



O NORTH STAR

The Flute and Chamber Music of
**MEYER
KUPFERMAN**

O NORTH STAR (1997)

FOUR CONSTELLATIONS (1970)

DOVELY DUO (1998)

STRATA (1997)

Laurel Ann Maurer

Flutes

Russel Harlow

Clarinets

Joanne Pearce Martin

Piano

DDD **Soundspells** CD132

FOUR CONSTELLATIONS (1970) *for flute and clarinet*

I have always felt that my "mission in life" as an active clarinet soloist was to explore and broaden the literature for woodwinds. As a composer I looked for new directions in wind technique, compositional style and chamber ensemble combinations. I performed and commissioned more than sixty new works featuring woodwinds during the seventies at Carnegie Recital Hall, with the ARIEL WOODWIND QUARTET and MUSIC BY MY FRIENDS ensembles. Since many of the instrumentalists with whom I sometimes played were remarkable soloists in their own right, I composed many virtuoso solo sonatas, duos and six big concerti for these artists, who included Samuel Baron, Max Pollikoff, David Moore, Ronald Roseman, Kazuko Hayami, Laszlo Varga, David Starobin and Gilbert Kalish.

Four Constellations is a duo in four short movements for flute and clarinet. Initially, I approached the work as a study in delicate balances and intensely articulate timbres. Since I have always been interested in night sky-images, I decided to use a few of the heavenly constellations as compositional targets whose mythological reflections offered rich contrasts for my music. The first, *Aquarius*, based on a three-note motif (G-F-Db), is modestly immersed in my Infinities twelve-tone row. It is a quiet dialogue for the flute and clarinet. The textures between the two instruments alternate in an old-fashioned strict "see-saw style", with one voice being sustained while its answer is busy stretching the three-note motif in curious designs.

The second movement, *Scorpio*, is chock full of sharp thrusts and grotesque gestures, like a duel between instrumental dancers. Its rhythmic energy is derived from a quick four-note rising motif. The stylistic direction of this little piece is up-up-up – in a hurry, but never quite making it...

Libra, the third movement, is more contemplative, slow-moving and complex. Long, sustained phrases are contrasted with fast-note flurries in either instrument. Here too, a motivic interval guides the material as a two-note descending motif widens or narrows its intervallic stretch.

The finale, *Sagittarius*, is a fast, playful scherzo with chattering staccatos, tiny syncopations and familiar motivic fragments drawn from the earlier movements. A lyrical theme with an agitated accompaniment appears briefly then zaps right into the ending in a daring fluttertongue upward sweep.

O NORTH STAR (1997)

for flute (piccolo and alto flute), clarinet (Eb piccolo clarinet and bass clarinet) and piano

First, permit me to apologize to my listeners for the massive size of this chamber work. Laurel Ann Mauer commissioned this work for herself and her friends Russel Harlow and Joanne Pearce Martin to premiere at a major performance in Utah. Clearly, she wanted a big design! I was drawn into a vast image of an endless dark sky when I started thinking about this piece. Time was needed to create a crucible to transform my thoughts into a special world of organized sounds. I had just finished re-reading Herman Melville's tale of *Moby Dick*, and the haunting shadows of its story drew me powerfully into its world once again.

O North Star was conceived in four huge movements, with the second comprising a set of five variations on a march theme – which in itself is almost like six little movements. The trio of performers for this work actually plays seven instruments: flute doubling piccolo and alto flute; clarinet doubling Eb piccolo clarinet and bass clarinet; and piano playing only piano.

Lento espressivo, the introductory movement, is a slow tableau that marks the harmonic and melodic boundaries of *O North Star*. Most of the instrumental timbres that govern this movement are introduced in broad sustained lines and rich chords. The opening theme in the piccolo and bass clarinet sets the stage for motivic interaction later on. An overview of *O North Star* may reveal a tide-like rise and fall of its musical events. These are my conversions of Melville sea images into sound.

Part Two, entitled "*March with Variations*", opens with a perky piano solo, rather stiff and tin-soldierish. The first variation, as well as the remaining four, holds closely to the tempo of the original march, resulting in a rhythmic momentum that feeds more and more energy into the piece. The alto flute and the Eb clarinet dominate the timbres of the first variation in a constant stream of sixteenth-note figurations. Variation Two is essentially a fugue in three voices, with the piano breaking away occasionally to throw in some supporting accompanimental oom-pahs.

Variation Three is an alto flute solo in jazz style. Its harmonic basis is drawn from the original march theme and converted into a long, improvisatory-like jazz lick, characteristic of standard jazz designs. Little bends, slides and glissandi, and curious syncopated barbs add a little spice to the articulation. As we move into Variation Four, a duo for

clarinet and flute begins a dialogue of antagonistic rhythms. These bouncy figures seem to be drawn directly from the earlier jazz. Variation Five is a short coda that begins with a piano solo and ends with flute and bass clarinet in a wild flourish.

The third movement begins with free-floating, sustained patterns in all three instruments. At first, we have an introductory essay of this material, which changes into, what I call ... "the music of the sea and the stars." A piano ostinato backs up the material until the end of the movement, with only one modulation in the middle. Floating over the ostinato are long, free, sustained tones in the flute, and flickering "star-notes," sharply attacked in the high register of the piano. Eventually, the clarinet joins the ensemble, playing the closing melody in wide octaves with the piccolo.

The finale of this enormous composition is marked *Stridente agitato ritmico*. Clearly, we are now in a wild storm at sea, which begins with an outburst of crashing chords in the piano. Gradually the clarinet and flute introduce a continuum of rhythmic figurations, set against a strong accompanimental thrust in the keyboard. These patterns remain constant and are developed through the end with furious impact.

DOVELY DUO (1998)

for flute and clarinet

I composed *Dovely Duo* as a short encore piece for Laurel Ann Maurer and Russell Harlow to play for the close of their chamber concert at the 1998 Flute Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. These wonderful performers had worked so hard to come up with a truly remarkable performance of my chamber works involving flute and clarinet that I thought it would be fitting for me to honor them with a surprise. I must admit I was initially inspired by two lovely doves walking across my lawn one summer day, and billing and cooing with each other in the most charming manner. At first I thought I would have the clarinet doing the billing and the flute doing the cooing, then I reversed it, and finally mixed it all up, so that I can't even tell at this time what's what. Obviously my piece is playful and not very deep, but I love the gentle affection it seems to radiate in the music. In fact, I wish I wrote more things like it!

STRATA (1997)

for solo flute ... in memory of Samuel Baron

I composed *Strata* for solo flute a few days after the death of my dear friend, Samuel Baron. He was a virtuoso performer, a wonderful conductor, a near musicologist and an insightful analyst who wrote beautifully about music and composers and whose specialty was Bach and contemporary music. Samuel Baron was also a gifted and generous teacher, a masterful chamber player and a champion chess player. The warmth of his smile radiated throughout his personality and made it possible for him to maintain relationships of depth and meaning with many colleagues and students over the years. Sam was experimental and was willing to try any new musical idea if he could find some sense in it. With Sam's encouragement, for example, in the early fifties I conceived the idea of my *Cycle of Infinities*. He launched the *Cycle* with the premiere of my *INFINITIES ONE*, a full-length concert for unaccompanied flute based on a single tone-row, at Carnegie Recital Hall. Less than a decade later, over dinner in Chinatown, Baron and I explored the notion of a piece for flute and tape to be called *SUPERFLUTE* with the flute part to be played live against the tape. I thought I could use the *Infinities* twelve-tone row as the harmonic basis for the piece. Sam became so excited about the project that he commissioned me on the spot to drop everything and compose the piece for a special program he was preparing for in Washington, D.C. Later, I even tried to talk him into wearing a Superman costume for the premiere, but there he drew the line. I miss him.

Music Notes by Meyer Kupferman

LAUREL ANN MAURER, flutist

Flutist Laurel Ann Maurer has been lauded by *The New York Times* as "...a secure technician and an assured, communicative interpreter."

Ms. Maurer began her musical studies in Seattle, Washington, where she was a member of the Seattle Youth Symphony and a recipient of awards from the Seattle Young Artists Festival. She continued her musical education in New York City, studying with Julius



Laurel Ann Maurer

Baker, Jeanne Baxtresser and Samuel Baron. Her principal teacher, Mr. Baker, has stated that she is "One of our outstanding and gifted flutists."

As an award winner from such organizations as the National Association of Composers - USA, the National Flute Association, the National Orchestra of New York, the Chautauqua Institute and the Utah Arts Council, Ms. Maurer has appeared as flute soloist throughout the United States and Europe including performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Merkin Concert Hall in New York City and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. which was broadcast live on the Internet. She has appeared as concerto soloist with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Flute Association's American Flutist Concerto Orchestra, the Salt Lake Symphony and the Long Island Chamber Orchestra.

At the forefront of Ms. Maurer's career is her dedication to contemporary music. She has commissioned numerous works for the flute, compelling many fine composers to comment on her performance of their works. Otto Luening wrote, "She projects composers' ideas with authority and elegance." Joan Tower has written, "Thanks so much for doing such an outstanding job...this performance (was) one of the best I've received." Augusta Read Thomas said, "Bravo! We composers need you." And Meyer Kupferman has called her playing "Truly sensational."

Laurel Ann Maurer has recorded for Albany Records, CRI, Soundspells and 4-Tay Records. Ms. Maurer performs exclusively on Miyazawa flutes and is a Miyazawa artist.

JOANNE PEARCE MARTIN, pianist

Pianist Joanne Pearce Martin enjoys an international career as a soloist, chamber musician, and recording artist. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, she has performed as soloist with numerous orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra. She has collaborated with such artists as Lynn Harrell, Steven Isserlis, Joshua Bell, Iona Brown, Joseph Silverstein, Aaron Rosand, and Julius Baker, among



Joanne Pearce Martin

others. Ms. Martin has appeared at major summer music festivals and on concert series spanning four continents. Based in Los Angeles, she often performs in the Los Angeles Philharmonic as both orchestral keyboardist and chamber artist.

An avid chamber music performer, Ms. Martin is a founding member of the critically-acclaimed Santa Barbara group **Camerata Pacifica**, as well as the **Los Angeles Piano Trio**. Her playing has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as possessing "unusual fervor and fluency", and the *New York Times* has hailed her as "a superb collaborator". She has performed on all of the U.S. major TV networks and recorded commercially for Centaur, Summit and Albany records, as well as the Yamaha Disklavier Piano. She was recently featured on the Learning Channel's "Slice of Life" TV series, which highlights the professional lives of women. Joanne also enjoys performing the two-piano repertoire with her husband, Gavin Martin.

RUSSELL HARLOW, clarinetist

Russell Harlow has performed as associate principal clarinetist with the Utah Symphony Orchestra since 1971. He has appeared as soloist and chamber player with the Sitka Summer Music Festival, Anchorage Autumn Classics, The Amsterdam Chamber Music Society, Lyrica Music Series in New Jersey, The International Clarinet Society, The Ling Concert Series in Kansas, Colorado's Music from Ouray, with the Florestan Trio in Portland, Oregon, the Leonore Trio and the Piatigorsky Foundation in New York. Mr. Harlow is a native of Los Angeles, California, where he studied with Gary Foster, Mitchell Lurie and subsequently with Harold Wright at Tanglewood. Mr. Harlow founded the NOVA Chamber Music Series in Salt Lake City before moving to Park City as Co-Director of the Park City International Music Festival. In addition to recordings with the Utah Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Harlow has recorded the Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano by Ramiro Cortes and has recorded with the Mirecourt Trio and the Allegria Wind Quintet.



Russell Harlow



My Music... by Meyer Kupferman

The music I love to write often crosses over a broad spectrum of styles usually characterized by tonal and atonal positions. Since I have been doing this sort of thing for fifty years, the notion of mixing opposing elements which is very natural for me has included thematic and atthematic materials, jazz and non-jazz ideas and a host of rhythmic and textural opposites that I would prefer to describe as dynamic or creative polarization. As for performing artists, my best players and interpreters are those who have a real feel for these aesthetic games; they must be artists who command considerable virtuosity and a deeply rooted expressivity, since my work often touches on neo-romantic performance traditions. I suppose

I should admit at this point that in the early days I was very quickly hooked on the challenge of big, romantic forms. This became evident as soon as I started composing for orchestra: My first symphony, first piano concerto, first cello concerto and first opera were all completed before I was twenty-one. Although these were never listed as tone-poems, it was for myself alone that these symphonic pieces were based on folk legends, fragments of mythology or the rich passions of epic poetry.

After working in a free chromatic style during the 1940's the twelve-tone system gradually occupied more and more of my attention. Since I was totally self-taught in music composition and wore no academic handcuffs to hold me back or keep me in line, I plunged right in and freely adapted the whole dodecaphonic system to my own selfish needs. Thinking that I had stumbled upon a goldmine, I created a form where each new work was based on a rotating series of tone centers - clearly a contradiction of atonality! This kind of re-invention soon led to what I regarded as my first major innovation: all forty eight permutations of the row were employed in a symmetrical distribution of tonal centers, each seven bars long and each coordinated by and evolved from the pitch sequence of the basic row. My Chamber Symphony was an early example of this tone-center rotation procedure. Since the symphony had a bit of success and was premiered on an important ISCM concert, I was happy to continue in this direction for a while.

The 1950's represented a period of many swings back and forth between this form of private atonality and a more neo-romantic chromatic tonality. Perhaps my *Lyric Symphony* and *Fourth Symphony* (1955) are the best examples of the latter approach. My *Sonata on Jazz Elements* (1958), a freely twelve-tone, hard-hitting jazz sonata, clearly showed that although I might have taken leave of my senses writing such an enormously difficult keyboard work, I had not abandoned the jazz world. Dreaming about the mind-boggling operatic success of Menotti, many American composers like myself were caught up in the operatic explosion of the 1950's. Although none of us really succeeded, I did manage to compose five operas during this crazy decade: *In A Garden*, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*, *Voices for a Mirror*, *The Curious Fern* and *Draagenfoot Girl*.

The 1960's marked the beginning of my Cycle of Infinities, a series of related twelve-tone works spanning nearly four decades all based on the same tone row. I became totally committed to this direction, discovering along the way that my Infinities tone row was like a magic tune that could yield anything I required in terms of melody, counterpoint, texture or harmonic organization. Cycle of Infinities started out with four different solo instrument concerts: unaccompanied flute, viola, cello and coloratura soprano. Each concert became a spectacular tour-de-force for the artist, particularly since new echo techniques, theatrical illusions such as lighting and choreography, and an array of electronic devices which enabled these solo instrumentalists or singers to perform live against their own pre-recorded sounds, were all part of each Infinities event.

Also, I composed many Infinities jazz works like my Jazz String Quartet (premiered at the White House when Johnson was president), Concerto for Cello and Jazz Band, Infinities Projections (for chamber orchestra), Infinities for Strings, Jazz Infinities Three for sax, bass and drums (premiered at the Library of Congress for Gunther Schuller's First International Jazz Festival) and Moonchild and the Doomsday Trombone, a jazz concerto for oboe and a small group of versatile artists including Ronald Roseman and the wonderful Jan DeGaetani who sang jazz onstage for the first time with this Infinities piece. A highlight in my evolving Cycle of Infinities was an opera without orchestra, THE JUDGMENT, in three long acts, called for huge stage sets, nine-

teen soloists, five choruses and absolutely no supporting instruments. I never concerned myself about where my poor singers would get their pitch or how they would maintain the twelve-tone intonation. Each singer had to have perfect pitch or a remarkable sense of relative pitch. Since I had worked with artists of this type before I could foresee no great difficulty. Now, however, I believe that I must have been wrong since *The Judgment* has still not seen the light of day.

The early 1970's marked the beginning of a major turnabout for me. My music embraced a new multi-style approach which I soon wound up calling "gestalt" form. Today I can safely say I wasted many hours hopelessly trying to explain to my academic cronies why I gave it such a name. My lecture in Aspen, for example, proved to be a bust until I played some tapes of my new gestalt music. Suddenly there was a glimmer of understanding. "Why does music always have to be consistent?" I asked. "Life certainly isn't except when it chooses to be!" My new gestalt idea provided me with a great *raison d'être* to explore expansive musical conceptions of changing elements or, in fact, totally contrasting styles so incongruous that they had no business being near each other, let alone in the same composition! Thus armed with the chameleon-like aesthetic of my gestalt idea, I could not only combine tonality with atonality but create a believable blend of music which could include touches of aleatoric, romantic, minimalist, forms. As a result, an avalanche of massive gestalt works followed: *YinYang Symphony*, concerto for Six Instruments and Orchestra, *Twilight Symphony*, *The Celestial City* and *Concerto for Cello, Tape and Orchestra*.

The 1980's and 1990's reveal a continued expansion of my *Infinites Cycle*. I would not be exaggerating if I said my *Infinites* row is like an old friend with whom I enjoy a visit a few times a year. My weakness for atonal jazz provides me with other aesthetic opportunities. Speaking about 1990, it would appear I opened a Pandora's box with my new book titled *Atonal Jazz*. The book explains my ideas about twelve-tone improvisation and is published with an *Infinites* play-along CD. I scribbled the first draft of the book on my way to Lithuania that scary summer of 1990. Our nervous little caravan of soloists, engineers, producers and wives sneaked into Vilnius to record my *Jazz Symphony* without Soviet visas! Very dangerous - so was the music! But that's another story.

I do not wish to give the impression that I abandoned my grandiose gestalt fantasies. The gestalt form eventually did emerge as the central preoccupation of my music from 1980 through 1996. The compositions of this period were centered around two instruments: the piano and the amplified guitar. The major keyboard works were *The Moor's Concerto*, *A Little Ivory Concerto*, *Masada* and four big piano sonatas: *The Canticles of Ulysses*, *Red Sonata*, *Twilight Sonata* and *Sonata Occulta*. The works for amplified guitar are *Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra*, *Ice Cream Concerto* (for 11 players and ice cream vendor), *These Suns* are *Dark* and *Hamlet*, *Prince of Denmark* (both for solo guitar), *Going Home* (for guitar quartet) and *Icarus* (for guitar, viola and cello).



Meyer
Kupferman

Joanne
Pearce
Martin

Laura Ann
Mauer

Russell
Harlow

Just to show that I am still keeping my hand in there, I should explain that I do play my instrument, the clarinet, every day, and conduct once in a blue moon, or whenever it is less of a hassle for me to do it. My musicians are very sensitive individuals, often high-strung or just plain strung-out from too much concentrated work on my music. It is good, therefore, that I hold myself in high esteem as an excellent coach (I haven't killed anyone yet, but I have been tempted many times!). I try to impress upon my artists that they should enjoy the challenge of impossible passages, arguments with composers, making revisions and planning important musical events.

In closing let me say that music has been my life and I am very grateful to have lived it. Although the hardships, struggles and disappointments are never forgotten, the real joy of making something out of nothing is always there in front of me.

- Meyer Kupferman

FOUR CONSTELLATIONS (1974)
for flute and clarinet

1. *Aquarius* (4:02)
2. *Scorpio* (1:38)
3. *Libra* (2:51)
4. *Sagittarius* (3:33)

O NORTH STAR (1997)
for flute (piccolo and alto flute), clarinet
(Eb clarinet and bass clarinet) and piano

5. *Lento espressivo* (6:14)
6. *March with variations* (1:03)
7. *Variation I* (1:46)
8. *Variation II* (2:54)
9. *Variation III* (2:25)
10. *Variation IV* (1:27)
11. *Variation V* (1:39)
12. *Slowly* (8:43)
13. *Stridente agitato ritmico* (5:35)

14. DOVELY DUO (1998)
for flute and clarinet (7:37)

15. STRATA (1997)
for solo flute (11:25)
in memory of Samuel Baron

Total Duration: 63:49

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The music and CDs of Meyer Kupferman are available from Soundspells Productions. Please include contact information, and purchase order number where possible, in all orders sent via e-mail, fax or mail. Complete catalogues of music and CDs will be sent upon request.

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O NORTH STAR

The Flute and Chamber Music of
MEYER KUPFERMAN

Laurel Ann Maurer, flute, piccolo and alto flute
Russel Harlow, clarinet, Eb clarinet and bass clarinet
Joanne Pearce Martin, piano



Photo: Christy Patton

Laurel Ann Maurer



Photo: Joseph Bernal

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