

# THE MUSIC OF MEYER KUPFERMAN

## A Faust Concerto (1997)

"...Concerto Tone-Poem"  
for Horn and Orchestra

Jane Zwerneman, *horn*

Orquesta di Baja California

Meyer Kupferman,  
*conductor*

## Among the Windy Places (1994)

Bronx Arts Ensemble

William Scribner, *bassoon*

Hector Falcon, *violin*

Masumi Per Rostad, *viola*



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## A FAUST CONCERTO (1997)

by Meyer Kupferman

As a child I always loved to hear my father read to me. When I was old enough to open a book by myself I loved to read folk tales, biblical stories and legends of adventure or mythology. But what I liked most was to make up my own very tall tales and tell them or act them out for my friends. These stories were improvisations without an ending - and the whole point was for my listeners and I to discover, perhaps at the very same moment - how things would turn out.

Today, anyone familiar with my music may soon realize that my musical endings are never predictable. Also, they may find the continuity of my scores dramatic and improvisatory. Obviously, the challenge of not knowing what comes next is what I enjoy most as a composer. Telling a story in music is fun for me; and, as with Arnold Schoenberg's view on composing with a poetic text, it makes the scaffolding of the instrumental form so much easier.

Our symphonic and keyboard literature has an impressive tradition of tone-poems. But the idea of unwinding a story in concerto form is somewhat more rare. During the last twenty years I have composed a few concerto tone-poems: THE MOOR'S CONCERTO, a piano concerto based on Shakespeare's OTHELLO and my MOONCHILD AND THE DOOMSDAY TROMBONE, an oboe concerto based on an old BUCK ROGERS comic strip.

Principal features of the main character usually suggest the choice of solo instrument; and in the case of A FAUST CONCERTO the French horn's central role is culled from a restless and deeply troubled psychological impression of Doctor Faustus and Mephisto. The horn, with its very wide range, enormous power and richness of tone, seemed perfectly suited to my needs. I should make clear, however, that my score did not follow a blow by blow treatment of the Faust legend. My approach to the story was one of a uniquely singular symbiosis - and for this my imagination ran wild in pursuit of acoustical imagery. Transposed into musical events, my meditations evoked new sounds and very dark mysterious gestures to represent my Faust and his devil.

Over forty years ago I composed a full length opera called DOCTOR FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS, based on a Gertrude Stein libretto. The opera never received a complete production but fragments of the music and their colorful stage settings lingered in my memory years later. Shortly after I completed my opera I recall how excited I was about Stravinsky's THE RAKE'S PROGRESS. His work was also based on the same legend, and its staging and score gave me much pleasure. I was inundated with this story then, and apparently the same shadow games of Doctor Faustus and the devil are, to this day, still haunting me.

Completed in 1997, my new A FAUST CONCERTO was conceived as a concerto tone-poem in two movements (or 'Acts'). The work was commissioned jointly by the Orquesta de Baja California and its principal hornist, Jane Zwerneman. It was premiered in Mexico in 1998 under the direction of Eduardo Garcia Barrios in a semi-staged concert performance. This took place on three stage levels, with screen projections, costumes, lighting and some stage movement for the principal performers.

Like in an opera taking place in the mind, we can imagine an overture with the curtain rising over a sustained F minor chord in the orchestra. From a distance we hear the French horn play a lament which I call THE MAGICIAN'S TUNE. This dark melody is reprised only once at the end of my concerto. Suddenly the genre of the movement begins to change. The French horn plummets abruptly into its lowest range and bursts into a dramatic cadenza. A series of contrasting episodes follows. One by one we share the visions of our restless magician, alchemist and astrologer - Doctor Faustus - who is confronted by the devil. In a bargain for Faust's soul, Mephisto offers him unlimited knowledge, enormous wealth, power and the love of Marguerite for one year. As this opening movement draws to a close we hear again a French horn cadenza: this one, a soliloquy cast in the shadow of an even more troubled Faust, wrestling with his soul and ready to sacrifice all spiritual values for his love.

The second 'Act' opens with a tableau of Marguerite at the spinning wheel. We hear a "rol-y-poly" ostinato in the guitar and harp set against a game of playful tunes in the orchestra. Faust and Marguerite open their hearts to their love and the grand passion of a new existence. But alas, the year goes by all too quickly and their love fades. Faust, struggling desperately, still in search of himself, now remembers there is yet a tragic price to be paid. At this point we see Mephisto, disguised as the Great Paganini, playing a dazzling cadenza for the violin called "The Devil's Cadenza." Mephisto demands and holds out his hand. Doctor Faustus, filled with pain and grief, yields his soul to him and lives on in damnation.

Finally the orchestra begins the reprise of the tragic horn lament heard at the start of my concerto - THE MAGICIAN'S TUNE. Marguerite dies during the very last phrases of the score but her soul lives on. A gentle violin figuration, shimmering nervously, rises up into a high orchestral cadence. Perhaps it is the magic of this sound alone which carries Marguerite's spirit to the gates of heaven....



## AMONG THE WINDY PLACES (1994)

by Meyer Kupferman

Early in 1994 when bassoonist William Scribner told me about the Bronx Arts Ensemble's commission for yet another new composition (there were two before this) I thought... "Wonderful! Now I can write a giant concerto for bassoon with a great big orchestra to back it up!" As it turned out, however, my new piece, *AMONG THE WINDY PLACES*, was scored as a trio for bassoon and only two strings. Although the bassoon was often featured as soloist in my new trio, with virtuoso cadenzas all over the score, the true concept of the music was quite classical, resembling one of pure chamber music.

Before I get too involved let me say that the creative process for this work began with a period of just listening to music. I turned first to my favorite classical and contemporary chamber pieces. I developed some special thoughts about Bartok, Shostakovich and the last quartets of Beethoven. The incisive, highly motivic gestures of all three composers and especially Beethoven's unusual recasting of those post-traditional forms and harmonies emerging around him - all strongly influenced my thinking. But unlike the classical string quartet ensemble my piece was to be scored for a most unusual combination: violin, viola, and bassoon. True, together these instruments cover adequately all the registrations needed for a good-sized chamber work. After I began, however, I found myself somewhat worried: the sheer phrase by phrase balances and delicate blending of instrumental timbres, were in themselves very tricky challenges. After listening to the Beethoven I decided that sharp and quick motivic shifts in the instrumental texture of my trio, would make most of the blending problems easier. So with this in mind I plunged ahead.

There are four movements to my trio, each in contrasting temperaments. The first is fast, quite accented, overwhelmingly intense and, with its insistent rhythmic designs, almost too compelling. There are moments where neo-classical elements appear from time to time. These move freely in and out of tonality, as if there never were any rules about harmony or systematic atonality.

The easy-going tempo of the second movement is introduced with a laid back pizzicato figure in the strings. The pizzicato effect shortly becomes the background accompaniment to a high register bassoon theme. This in turn points to the true aesthetic character of the movement: It is as if we discover ourselves in the middle of a 'turn of the century' nostalgic waltz. As the music moves deeper into its gentle lilt a romantic pattern emerges in quiet, symmetrical phrases.

The third movement is a scherzo. At this point the bassoon becomes tightly fixed in its most humorous role. The bouncy low note staccatos, for example, are sharply contrasted with the make-believe tearful high 'falsetto' tunes. After an expressive viola cadenza, new teasing patterns drive on playfully to the end of the movement.

The finale is slow and introspective. It opens with a sustained bassoon solo which abounds in wide intervals. Each phrase is highly concentrated and seems to cover the bassoon's enormous range in only a few seconds. The episodes which follow are alternately dramatic and lyrical. These, reflecting the action of the bassoon, provide a seemingly improvisatory counterfoil for the violin and viola. The finale closes with my favorite episode: a very sad, expressive epilogue which is simply a 'song without words' in A minor. The bassoon carries the melody as both strings play a quietly undulating accompaniment "...until everything disappears."

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS...

#### Jane Zwerneman, horn

Jane Zwerneman began studying piano and recorders at age 5, and the horn at age 11. She made her debut as a soloist performing Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 3 in 1976 as winner of the New Mexico Young Artist's Competition. After receiving a Bachelor of Music degree in 1984 from Saint Mary's College, Ms. Zwerneman continued her studies with professor Verne Reynolds at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY where she received a Master of Music degree in 1985 and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1989. As Principal Horn with the Orquesta de Baja California in Tijuana, BC, Mexico since 1993, Ms. Zwerneman has participated in numerous concert tours and recording projects under the direction of Mtro. Eduardo Garcia Barrios. She remains active as a freelance artist in both Southern California and Mexico, performing regularly with ensembles such as the San Diego Opera, Premier Brass Quintet, the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, the San Diego Chamber Orchestra and "In the Music Room" chamber series in Los Angeles.



Jane Zwerneman

## Orquesta De Baja California

Roberto Limon, *guitar & director*

Igor Tchetchko, *violin*

Karina Bezkrvnaia, *violin*

Omar Firestone, *violincello*

Joseph McNally, *contrabass*

Boris Glouzman, *oboe & English horn*

Vladimir Goltzman, *clarinet & E-flat clarinet*

Alexander Gurievitch, *clarinet & bass clarinet*

Pavel Getman, *bassoon*

Loren Marsteller, *trumpet*

Elena Mashkovtseva, *harp*

Irina Tchetchko, *piano*

Andrei Tchernechev, *percussion*

### William J. Scribner, *bassoon, Founder and Executive Director of the Bronx Arts Ensemble*

An active freelance bassoonist in the New York area, Mr. Scribner is principal bassoonist with the Long Island Philharmonic, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra and the New Jersey State Opera Orchestra. He has performed with such groups as the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony, American Symphony Orchestra and in numerous Broadway productions. He is a member of the Phoenix Woodwind Quintet and Leonia Chamber Players, and has been a faculty member at the University of Connecticut (Storrs), Queens College, Rutgers University at Newark and the Bloomingdale House of Music. Mr. Scribner is a Board member of the Bronx Council on the Arts, the Advisory Board of Hostos Community College and the Arts Consortium of Bronx Community College. In addition he is orchestra manager of the Colonial Symphony, Madison, New Jersey and former treasurer of the American Symphony Orchestra.



William Scribner

### Hector Falcon, *violin*



Hector Falcon

Described by music critics as an artist who "displays a solid technique, beautiful sound and great maturity" (Mario Gulli, *Il Giorno de Parma*) and "an excellent sense of style and musicality," (Pietri Marchini, *La Gazzetta di Roma*) Falcon has won numerous awards and competitions both in the United States and Puerto Rico; among them first prize in the Sam Levenson Violin Competition and the R.J. Reynolds Career Grant award.

Falcon began his musical studies with Jose Figueroa, a member of Puerto Rico's most prestigious family of musicians, and with Jaime Medina, member of the Simfonica de Puerto Rico. A graduate of The Juilliard School of Music where he obtained both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees, he has studied with Hyo Kang and Masao Kawasaki and attended master classes with Itzhak Perlman, Dorothy DeLay, Igo Bezrodny and Ruben Gonzalez.

For the past several years, Falcon has performed in Music Festivals in the Far East including the Pacific Music Festival of Japan. In addition to his busy schedule as a soloist and chamber player, Falcon teaches privately and is on the faculty of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music.

### Masumi Per Rostad, *viola*

Masumi Rostad was born in New York City of Japanese and Norwegian parents in 1977. He began his musical studies at the age of four at the Third Street Music School Settlement. He has since distinguished himself with numerous prizes and awards.

In March of 1999, as a Juilliard Concerto Competition winner, he performed the World Premiere of the Michael White Viola Concerto in Avery Fisher Hall with James DePriest conducting. In January of 1999, as a Juilliard Focus Festival Competition winner, he performed the New York premiere of the Paul Schoenfield Viola Concerto with the Juilliard Symphony. He has also won the Bronx Arts Ensemble's Young Artist Competition Grand Prize, the Fiorello H. LaGuardia "Little Flower" award for excellence in music, and the Lillian Fuchs award for outstanding graduating violist at the Juilliard School where he received his Bachelor of Music degree.

As a chamber musician Mr. Rostad has appeared at such venues as Alice Tully Hall, the Caramoor Festival, the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada, and New York University. In addition, he regularly performs with the ensemble, International Sejong Soloists.



Masumi Per Rostad

Mr. Rostad's orchestral experiences include principal positions in Juilliard's Symphony and Orchestra, Aspen's Concert Orchestra, and the Jupiter Symphony. In addition, he has performed with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the New York String Orchestra, New York Youth Symphony, and Aspen's Chamber and Festival Orchestras.

Music festivals he has participated in are the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Kneisel Hall Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, and the Kinhaven Music School.

Mr. Rostad is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at the Juilliard School where he is the teaching assistant for Karen Tuttle.

## The Bronx Arts Ensemble

The Bronx Arts Ensemble is the borough's most celebrated chamber music and orchestral performing group, presenting concerts throughout the Bronx which are both affordable and reflective of the diversity of its audiences. In residence at Fordham University, it offers concerts at Fordham Church, informal chamber music programs and a free summer series, as well as music for campus events. The BAE recently initiated a new series at The New York Botanical Garden, presenting concerts tied to environmental themes which often offer new music. The Ensemble performs at Van Cortlandt House Museum, Riverdale YM-YWHA, Bronx Community College, The Woodlawn Cemetery and the Russian Mission to the UN Residency in Riverdale, as well as at landmark homes in Riverdale. Free concerts are given each summer at Van Cortlandt Park, and an extensive series of educational programs serves school children throughout the New York area. The BAE won the NYC Arts & Business Council, Inc. Encore Award in 1981 for its imaginative programming and service to the people of New York, and recordings have been produced for New World Records, Leonarda, Musical Heritage Society, Thorofon, Newport Classic, CRI, Soundspells Productions and Premier Recordings Inc. The BAE's latest CD is the first recording of Roberto Sierra's chamber opera *El Mensajero de Plata*, which the Ensemble premiered in New York.

## 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" (1998) has already been released by Soundspells [CD124].

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 Itzhak 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, "Percussion Symphony", was premiered by the Ithaca Percussion Ensemble in 1998, conducted by Gordon Stout.

Meyer Kupferman's most recent recordings are his Winter Symphony (1997) and his Concert to Brevis (1998) for flute and orchestra, both of which were recorded for Soundspells on CD125, by the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo with the composer conducting.

*Kupferman Notes by Valentine Fabian*



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MEYER KUPFERMAN

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Total Duration 71:08

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**1 A Faust Concerto (1997)**

*"...Concerto Tone-Poem" for horn and orchestra*

Act I [21:28]

**2 Act II [11:51]**

Jane Zwerneman, horn

Meyer Kupferman, conductor

Orquesta di Baja California



JANE ZWERNEMAN

**3 Among the Windy Places (1994)**

*for bassoon, violin and viola*

*Allegro deciso [08:39]*

**4 Con moto [09:32]**

**5 Scherzando [10:21]**

**6 Cadenza and Epilogue [09:15]**

Bronx Arts Ensemble

Hector Falcon, violin

William Scribner, bassoon

Masumi Per Rostad, viola



WILLIAM SCRIBNER

Cover Art: "Faustus looking at the Windy Zeppelin" (1976), oil painting by Meyer Kupferman. Entire project produced by: Meyer Kupferman. Engineering for "A Faust Concerto" by Luis Chi Sing Jr., Provision Studios, Edited by Jeremy Tressler. Engineering for AMONG THE WINDY PLACES and CD mastering by Jeremy Tressler and EONTA Studios. Special thanks to Albert Rodewald for his A and R supervision for "A Faust Concerto". The music of Meyer Kupferman is published by Soundspells Productions (ASCAP).

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