

CHARLES WUORINEN (b. 1938)

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|----|--|---------|
| 1 | The Blue Bamboula (1980)
(piano solo) | [11:20] |
| | Six Pieces (1977)
(violin & piano) | [19:44] |
| 2 | I | [1:30] |
| 3 | II | [2:55] |
| 4 | III | [1:31] |
| 5 | IV | [3:44] |
| 6 | V | [4:16] |
| 7 | VI | [5:35] |
| 8 | Spinoff (1983)
(violin, contrabass, conga drums) | [6:30] |
| 9 | The Long and the Short (1969)
(violin solo) | [9:29] |
| 10 | Fantasia (1974)
(violin and piano) | [17:16] |

Total time: 64:45

Benjamin Hudson, violin

Garrick Ohlsson, piano

with members of Speculum Musicae:

Donald Palma, contrabass

Joseph Passaro, conga drums

Notes by Michael Steinberg

Charles Wuorinen is not about to join the ranks of the born-again tonalists or of those who, forgetting that the Romantic movement was about adventure, not retreat, presume to call themselves neo-Romantics. He is a "maximalist" through and through, writing music dense with notes, with event, with cross-reference and allusion. He has never thought there must be something wrong with a piece that reaches its listeners at the first encounter (if indeed that attitude is not altogether a myth in the minds of more populist musicians and critics), but he does believe in writing music that challenges performers and listeners to do better than they knew they could, that reveals its riches gradually rather than all at once, that rewards attention and effort. In other words, the musical contact between composer and listener is a two-way street. The works for violin and piano, together and separately, on this recording are not large, but they give you plenty to listen to.

Wuorinen has been composing since he was five, when he started to produce imitations of the little Bach and Mozart pieces he was learning to play on the piano, and he has been a forceful presence on the American musical scene for three decades. Confident, prolific, successful, Wuorinen has presented a sharply defined musical personality to the world from the beginning.

The first twentieth-century music he knew was *Petrushka*, and though Wuorinen's Stravinsky now is the composer of the late works like *Movements* for Piano and Orchestra, *A Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer*, the *Variations Aldous Huxley in Memoriam*, and the *Requiem Canticles*, the brilliant color and the athleticism of the early ballets

have left a permanent mark on his style. Schoenberg was another composer from whom he drew "crucial nurture," and he has written of "the inexhaustible treasures of [my] patrimony: the twelve-tone system." The coruscating scores of Edgard Varèse appealed to the same appetites that had drawn Wuorinen to *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du printemps* (and for a while to Bartók). He also came to find the richly complex, challenging, individually quite distinct musics of "that most important triad" of Stefan Wolpe, Elliott Carter, and Milton Babbitt powerfully compelling. Given these penchants, the nature of his own highly energized music—mentally and physically—comes as no surprise.

Wuorinen is on the faculty of Rutgers University and since 1985 he has been Composer in Residence to the San Francisco Symphony. In 1962, together with the composer and flutist Harvey Sollberger, he founded the Group for Contemporary Music, the model for many other such ensembles that began to spring up in the 1960s. He himself has always been active as pianist and conductor, and his music reflects his delight in virtuosity.

The New Grove Dictionary of American Music skips straight from Baltimore to Rose Bampton, and you have to go to a British reference book, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, to find "bamboula," which is both a tambourine "formerly in use in Louisiana and still in use in the West Indies" and "a dance to which this instrument is the accompaniment." Wuorinen first encountered the word when his colleague Easley Blackwood delighted him by playing the *Bamboula, Danse de nègres* of the nineteenth-century New Orleans composer, Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Wuorinen himself has written four bamboulas, the others

being the *Grand Bamboula* for String Orchestra, *Bamboula Squared* for Orchestra and Electronic Sound, and the most recent, *Bamboula Beach* for Michael Tilson Thomas's Miami-based New World Symphony. *The Blue Bamboula*, composed in 1980, was written for Ursula Oppens, who is not only a marvellous pianist but a champion of American music who has commissioned a number of pieces, this among them, with her very own money, without waiting for government or foundation grants. *The Blue Bamboula* is a sassy piece all about piano virtuosity, and if you think you hear an allusion to Tchaikovsky's First Concerto it is because Wuorinen wanted you to.

The late Max Pollikoff was a violinist who for some twenty years ran a concert series in New York called *Music in Our Time* at which he introduced something like 250 compositions. Occasionally he was also able to offer a commission, Wuorinen's *Six Pieces* of 1977 being one. Pollikoff and Wuorinen introduced them in Town Hall, New York, at a concert celebrating the fifty-fourth anniversary of the violinist's debut at Aeolian Hall (at which, characteristically, he had introduced a new work, his own *Légende*). The *Six Pieces*, compared to *The Long and the Short* and the *Fantasia*, are more by way of being "Charakterstücke," the effect of the whole being that of vivid contrasts of musical character. The first and third are very short indeed (but "long" here means a matter of three minutes or so).

Spinoff, composed for Speculum Musicae, one of the new-music ensembles that are part of the progeny of Wuorinen's own Group, and dedicated to Benjamin Hudson, makes contact with the demotic. Wuorinen lives on New York's Upper West Side, and the sounds of his environment sometimes invade his music. Here it is as though he

had imagined a violinist and a bass player rehearsing chamber music in a non-air-conditioned West End Avenue apartment with the windows open, their music being gently, charmingly, insistently invaded by sounds emanating from the world of Riverside Park. The date of *Spinoff* is 1983, and the first performers were Benjamin Hudson, Donald Palma, and Joseph Passaro.

The Long and the Short is a solo piece Wuorinen composed in 1969 for Paul Zukofsky, a superbly equipped violinist—now more active as a conductor—who, despising his colleagues' commitment to musical necrophilia, devoted himself vigorously to the cause of contemporary music. The title refers most obviously to the contrast between the frame of extremely long notes (two at the beginning, three at the end) and the short ones, many of them, of many kinds, and carefully defined as to weight, articulation, and color, that make up the body of the piece. But there is more to it than that. Wuorinen has always been interested in the structural possibilities inherent in the relationship of rhythm to pitch, lengths of notes being coordinated in various ways with intervals between them—never more so than at this period—and the title also alludes to this feature. As for those long notes—Wuorinen uses certain notes as nodal points between which there is a lot of activity, while the long notes are such points where nothing has been filled out, rather like leaving a couple of mannequins nude at each end of a display window.

Wuorinen wrote his *Fantasia* for Violin and Piano between March and December 1974 on commission from the Chamber Music Society of Baltimore in celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary. Paul Zukofsky and Wuorinen himself gave the first performance. The violin

line takes off like something released by a powerfully coiled spring. At first it seems as though Wuorinen had followed the example of Schoenberg's *Phantasy* and written a piece for violin with piano accompaniment, but the piano gradually asserts its rights as a fully entitled partner. Here is the most complex work in this collection, an often spiky music of electrifying nervous energy, rapidly eating huge amounts of vertical space, but leading to a coda in pianissimo in which piano and violin, now in steady gait, play chords as though they were a single instrument.

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Benjamin Hudson

Violinist Benjamin Hudson's remarkable versatility and musicianship have led to international recognition as a major performer, both on period and modern violin. Long respected for his brilliant and insightful interpretations of traditional and twentieth-century works, Benjamin Hudson has appeared as soloist and concertmaster with conductors including James Levine, Pierre Boulez, Gerard Schwarz, Arnold Ostman, and Dennis Russell Davies.

Recently appointed as concertmaster of The Drottningholm Court Theatre Orchestra, Benjamin Hudson also serves as concertmaster for a number of authentic instrument ensembles such as The Hanover Band (London), The Grande Bande, and Joshua Rifkin's Bach Ensemble. This season Mr. Hudson will be featured as soloist in the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto during The Hanover Band's U.S. tour.

Up-coming recordings include period-instrument versions of the Beethoven and Mendelssohn Concerti (both with The Hanover Band), and with the Columbia Quartet, the complete Beethoven Quartets on period instruments. Benjamin Hudson is a founder of the Period Instrument Program at Rutgers University, and is a member of the faculty at Columbia University.

Garrick Ohlsson

Garrick Ohlsson's impressive schedule of concerts, recitals, and recordings has established him as a respected member of the international musical community and proved him to be one of the foremost pianists of our day. His music making is known to audiences throughout the world—from New York City's Carnegie Hall and Royal Festival Hall in London to Japan's major concert halls and Dvořák Hall in Prague where he has averaged three sell-out concerts a season since the early 1970's.

Last season in the United States, Mr. Ohlsson was heard in recital in New York City and was guest artist with the Chicago, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Calgary, Milwaukee, San Antonio, and Winnipeg Symphonies. European engagements included recitals in Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, London, and Amsterdam and dates with the Warsaw Philharmonic; the Hamburg Symphony, Herbert Blomstedt conducting; and a tour of the British Isles with the Dresden Staatskapelle, Hans Vonk conducting.

Garrick Ohlsson was born in White Plains, New York, where he began piano study at age eight. At age 13, he entered The Juilliard School. Although Ohlsson had already won first prizes at the 1966 Busoni Competition in Italy and the 1968 Montreal Piano Competition, it was winning the 1970 Chopin Competition in Warsaw that assured his international reputation. Since that time, Ohlsson has made nearly a dozen tours of Poland where he remains a particular audience favorite.

Charles Wuorinen

Pulitzer Prize-winner Charles Wuorinen is one of the most performed and prolific of contemporary American composers, with more than 160 compositions for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal combinations.

Recent commissions include *Five (Concerto for Amplified Cello)*, for the New York City Ballet; *Third String Quartet* for the 25th Anniversary of Dartmouth's Hopkins Center; and *Bamboula Beach* for Michael Tilson Thomas and the inaugural concert of Miami's New World Symphony.

Almost two dozen of Wuorinen's works have won prizes and awards. His Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *Time's Encomium*, was, in fact, a commission from Nonesuch Records. His works have been recorded for nearly a dozen labels, and are published primarily by C. F. Peters.

Wuorinen has also been either conductor or piano soloist in performances of his works by the New York, Los Angeles, Helsinki and Royal Philharmonics; the Boston, Milwaukee, Indianapolis and Colorado Springs Symphonies; the St. Paul Chamber, American Composers, Louisville, Hessischer Rundfunk (Frankfurt), Berlin and Helsinki Radio Orchestras.

Mr. Wuorinen is Composer-in-Residence with the San Francisco Symphony, and Distinguished Professor of Music at Rutgers University, and has recently been awarded one of the coveted five-year MacArthur Foundation Fellowships.

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(left to right: Charles Wuorinen, Garrick Ohlsson, Benjamin Hudson)

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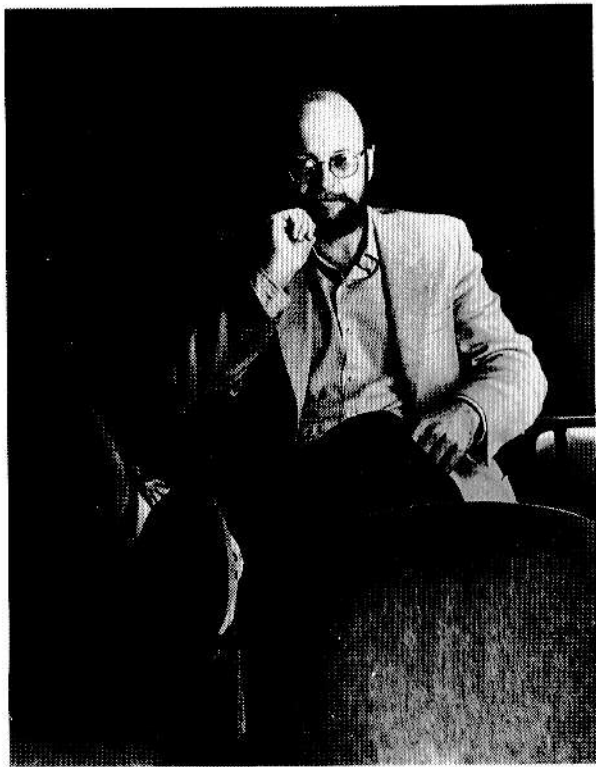
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