

## HARRISON BIRTWISTLE: VERSES (1966)

Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934), along with three former classmates at the Royal Manchester College of Music--the composers Alexander Goehr and Peter Maxwell Davies, and the pianist John Ogdon--is known in Britain as one of the Manchester Group of composer/performers. His music is characterized by a delicate, poised lyricism of subtle nuances. In the Verses for clarinet and piano, a mezzo-piano is an extreme dynamic; the pianist is instructed to play sempre una corda throughout the entire work; of the eight movements, only the fifth has a verbal indication accompanying the metronome marking: "senza espressione"! This is an intimate music of understatement which invites, never demands.

## HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS: QUINTETO EM FORMA DE CHÔROS (1928)

CHORO NO. 7 (1924)

SUITE FOR VOICE AND VIOLIN (1923)

The name chôro (literally "weeping," or "tears") derives from the choroes, itinerant bands of popular musicians of Rio de Janeiro, with whom Villa-Lobos was associated during the early years of this century. The chôro (pronounced show-roh) groups were almost exclusively instrumental, of varying size and instrumentation, and featured highly virtuosic solo improvisations.

The Quinteto em forma de chôros was originally composed for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet and bassoon, but is most frequently heard in the standard wind quintet format--an arrangement sanctioned by the composer. A literal rendering of the title into English would be perhaps misleading, as "forma" implies "manner" as much as "form." In fact, the various works called "chôros" by Villa-Lobos embrace a variety of musical forms, from the stylized dances in the Suite Popular Brasileiro for guitar ("Mazurka-chôro," "Schottisch-chôro," etc.) to the great, sprawling fantasies of works such as the Chôro No. 8. The Quintet consists of a free succession of contrasting ideas, reflecting the style and virtuosity of the improvisations of the choroes.

The numbered series of works known collectively as "the" Chôros constitutes a cycle of fourteen compositions, with a prefatory Introdução aos Chôros for orchestra, designed to lead directly into the first number of the series. These Choros are numbered, not in chronological order of composition, but rather in order generally of increasing complexity, duration, and size of performing ensemble, from the brief Choro No. 1 for solo guitar to the mammoth No. 13 (1929) for two orchestras and military band, and No. 14 (1928) for orchestra, band and chorus.

The Chôro No. 7, subtitled Setemino ("septet"), is among the most frequently performed of the cycle, the bright colors and relatively accessible size of the ensemble doubtless contributing to its popularity. Like the Quintet, it is built of a series of contrasting sections, alternately lyrical and rhythmic, with a return to the opening material at the end.

The three movements of the Suite for Voice and Violin utilize a variety of techniques borrowed from popular singing styles. The second movement in particular, employs an agile, staccato vocal line characteristic of certain singing styles in Portugal and Brazil--an element utilized later by Villa-Lobos in the "martelo" of the well-known Bachiana Brasileira No. 5. Neither the second nor the third movement of this suite employ a conventional text, utilizing instead syllables such as "na-na" in a quasi-instrumental manner--a device very characteristic of the composer.

## VILLA-LOBOS (continued)

The translation of the only texted song (the first) in the Suite for Voice and Violin:

The thin, gaunt girl, her skirt flying above her bony knees,  
 Came half dancing, singing, in the dim twilight.  
 She beat a rhythm with her stick in the dust of the sidewalk.  
 Suddenly she turned to the old woman who came tripping behind,  
 an enormous clothes bundle on her head:  
 "Oh, give it to me, Granny?"  
 "No."

## ROBERT STARER: "NIGHT MUSIC FOR PERCUSSION"

"Night Music for Percussion" by Robert Starer is one of a limited number of percussion ensembles that are primarily melodic as in the second movement of Carlos Chavez' "Toccata for Percussion." In "Night Music", Starer utilizes pitched percussion instruments and long melodic phrases over a slow pulse. The melody, first introduced in the tympani is then reiterated by the chimes, glockenspiel, and celesta while the xylophone, drums, and gongs are used primarily as rhythmic gestures.

## ALBAN BERG: LYRIC SUITE

The Lyric Suite (1926) is Alban Berg's masterwork in the chamber music genre, written in the years immediately following the completion of his opera Wozzeck (1920). The highly expressive aim of the work is amply exposed through the composer's emotive titles for each of the work's six movements: "jovial, amorous, mysterious, passionate, delirious and desolate".

## STUART DEMPSTER: PIPEDREAM

Conceived in Seattle early last month, this work was designed for the multi-media class out of a desire to provide a lab experience for them that would also involve the members of the Contemporary Group. Besides these groups, the work features Pamela Schick along with other members of Dance Theater Seattle, slides by Karl Krogstad, the Chime Organ performed by members of the percussion ensemble, and two sculpture-instruments, entitled "Blowdozer" by Wayne Forbes, and "Human Serpentoid" by Chip Wulff, from the "Sculptorchestra."

The "Sculptorchestra" and the TEN GRAND HOSERY from which it is lifted, was conceived in 1969 on the train from Champaign to Chicago and was sketched and completed while Dempster was on leave last season as a Fellow in the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois. The sculptors Forbes and Wulff were students of Frank Gallo. It is to be noted that PIPEDREAM is also linked to train travel since it was sketched and completed on the Seattle-San Diego run. Since TEN GRAND HOSERY is also somewhat of a "dream" piece, it is Dempster's contention that the dream state inherent in train travel is what makes these two works so interwoven.