, "Moonfinger's Demon" for orchestra and "Acrobats of Apollo" for marimba, guitar and chamber orchestra, all three works composed for the Orquesta de Baja California, with Eduardo Garcia Barrios, conductor. Flutist Laurel Ann Maurer commissioned a work for the Utah Contemporary Chamber players for flute, clarinet and piano called "O North Star." Mr. Kupferman has also written a solo guitar piece for the Mexican guitarist, Roberto Limón, called "O Luna O Sol." The composer's latest project is his "Concerto Brevis," for flute and orchestra commissioned by the National Flute Association. His "Winter Symphony", completed in 1997, will be premiered in Europe in 1998 along with his new "Percussion Symphony".

Kupferman Notes by Valentine Fabian

The Guitar Music of MEYER KUPFERMAN • VOL. 1

“ECHOES FROM BARCELONA”



MEYER KUPFERMAN

- 1 **STRUMMING** (1988)
for solo guitar
Adagio espressivo 1:46
 - 2 *Allegro barbaro* 1:10
 - 3 *Andante con rubato* 2:08
 - 4 *Vivacemente* 2:55
 - 5 **POETICS #3** (1982)
for two guitars
Andantino tranquillo 8:56
 - 6 *Allegro deciso* 7:45
 - 7 **THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY** (1988)
for solo guitar 8:12
 - 8 **ECHOES FROM BARCELONA** (1975-77)
for solo guitar 14:52
 - 9 **EXORDIUM** (1988)
for piano and guitar 7:12
- Total CD Duration: 55:16



WILLIAM ANDERSON

WILLIAM ANDERSON, solo guitar; OREN FADER, guitar; JOAN FORSYTH, piano

ENGINEERING AND EDITING: *Stephen Epstein* **EDITING:** *Jeremy Tressler* **ENGINEERING:** *Tatyana Lieberman*

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William Anderson Photo: Eiko Kijima • This is a composer supervised recording. The music of Meyer Kupferman is published by Soundspells Productions. All solo works were recorded at the West Center Church, Yonkers.

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