

STEPHEN JAFFE

(b.1954)

- i** **The Rhythm of the Running Plough** (1985/88) (14:49)
(for chamber orchestra)

The Prism Orchestra
Robert Black, conductor

- Four Songs with Ensemble** (1988) (20:55)
(for mezzo-soprano, alto flute/flute, viola, cello and piano)

- 2** I. The Sea Wind (Harry Martinson; trans. Robert Bly) (4:05)
3 II. On That Cool Plane (Robert Francis) (3:50)
4 III. His Running My Running (Robert Francis) (5:49)
5 IV. The Depths (Denise Levertov) (7:03)

D'Anna Fortunato, mezzo-soprano
with Speculum Musicae
Susan Palma, alto flute/flute Maureen Gallagher, viola
Eric Bartlett, cello James Winn, piano
William Purvis, conductor

- Double Sonata** (1989) (21:27)
(for two pianos)

- 6** I. Molto maestoso, poco stravagante, ardente (9:02)
7 II. Vivace leggiero (joyous, precise and articulate) (3:25)
8 III. Adagio (in memoriam V.P. and M.F.) (6:33)
9 IV. Veloce (2:24)

Anton Nel and Barry Snyder, pianos

Total time: 57:24
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Introductory Note by Vivian Perlis

The general public is unaware of the existence of many young composers and their works. Yet among these creative individuals, now in their thirties and forties, are those few who hold promise of becoming the major musical figures of the 21st century. This recording will familiarize audiences with the music of the talented young composer Stephen Jaffe. As the first all-Jaffe disk, it is a landmark in his career. It presents three mature works that have been admired by performers and well received by critics. They demonstrate the range and diversity of Jaffe's skills and talents.

All three pieces are tonal in an individualistic way. Jaffe does not quote material or make abrupt changes of style. In a century of fast-moving stylistic swings that has been described as fragmented and pluralistic, Stephen Jaffe has composed music that sounds secure: he knows what he wants, where he is going, and how to get there. The appreciation for each of these works deepens with repeated hearings, for there is a depth of intelligence and a wealth of interesting ideas to savor; yet these pieces have an exuberance, flair and wit that make them accessible and attractive at first hearing.

Vivian Perlis

Director Oral History, American Music
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Notes by the Composer

THE RHYTHM OF THE RUNNING PLOUGH

for chamber orchestra

The Rhythm of the Running Plough was written in the fall and early winter of 1985 when I was living in New York and Rome. Its original version for four instruments (alto flute doubling piccolo and flute, violin, cello and percussion) was composed for the New York New Music Ensemble, which gave the first performances in 1987. Even before the premiere took place, the composition's alternately rich and delicate sonorities suggested a larger scoring; this idea was encouraged by the late Robert Black, who conducted both the New York New Music Ensemble and the Prism

Orchestra (the latter gave the premiere of the chamber orchestra version at Merkin Hall, NY in December, 1988).

The music is pastoral in nature, making extensive use of drones and open string and percussion sounds as well as the more penetrating and emotional qualities of the winds, horn and strings. In fact, the work alternates between these two kinds of music - a musical mosaic united by a single pulse and divided into three main parts (the third presenting the ideas of the first recomposed and in reverse order).

The title is taken from these lines of the American poet William Everson:

The fragrance of the earth rises like tule-pond mist
Shrouding me in impalpable folds of sweet, cool smell,
Lulling my senses to the rhythm of the running plough,
The jingle of the harness
And the cries of the gleaming, bent-winged birds.

FOUR SONGS WITH ENSEMBLE

for mezzo-soprano and four instruments

Although I was thinking more of a group of loosely related songs than a song cycle, there is a progression to the texts and the music of *Four Songs with Ensemble*: from Martinson's "immortal" sea wind in the first piece through the great depths of metaphorical ocean in Levertov's beautiful poem, with contrasting verses of Robert Francis interspersed. Each of the four poems is a meditation about some aspect of Time. Francis' deceptively simple poems and my settings of them are a foil for the outer, more abstract songs; their use here marked the beginning of my continuing association with Francis' fine and delicate poetry, which often emanates from images relating to the town and landscape around Amherst, Massachusetts (where I lived for many years, although never meeting the poet).

Four Songs with Ensemble was commissioned by the music festival *An Appalachian Summer* with assistance from the North Carolina Arts Council for the Broyhill Ensemble, who performed the premiere in July, 1988. The mezzo-soprano was Katherine Ciesinski.

I. THE SEA WIND

The sea wind sways over the endless oceans -
spreads its wings night and day
rises and sinks again
over the desolate swaying floor of the immortal ocean.

Now it is nearly morning
or it is nearly evening
and the ocean wind feels in its face - the land wind.

Clockbuoys toll morning and evening psalms,
the smoke of a coalboat
or the smoke of a tar-burning phoenician ship fades
away at the horizons.

The lonely jellyfish who has no history rocks around
with burning blue feet.

It's nearly evening now or morning.

Harry Martinson, trans. by Robert Bly

II. ON THAT COOL PLANE

On that cool plane conflict is harmony
And what was discord now is dissonance,
Part of the music, the moving part of the music.

And if the resolution is delayed
Bar after bar, or if one dissonance
Shifts to another and then shifts again,

We are not anxious for the resting chord.
It comes, it comes in time. Solved and unsolved
On that cool plane are equal in delight.

Robert Francis

III. HIS RUNNING MY RUNNING

Mid-autumn late autumn
At dayfall in leaf-fall
A runner comes running.

How easy his striding
How light his foot fall
His bare legs gleaming.

Alone he emerges
Emerges and passes
Alone, sufficient.

When autumn was early
Two runners came running
Striding together

Shoulder to shoulder
Pacing each other
A perfect pairing.

Out of leaves falling
Over leaves fallen
A runner comes running

Aware of no watcher
His liveness my liveness
His running my running.

Robert Francis

IV. THE DEPTHS

When the white fog burns off,
the abyss of everlasting light
is revealed. The last
cobwebs of fog in the
black firtrees are flakes
of white ash in the world's hearth.

Cold of the sea is counterpart
to this great fire. Plunging
out of the burning cold of ocean
we enter an ocean of intense
noon. Sacred salt
sparkles on our bodies.

After mist has wrapped us again
in fine wool, may the taste of salt
recall to us the great depths about us.

Denise Levertov

DOUBLE SONATA

for two pianos

Having shied away from the two-piano medium because of unrewarding experience as a student pianist, I became interested in two-piano music a few years ago when, in order to make a demonstration tape for conductors of my *Four Images* for orchestra, I made a version for two pianos. It was beautifully played (by Cameron Grant and James Winn): my transcription sounded fantastic and signaled to me what clarity, power, and brilliance the two-piano medium was capable of! It was thus with enthusiasm (and as Rene Dubos pointed out, *enthusiasm* comes from the Greek *entheos* - meaning "the God within") that I responded when the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation asked me to write a new piece for two pianos.

The *Double Sonata* was composed in the fall and winter of 1988-89. Like *Four Images*, the work is in four large tableaux, each focussing on a different aspect of common material. Another parallel with *Four Images* is the use of antiphony (literally "sounding in response to") in taking musical advantage of the physical placement of the instruments. In my orchestral work, strings, percussion and harps are divided into left and right choirs, and here the separation of the two pianos gave me similar stimulation.

The first movement (*Molto maestoso, poco stravagante, ardente*) has a monumental character, contrasting bold and stark music with very long lines. The tempo is mixed but mostly fast. Three prominent melodic motives are introduced near the beginning: a descending half-step (C-B) heard between the two pianos as the sonata opens, a kind of fantastic fanfare repeated three times at the climax of the *maestoso* introduction, and a melody characterized by a slowly descending shape.

The contrasting second movement (*Vivace leggiero - joyous, precise and articulate*) is an interlude in fast tempo in which the two pianos' short articulations and rhythmic unisons suggest a kind of joyful, chattering dialogue, at times mechanical and playful, at times even manic.

The third movement (*Adagio - in memoriam V.P. and M.F.*) is an elegy for two admired composers, Vincent Persichetti and Morton Feldman, both of whom passed away just before I began work on the sonata. Here I imagined two kindred spirits working in tandem; my slow music absorbs cadences reminiscent of both their styles in a dual image, as if *Rothko Chapel* met the *Symphony for Strings* in my own dream. Here and elsewhere I take some advantage of the pianists playing in independent tempos, and the descending C-B half-step mentioned above plays a major role.

An ostinato which crystalizes from the final notes of the slow movement is the subject of the final movement, marked *Veloce*. Fanciful in design, this movement progresses from its *moto perpetuo* opening towards a series of cadenza-like figures, reminiscent of the first movement, finally bringing the sonata to a close on a strong cadence, resolving the pivotal half-step upward. The *Double Sonata* was first performed June 28, 1989 at Alice Tully Hall, New York, by the artists who have recorded it here.

The music of **Stephen Jaffe** (b. Washington, D.C.) has been widely performed throughout the U.S., Europe and China by ensembles including the R.A.I. of Rome, the San Francisco and New Jersey Symphonies, the New York New Music Ensemble and Spectrum Concerts Berlin; it has also been recorded on CRI, Albany and Neuma. Jaffe received his training in composition at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with George Crumb, George Rochberg and Richard Wernick, and at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition to a Premier Medaille from that institution, he has been the recipient of the Rome Prize, Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, fellowships from Tanglewood, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, and commissions from the Fromm and Naumburg Foundations, the New Hampshire Symphony and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Honoring his "eloquent and individual voice" in 1989 Brandeis University awarded him its Creative Arts Citation.

The composer's most recent works are *First Quartet* (1990-91) and three song cycles involving the poetry of Robert Francis: *Four Songs with Ensemble*, *Fort Juniper Songs* (1990) and *Pedal Point* (1990/94).

The Performers

The late **Robert Black** was founder and conductor of the Prism Orchestra. Other Robert Black performances on Bridge include: Elliott Carter: *In Sleep, in Thunder* (BCD 9014) and Tod Machover: *Nature's Breath* (BCD 9002) and *Towards the Center* (BCD 9020). During his all too brief career, Black's leadership of many of New York City's finest new music ensembles, and later, of an international range of orchestras, produced consistently well-prepared performances of unusual clarity and integrity. He is greatly missed.

The **Prism Orchestra** was founded in 1983. Its repertory ranges from Schubert and Brahms through Liszt, Strauss, Janacek and Shostakovich. The Prism Orchestra has recorded for the Bridge, CRI and Owl labels.

D'Anna Fortunato has been widely acclaimed for her vocal beauty, her superb musicianship, and for her extraordinary stylistic versatility. Ms. Fortunato has made numerous appearances with Roger Norrington, and has been a favorite soloist with such orchestras as Boston, San Francisco, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland, Dallas, and Houston. Ms. Fortunato's next recording for Bridge will be songs by the little known 19th century composer, Giulio Regondi.

Formed in 1974, **Speculum Musicae** is a democratically propelled instrumental ensemble dedicated to the performance and recording of twentieth century repertoire. These Speculum Musicae discs are available on Bridge: Charles Wuorinen (BCD 9008); Elliott Carter (BCD 9014); George Crumb (BCD 9028); Poul Ruders (BCD 9037); Stefan Wolpe (BCD 9043). Speculum's next Bridge disc will feature four new compositions from Denmark.

William Purvis has been acclaimed as virtuoso French horn recitalist, concerto soloist, chamber player, and recording artist. Purvis is a member of the Orpheus Ensemble, Orchestra of St. Luke's, New York Woodwind Quintet, as well as Speculum Musicae. He recently premiered Milton Babbitt's *Around the Horn* for solo horn, and will be playing a new horn concerto, being composed for him by Peter Lieberson.

Barry Snyder's performances have drawn high praise for their great elegance and subtleties. Snyder's recording of Faure's Complete Music for Cello and Piano (Bridge BCD 9038, with Steven Doane) has just been honored with a *Diapason D'Or* (highest rating). Snyder's next recording for Bridge combines works of Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten.

Anton Nel was winner of the First Prize at the Naumburg International Piano Competition in 1987. Mr. Nel has been soloist with numerous orchestras including the orchestras of Chicago, Seattle, Cincinnati, and the Academy of London. Mr. Nel has recorded for Virgin Classics, Musical Heritage Society, and Bridge (Rodrigo BCD 9027A/B).

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The Rhythm of the Running Plough

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Four Songs with Ensemble

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Double Sonata

Producer: David Starobin
Engineer: David Peelle
Edited by David Peelle
Recorded at Kilbourne Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester
on November 22 & 23, 1991

Harry Martinson *Havsvidnen (The Sea Wind)* from the Swedish, translation Copyright 1975 by Robert Bly. Used with permission of Robert Bly.

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