

Music of
David Felder

(b. 1953)

- 1 **Journal (1990)** (11:44)
June in Buffalo Chamber Orchestra
Harvey Sollberger, conductor
- 2 **Canzone XXXI (1993)** (6:37)
American Brass Quintet
Raymond Mase, Christopher Gekker, trumpets; David Wakefield, horn
Michael Powell, trombone, John Rojak, bass trombone
- 3 **November Sky (1992)** (16:33)
Rachel Rudich, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute
- 4 **Third Face (1988-89)** (10:07)
Arditti String Quartet
Irvine Arditti, David Alberam, violins
Garth Knox, viola; Rohan De Saram, cello
- 5 **Three Lines from Twenty Poems (1987)** (8:30)
June in Buffalo Chamber Orchestra
Bradley Lubman, conductor

Music of David Felder

by Nils Vigeland

The five pieces on this CD by David Felder (b. 1953) have a strong internal connection and cohesive unity not only technically, in the manner of their composition, but also aesthetically in their choice of instruments and form. There are two pieces for classic chamber music combinations: *Third Face* (1988-89) for string quartet and *Canzone XXXI* (1993) for brass quintet. There are two chamber orchestra pieces; *Three Lines from Twenty Poems* (1987) and *Journal* (1990) with similar orchestrations (the earlier work has a slightly larger wind and brass group, plus tape); and there is *November Sky* (1992) for flute doubling piccolo, alto-flute and bass flute, with computer processed sounds.

In these pieces, and indeed in Felder's work as a whole, one senses not so much an evolving style but an expanding one. What changes from piece to piece is the emphasis and balance of a few primary characteristics, largely dictated by instrumentation and textual association. The main characteristics of Felder's music are, I think, two in number. The first is a fierce opposition of states of activity--muscular, often violent fast music with static remote music of repose. This opposition is often made even more palpable by the parallel association of dynamics (loud versus soft) and interval content (dissonant versus consonant), although a re-thinking of these parameters is evident in Felder's more recent work. The second major characteristic of Felder's music is its insistent virtuosity of instrumental projection. In a Felder score, the performers are not only required to execute music of great difficulty, but must respond to both notational complexity and ensemble virtuosity. Although Felder (presently the Composer-in-Residence with the Buffalo Philharmonic) is very much concerned with the realities of performance, he has not wavered in his demand for the solution of difficult performance problems.

Total Time 54:17

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In the score of *Three Lines from Twenty Poems* (after Pablo Neruda) Felder inscribes the appropriate verses above the music: at the beginning, "...la dura fria hora..." (...the hard, cold hour...) and shortly after the hammered chords, "...a los lejos alguien canto. A los lejos..." (...in the distance someone is singing. In the distance...). Each succeeding section carries an inscription above it. Whether the verses triggered the music or became entwined with it during the course of composition is not important. Rather, it is the way in which they allow Felder to explore the balance and proportion of his characteristic materials in a composition.

I have made reference to the word "balance" because it appears to me the most important discovery for Felder in the expansion of his work. In the earlier *Third Face*, the aggressiveness of the general tone is too strong to be counterpoised by the occasional moments of calm. The fury that is unleashed in *Third Face* has only the eerie opposition of the "high harmonics' music" as relief. This points to an increasing difficulty for a composer who speaks with a few signature elements, no matter how powerful or original their presence. Felder is too intelligent as well as self-critical a composer not to realize that if the danger of eclecticism (which he has avoided) is pastiche, then the danger of too strong a reliance on the signature, is self-parody.

The works after *Third Face* confront this potentially constricting dualism in three different ways, indicative of Felder's powers of self-renewal: the two chamber orchestra pieces reconsider the parallelisms of activity, dynamics, and interval character; *November Sky* contains a sustained ecstatic songfulness for its entire duration; and *Canzone XXXI* admits direct historical references to instrumental style and content (16th Century Venetian brass music) in its imitative writing, rhythmic counterpoint, and the fleeting mutation of a Gabrielli fragment at the end.

Most striking of these three new factors in Felder's recent music is the more

consonant interval palette, which is so prevalent in the chamber orchestra pieces. It seems to me (and this is a purely subjective response) that one likely source for this discovery was Felder's friendship with, and study of the music of, Morton Feldman, with whom he taught at the State University of New York at Buffalo. What Felder may have surmised from Feldman's work was that the insistence of a continuously harshly dissonant intervallic language could give way to a more greatly varied harmonic palette and the gain of new expressive territory. In *Journal*, there is a magical passage which begins the slow, quiet second section, in which the strings play three times the same wedge-like expansion of six chords. The first time, the six winds and brass double and shadow the strings. The second time, the harp, celesta and vibraphone echo the chords in new registers at a distance of two beats. The third time, the percussion again echoes, but at a distance of three and one-half beats. This re-iterative form of variation is at the core of Feldman's late music, and is beautifully adapted here for its own purposes by Felder.

Five works then which articulate an authentic, personal voice. One looks forward to the continuation of David Felder's work while admiring and enjoying what he has already achieved.



David Felder's music has been performed at many of the most important venues for new music, including Huddersfield, Darmstadt, Ars Electronica, Brussels, Vienna Modern, Geneva, ISCM and Warsaw Autumn, and by such ensembles as the New York New Music Ensemble, the Arditti Quartet, the BBC Symphony and the American Brass Quintet. Felder has received numerous grants and commissions including six fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as Guggenheim, Koussevitsky and Fromm Foundation Fellowships, and two awards from the Rockefeller Foundation. Currently, Felder holds the Birge-Cary Chair in Music at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he is

Artistic Director of the "June in Buffalo" Festival, and "New Residencies" Composer in Residence to the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Greater Buffalo Opera and WBFO-FM. He holds a Ph.D. from UCSD and names Reynolds, Erb, Rands and Erickson as influential teachers.

The June in Buffalo Chamber Orchestra

Rachel Rudich, flute/alto flute/piccolo; Tara O'Connor, flute; Briane Greene, oboe/english horn; Marianne Gythfeldt, clarinet/bass clarinet; Jerry Simas, clarinet; Jennifer Schuler, bassoon; Daniel Grabois, horn; Richard Kelley, trumpet; Jon Nelson, trumpet; Benjamin Herrington, trombone; Lon Gormley, bass trombone; Raymond Stewart, tuba; Rachel Ferris, harp; Margaret Kampmeier, piano/celeste; Kirk Brundage, percussion; Patti Cudd, percussion; Karen Bentley, Curtis Macomber, Cyrus Stevens, Katie Lansdale, Lee Wilkins, Rohan Smith, Kevin Case, Ellen Jewett, Sonia Jun, Patricia Nultemeier, violins; Frank Foerster, Scott Woolweaver, Lih-Wen Ting, Terry Van Volkinburgh, violas; Joshua Gordon, Greg Hesselink, Simon Turner, Elizabeth Simkin, cellos; Robert Black, Niek DeGroot, basses

Conductor **Harvey Sollberger** studied composition with Jack Beeson and Otto Luening at Columbia University, where he subsequently taught and co-founded the Group for Contemporary Music with Charles Wuorinen. He is well known as a performer of new music for the flute, and has conducted the premières of many new works as well as performances of standards from the contemporary repertoire. He was a Professor of Music at Indiana University for ten years, and now teaches and conducts at the University of California, San Diego.

Flutist **Rachel Rudich** is a specialist in the solo and chamber music repertoire of the Twentieth Century. She has appeared as a soloist for The New Music Consort, The Group for Contemporary Music, Speculum Musicae and Parnassus,

and as a recitalist throughout the United States. Miss Rudich has premiered works by Boulez, Carter, Crumb and Davidovsky. She has recorded on CRI, Koch, Newport Classics, Opus One, New World, Centaur and Bridge. Miss Rudich is currently Professor of Flute at California Institute for the Arts, and is also on the faculty of Pomona College.

As well as regularly touring the United States and Europe, the **American Brass Quintet** has completed extended tours of Japan and the People's Republic of China. The Quintet is in residence at the Juilliard School and at the Aspen Music Festival, and has recorded more than 25 albums for a wide range of labels. The ABQ has commissioned more than 100 works from such composers as Elliott Carter, William Schuman, Virgil Thomson, Henry Brant, Jacob Druckman, Gilbert Amy, Ralph Shapey and Meyer Kupferman.

Since its foundation by Irvine Arditti in 1974, the **Arditti String Quartet** has acquired a world-wide reputation for its brilliant interpretations of contemporary music. With a handful of exceptions, the Quartet has worked with every contemporary composer whose music they play. In recent years they have premiered works by Aperghis, Bryars, Bussotti, Cage, Carter, Donatoni, Feldman, Ferneyhough, Gubaidulina, Harvey, Kagel, Kurtág, Mason, Nancarrow, Nono, Pousseur, Scelsi and Xenakis; and their discography numbers well over 30 CD's.

Bradley Lubman, conductor, composer and percussionist, is the Music Director, Principal Conductor and Manager of the Stony Brook Symphony, as well as being on the faculty at Stony Brook University. He has conducted and recorded with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, the Group for Contemporary Music and the New Music Consort. From 1992 through 1994 Mr. Lubman participated as a composer and conductor at "June in Buffalo", and he has been on the faculty at the Aspen Festival since 1989. He has recorded for Nonesuch and New World Records.

Journal, and Three Lines from Twenty Poems

Producer: David Starobin

Engineer: Paul Zinman

Assistant Engineer: Richard Bailey

Editing: Eric Delente

Recorded at Slee Hall, SUNY at Buffalo

Canzone XXXI

Engineer: David Peelle

Assistant Engineer: Richard Bailey

Editing and post-production: Adam Abeshouse

Recorded at Slee Hall, SUNY at Buffalo

November Sky

Engineer: Josef Kucera

Editing and mixing engineer: Paul Zinman

Computer programming assistance: Rick Bidlack and Scott Thomas

Computer sounds realised at SUNY, Buffalo and at the Banff Centre, Frank Lockwood, engineer

Recorded at the University of California, San Diego

Third Face

Producer: David Starobin

Associate Producer: Michael Calvert

Editing: Michael Calvert and Eric Delente

Engineer: Paul Zinman

Recorded at Mastersound Astoria

Cover Painting by Alfred DeCredico

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