

THE CONTEMPORARY GROUP
PROGRAM NOTES
Wednesday, April 17, 1974

GEORGE ROCHBERG: RICORDANZA (Soliloquy for Cello and Piano) (1972)

A feature of increasing prominence in Rochberg's more recent compositions is the technique of musical collage. Such recent major works as the Third Symphony and the Third Quartet regale their listeners with the familiar styles of earlier masters of these forms (Mahler and Beethoven, for example), though the fragmented juxtaposition and reworking of the various quoted elements result in a completely contemporary and personal statement.

Ricordanza (Remembrance) was written in 1972 for the cellist Michael Rudiakov and is dedicated to him and to the memory of the composer's nephew, Robert Rochberg. The piece is essentially a ternary dance-form (ABA), the middle section consisting mostly of material drawn from Beethoven's Fourth Cello Sonata.

OLIVER MESSIAEN: OISEAUX EXOTIQUES (1955)

Oliver Messiaen's major source of musical materials during the past 25 years has been the sounds of nature. Bird songs have predominated, especially in such works as *Oiseaux Exotiques*, *Reveil des Oiseaux*, and *Catalogue des Oiseaux*. In his orchestral work, *Chronochromie*, of 1960, Messiaen uses in addition to birdsong the sound of waterfalls and mountain streams in the French Alps. This preoccupation with nature has extended into an almost mystical concern with numbers and what Messiaen refers to as "certain mathematical impossibilities in the domain of mode and rhythm."

Oiseaux Exotiques is a musical aviary within which are depicted the songs of some 40 birds. Most of these are North American, which is certainly exotic for a Frenchman. We thus find the cardinal, American robin, catbird, bobolink, and prairie chicken taking very prominent roles. The piece begins and ends with the songs of two Indian birds, the minah and the white-crested laughing thrush. Also from India are various Hindu talas which, along with Greek rhythms, are sedate backdrop to extremely complex and colorful textures made up of many different bird songs.

W. O. SMITH: C. B. (1972)

C. B. was composed in Rome the summer of 1972 and tonight receives its first performance. It was written for Charles Brennand and the pitch sequence is derived largely from transpositions of his initials.

The composer has tried not only to explore the coloristic possibilities of the cello, but also to utilize the performer himself as a sound producing movement are a quotation from C. G. Jung.

GERALD KECHLEY: DROP, SLOW TEARS (1971)

Drop, Slow Tears, a setting of the religious poem by Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650) for mixed voices unaccompanied, was written during a sojourn in London in 1970. Before its first performance in 1971, the piece was scored to include a quintet of two violins, cello, oboe, and harpsichord, with the dual aim of complimenting the warmth of the voices and providing a contrasting delicate texture as a foil for the vocal lines.

*Drop, drop, slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet,
Which brought from heav'n
The news and Prince of Peace:
Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease:
In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye
See sin, but through my tears.*

GERALD KECHLEY: PSALM 150 (1966)

Psalm 150 was commissioned for the 175th Anniversary of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland, and first heard there in the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in 1966. It was written for the men of the Seminary with accompaniment of brass and organ. In the present performance, the original organ part has been rescored for a choir of woodwinds.

The text is a paraphrase of *Psalm 150* written for the festive anniversary occasion by Melvin L. Farrell, S.S., who conveyed that he "attempted to be as faithful as possible to the meaning and exuberant tone of the original. As the closing piece of the Psalter, it is a triumphant "Amen" to the whole; the composer seems to be straining the limits of his imagination to call all creation into one final and climactic affirmation of God's glory."

The Psalm text is framed by a series of energetic and sometimes frenetic "Alleluias".

*Praise the Lord in his temple:
Let heaven's dome echo his praise!
Wondrous are his works: praise him!
Give trumpets tongue to peal his praise!
Wake harp and string to sing his praise!
Wake strings and organ; sound his praise!
Drums and chorus, voice his praise;
Thundering cymbals, shout his praise;
All that breathes, praise God!*