

ALEA III

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SYNCHRONISMS NO. 8 FOR WOODWIND QUINTET AND TAPE

MARIO DAVIDOVSKY

Mario Davidovsky was born in Argentina in 1934, and has lived in New York since 1960. He is presently Associate Director of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, and Associate Professor of Music at CCNY. He is a winner of numerous awards and fellowships including: American Academy of Arts and Letters; Brandeis University Creative Arts Award; Aaron Copland-Tanglewood Award; two Guggenheim Fellowships; two Rockefeller Fellowships, and the Pulitzer Prize. He has won numerous national and international prizes for orchestral and chamber compositions and has received numerous commissions from, among others, the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Yale University.

Synchronisms No. 8 for Woodwind Quintet and Tape belongs to a series of compositions for electronically synthesized sounds in combination with the more conventional instrument. In this particular piece, which is in one movement, the electronic sounds are an extension of the sounds produced by the woodwind quintet. However, along with the usual instruments employed by the woodwind quintet, there are here three additional ones, calling for some doubling on the parts of the performers: the English horn is played by the oboist, and the alto flute and piccolo are played by the flutist. The electronic segment should perhaps not be viewed as an independent polyphonic line, but rather as if it were one of the performing parts. Generally speaking, in the whole series of these pieces, a coherent musical continuum is sought while trying to respect the idiosyncracies of each medium.

SIX SET-PIECES

FRANCIS THORNE

Francis Thorne was born in Bay Shore, N.Y., in 1922. His maternal grandfather was the distinguished music critic Gustave Kobbe. A pupil of Paul Hindemith at Yale, he was subsequently active as a naval officer, stockbroker, and jazz pianist before resuming studies in composition in the late 50's with David Diamond. His music has been premiered by the orchestras of Philadelphia, Minnesota, Buffalo, and St. Paul, and his catalogue of works numbers over 70. He is executive director of the American Composers Alliance and president of the American Composers Orchestra.

The composer has supplied the following note:

"*Six Set Pieces* owe an important debt stylistically to the Third Stream concert music of Gunther Schuller in the 50's. The pieces are not serially composed, although a theme using the 12 notes is the basis for the entire composition, with traditional thematic development employed. The characteristic titles of the movements are self-explanatory. The music requires high virtuosity in all of the players and the conductor. The richness of the ensemble sound is largely due to the use of lower pitched instruments: clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, two trumpets, trombone, two percussion players, piano, two violas, and double bass. The work is recorded on CRI and has a duration of approximately 17 minutes. It was written in the spring of 1967 in Puerto Rico."

The six pieces are headed:

- I. Grottesque I (Adagio maestoso; Allegretto misterioso)
- II. Jam Session I (Presto vivace)
- III. Grottesque II (Allegretto grottesco)
- IV. Choral Prelude (Adagio semplice)
- V. Jam Session II (Allegro con fuoco)
- VI. Finale (Andante grazioso; Presto vivace)

SAMUEL CHAPTER

JOHN HARBISON

John Harbison (b. 1938) is one of twelve composers writing new pieces for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's centennial celebration. His opera *Winter's Tale* was premiered by the San Francisco Opera in 1979; his chamber opera *Full Moon in March* was given its first performance by the Boston Musica Viva, repeated at Tanglewood this past August.

John Harbison's compositions include *Violin Concerto* and *Motetti di Montale*, a cycle of twenty songs for voice and piano. Commissions include works for the Naumburg Foundation (*Quintet for Winds*), Koussevitsky Foundation (*Diotima* for large orchestra), Fromm Foundation (*Elegiac Songs* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra), and the New York Bar Association (*The Flower-Fed Buffaloes*). He has just received the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award for his *Piano Concerto*.

Mr. Harbison is professor of music at MIT, music director of the Cantata Singers and Ensemble, and will be resident composer at the American Academy in 1981.

The composer has supplied the following note:

Samuel Chapter proposes to lead the hearer through a scriptural text, with various resources of musical articulation as guides: this is one of the oldest functions of sacred music. Special colors are used to divide the text for comprehension, as in an illuminated manuscript. The text unfolds close to speech speed, but there are pauses for emphasis. The voice is conceived as a trumpet-like herald (the score leaves open the possibility of using a boy's voice).

A few details from the previous chapter of Samuel I may help in following the narrative. The priest Eli has two corrupt sons. When their offenses, which include the defiling of the temple, are reported, he reprimands but does not punish them. The young Samuel is apprenticed in Eli's house. He is destined by God to become the faithful priest who will renew and restore His purpose.

Both protagonists are tested when God reveals His plan to punish Eli and his house. The music drives to, and away from, the resolution of two questions: Can Samuel give a true account of his vision to Eli, whatever the cost? Can Eli accept the truth and justice of the vision? The framing of the answers produced this piece.

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TEXT

Samuel 1:3

And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the Lord called

*Samuel: and he answered,
Here am I*

*And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou calledst me.
And he said, I called not; lie down again.
And he went and lay down.
And the Lord called yet again,*

Samuel.

*And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said,
Here am I; for thou didst call me.
And he answered,*

I called not, my son; lie down again.

*Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.
And the Lord called*

Samuel again the third time.

*And he arose and went to Eli, and said,
Here am I; for thou didst call me.
And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.
Therefore Eli said unto Samuel,*

*Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee,
that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy
servant heareth.*

*So Samuel went and lay down in his place.
And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times,*

Samuel, Samuel.

*Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.
And the Lord said to Samuel,*

Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.

And Samuel lay until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.

*Then Eli called
and said,
And he answered,
And he said,*

Samuel,
Samuel, my son.

Here am I.

What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?
I pray thee hide it not from: God do so to thee, and
more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all
things that he said unto thee.

*And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.
And he said*

It is the Lord:

let him do what seemeth him good

*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words
fall to the ground.*

*And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established
to be a prophet of the Lord.*

*And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed himself to
Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.*

NOCTURNE III FOR SOPRANO AND COMPUTER-GENERATED TAPE *Geoffrey Wright*

Geoffrey Wright is a Doctoral Candidate at the Peabody Conservatory of the John Hopkins University where he is also the assistant director of the Peabody Electronic Music Studio and founder of the fledgling Peabody Computer Music Studio. Mr. Wright has received numerous awards, grants, and scholarships—the most recent of which was a Composition Fellowship to the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood where he studied with Gunther Schuller.

Mr. Wright's *Dance Suite from the SONG WEAVERS*, an excerpt from an hour-long Electronic/Computer music ballet commissioned by the Body/Voice Theatre Foundation of NYC, will be performed again by that group on November 12th, 13th, 15th, and 16th in New York.

Nocturne III was composed during July, 1979, at the MIT Experimental Music Studio using the direct digital synthesis program MUSIC-11 of Barry Vercoe. The piece is the result of a grant and scholarship which enabled the composer to spend the summer of 1979 studying computer music and working in the studios of MIT.

It was the composer's intention to write a work which required the computational sophistication of a computer yet at the same time maintained a decidedly "human" character.

The computer part is not equally tempered, rather it consists entirely of computer calculated and generated "sum and difference tones" of the pitches A-440 and G-196. Therefore all pitches are either slightly above or below the pitches commonly produced in a normal concert situation. Consequently the soprano must adjust her singing to match the unusual tuning on tape.

After much experimentation, it was decided that the somewhat "nebulous" quality of this tuning system captured the feeling of the poetry of the French surrealist, Robert Desnos.

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Nocturne III is one of a series of 5 nocturnes. Its text is by Robert Desnos:

I dreamed so much of you
that you lost your reality
can I still touch that living body
 kiss on that mouth the birth
 of the voice that is dear to me,

I dreamed so much of you
that my arms in embracing your shadow
 so used were they to cross each other on my breast
that they would be clumsy in encircling your contours perhaps.
I would no doubt become a shadow
O sentimental scale of things

I dreamed so much of you
 walked so much, talked, slept with your phantom that I can only
 be perhaps and for all of that a phantom among phantoms
 and a shadow a hundred times more than the shadow that
 turns and will turn with happy gait on the sundial of
 your life.

LA CRÉATION DU MONDE (THE CREATION OF THE WORLD)

DARIUS MILHAUD

Darius Milhaud has always been one to take advantage of his environment and absorb the spirit of the music he has heard around him, fusing it with his own creative originality into a telling work of musical art. He did it with the folk music of his native Provence; with the folk songs and dances of Brazil when he served as attaché to the French Ambassador, Paul Claudel, in 1917, and with American jazz when he visited the United States for the first time in 1922.

In Boston, Milhaud was fascinated with the dance music performed by Leo Reisman and his Orchestra. In New York, his keenest interest in American jazz was aroused by Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and even more forcibly by the music of the Harlem dance halls. He returned to France with an armful of records he had purchased in Harlem.

Some months later, back in Paris, Milhaud set to work on a new project for Rolf de Maré's Swedish Ballet. His collaborators were Fernand Léger, who designed the scenery and costumes; Blaise Cendrars, who wrote the book, and Jean Borlin, who devised the choreography and danced one of the principal roles. Cendrars' idea was a ballet depicting the creation of the world as it might be envisioned in African folklore. Léger provided some striking décor along primitive, aboriginal lines, and Milhaud had an opportunity to pepper his music with Negro jazz elements. He scored it for an ensemble of dance orchestra proportions, though the instrumentation bore scant resemblance to that of an American dance band. But the jazz idioms were there in profusion, and *La Création du Monde* became the first important piece of serious music to make extensive use of jazz. It was first presented by the Swedish Ballet at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris on October 25, 1923, and thus appeared some three and a half months before George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Briefly, the action of *La Création du Monde* is a danced interpretation of the creation of all living beings. From out of the dark, mass of dancers emerge, one by one, trees and animals, progressing from the lowest forms of life to the highest, Man and Woman, who conclude the work with a climactic kiss of fertility. Milhaud's music accompanies this action on a relatively subdued plane, but the spirit of jazz, particularly the blues, is ever present.

—Paul Affelder