

POUL RUDERS

(b. 1949)

Violin Concerto No. 1 (1981) (18:54)

1 Echi d'una Primavera (9:20)

2 Ninna--nanna (5:11)

3 Ciacona d'Inverno (4:21)

Rolf Schulte, violin

Riverside Symphony ♦ *George Rothman, conductor*

Etude and Ricercare (1994) (13:32)

4 Etude (2:57)

5 Ricercare (10:33)

David Starobin, guitar

6 The Bells (1993) (17:51)

Lucy Shelton, soprano

Speculum Musicae ♦ *David Starobin, conductor*

7 The Christmas Gospel (1994) (10:53)

Malmö Symphony Orchestra ♦ *Ola Rudner, conductor*

Notes by Poul Ruders

Violin Concerto No. 1 (1981) is a neo-classical homage to the sunny world of the Italian Baroque. The scoring is made up of a double (echo) string orchestra, harpsichord and the modern chromatic harp. The concerto runs in three overlapping movements: Echi d'una Primavera (Echoes of a Spring); Ninna-nanna (Lullaby); and Ciacona d'Inverno (Winter Chaconne). In the first movement bits and pieces from 'The Spring' of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* emerge, disappear and re-emerge in a texture of lucid, bright-colored 'original' music; an energetic solo-cadenza leads into the slow movement, a simple 'cradle-song' in 3/4 (all Ruders), followed by a double-chaconne in which not only a stretch of bars from Vivaldi's 'The Winter', but also the piano introduction to Schubert's 'Der Greis' (*Winterreise*) form the 2 ostinati underlying the happy 'dancing' of the solo-violin. Being a winter-chaconne, however, the music freezes over towards the end and the movement terminates on a chilling note, an 'icicle' of a high E-natural, played by the solo-violin, all alone.

Violin Concerto No. 1 was actually composed in Italy - in November 1981, at San Cataldo, a Danish artist's resort near Amalfi. From the window above my desk I had a perfect view of Ravello, where Wagner composed *Parzifal* and Leopold Stokowski romanced Greta Garbo.

Etude and Ricercare could have been called 'Prelude and Fugue' with its short *Etude* leading the way towards the disproportionately longer *Ricercare*, a title I've taken from early Italian music (*Ricercare* meaning: "to search"). The quiet repetitive staccato of the *Etude* belies its considerable technical difficulty as a

left-hand study, traversing in 'moto perpetuo', the entire range of the guitar's fingerboard. The *Ricercare* is written in two and three voices, with its initiating theme and subsequent development the result of compositional techniques both old and new. *Etude and Ricercare* (particularly the latter) is most of all a polyphonic fantasy,--a 'search' for extreme expression on an introverted instrument. *Etude and Ricercare* was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation of Harvard University, and was composed for the American guitar virtuoso, David Starobin.

The high-voltage drama and Gothic atmosphere of looming doom inherent in the works of Edgar Allan Poe never seems to leave me alone, so when the London-based chamber group The Nash Ensemble commissioned a piece from me in 1993, I didn't delay long in deciding to have a go at setting the famous poem 'The Bells'. I asked American soprano Lucy Shelton if she would sing the part and I was more than happy when she agreed.

The poem virtually begs to be set to music (oddly enough, as far as I know, only Rachmaninov has done it), it being virtually a piece of music in its own right. In my setting, the progress of composition follows the text very closely --in other words the text is the form: the overall shape is descending--pitch, rhythm, and moodwise. Toward the end 'the groaning of the bells' is depicted in a low, hoarse 'Sprechgesang' (call it Melodrama if you wish) and a stern, processional pounding on low, muted piano strings.

I must, at some point during my career as a composer, have been caught off guard during an interview, calling myself 'a film composer without film', and ever

since I've seen that label stuck on me in booklets, leaflets, reviews, previews, interviews, etc. Not that this particularly bothers me, because, as the saying goes, "where there's smoke, there's fire." Apparently my music has a cinematographic quality to it, evoking visual imagery for its listeners.

In fact, I'd never composed any film music whatsoever, until as recently as 1994, when I was approached by Danish film director Trine Vester, who wanted me to do a score for a silent TV film about the time-honored, yet ever-fresh story of the Christmas Gospel. The film, titled in English, *The Return of the Light*, uses no spoken dialogue, and combines animation and live-action, with the music playing throughout. The length of the film being so short (only about 10 minutes), I wasn't too worried about not being able to pull it off in the two weeks allotted to me. The extraordinary sampled sounds (pan-pipe, metal-guiro, bowed cymbals, Chinese metal-balls, etc.) were created by Danish percussion virtuoso Gert Sørensen.

Following the tale closely and faithfully from beginning to end, the score is provided with the following cues, along with their entrance timings on this recording:

- 1) The desert (0:00)
- 2) The story begins (0:44)
- 3) Sudden heavenly light (1:21)
- 4) The appearance of the Archangel Gabriel (1:29)
- 5) Mary looks up (1:37)
- 6) The Immaculate Conception (2:05)

- 7) Joseph appears (2:12)
- 8) Mary looks for Joseph (2:22)
- 9) They see each other (2:30)
- 10) Herod's castle (2:41)
- 11) The 3 kings (3:16)
- 12) Herod contemplating what he's just been told by the kings (4:13)
- 13) Herod 'sees' the newborn child in a dream (4:33)
- 14) A sandstorm is picking up (4:49)
- 15) Mary and Joseph are seeking shelter, constantly denied access (5:09)
- 16) The contractions begin (5:17)
- 17) The manger (6:29)
- 18) The birth (6:40)
- 19) The Star of Bethlehem (6:42)
- 20) The elevation of the child (6:51)
- 21) The reappearance of the 3 kings (7:01)
- 22) The inhabitants of Bethlehem and the shepherds (7:17)
- 23) The adoration of the child (7:37)
- 24) Sinister premonition of the upcoming infanticide (7:54)
- 25) A fierce light sweeps across the desert (7:57)
- 26) Herod is blinded by the light (8:16)
- 27) Herod summons the soldiers (8:24)
- 28) The infanticide (8:39)
- 29) Mary and Joseph and the child at peace (9:17)
- 30) Credits (9:54)

THE BELLS

I

Hear the sledges with the bells-
Silver bells!

What a world of merriment their melody foretells!

How they tinkle, tinkle tinkle,
In the icy air of night!

While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle

With a crystalline delight;

Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells

From the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells-

From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II

Hear the mellow wedding-bells-
Golden bells!

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!

Through the balmy air of night

How they ring out their delight!-

From the molten-golden notes,

And all in tune,

What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells
On the Future!-how it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells-
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells-
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III

Hear the loud alarum bells-
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out of their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,

Leaping higher, higher, higher
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavor
Now-now to sit, or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear, it fully knows,
By the twanging
And the clanging,
How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
In the jangling
And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells-
Of the bells-
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,-
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

Hear the tolling of the bells-
Iron bells!

What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!

In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright

At the melancholy menace of their tone!

For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.

And the people-ah, the people-
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,

And who, tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory so rolling
On the human heart a stone-

They are neither man nor woman-
They are neither brute nor human-

They are Ghouls:-
And their king it is who tolls:-
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls

A paean from the bells!
And his merry bosom swells
With the paean of the bells!

And he dances and yells;

Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the paean of the bells-
Of the bells:-

Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the throbbing of the bells-
Of the bells, bells, bells-
To the sobbing of the bells:-

Keeping time, time, time,

As he knells, knells, knells,

In a happy Runic rhyme,

To the rolling of the bells--
Of the bells, bells, bells:-

To the tolling of the bells--
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells--

To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

Edgar Allan Poe

Rolf Schulte, born in Germany, came to the United States after winning top prize in the 1968 Munich International Radio Competition. Mr. Schulte has been soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Munich Philharmonic, the Philharmonica Hungarica, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, and the radio orchestras of Berlin, Cologne, and Stuttgart. Other Rolf Schulte recordings on Bridge include: Music of Elliott Carter (BCD 9044) and György Ligeti's *Horn Trio* (BCD 9012).

Riverside Symphony is based in New York City, where the orchestra presents a wide-ranging series of performances, an International Composer Reading Program, and focuses on the discovery of new artists, unfamiliar works by the great masters, and important new compositions by living composers. Riverside Symphony is in residence at Columbia University, where the orchestra presents an annual free concert series. Riverside Symphony was founded in 1981 by George Rothman (Music Director) and Anthony Korf (Artistic Director).

George Rothman is a native of New York City. He was trained at the Manhattan School of Music, the Juilliard School, and the Tanglewood Music Center, where he worked with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Mr. Rothman has conducted more than 50 world premiere performances and has specialized in reviving little-known works of the past. Mr. Rothman currently serves as director of music performance and conductor of the symphony orchestra at Columbia University.

David Starobin divides his time as performer, teacher, entrepreneur, and militant activist for the music of our time. Starobin's concerts frequently feature repertoire from a body of more than 200 compositions that have been dedicated to him, including music by Elliott Carter, George Crumb, Mario Davidovsky, Poul Ruders, Milton Babbitt, Gunther Schuller, Robert Saxton, and Mel Powell. David Starobin currently holds the "Andres Segovia Chair" at the Manhattan School of Music, and is the President of Bridge Records, Inc.

Lucy Shelton is a two-time winner of the prestigious Naumburg Award and is well known for her adventurous and highly individual programming. The most recent of her many recordings are songs and chamber works of Oliver Knussen (Virgin Records); of Alexander Goehr (Unicorn-Kanchana); and Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Herzgewächse* (Bridge BCD 9032).

Speculum Musicae was formed in 1974 and is a democratically propelled ensemble, specializing in the performance and recording of recent repertoire. Based in New York City, the musicians of Speculum Musicae present an annual series of concerts in New York City and Philadelphia, and tour regularly in the United States and Europe. Other Speculum Musicae discs on Bridge include: Elliott Carter, BCD 9014; George Crumb, BCD 9028; Poul Ruders, BCD 9037; Stefan Wolpe, BCD 9043; Stephen Jaffe, BCD 9047; Kurtág, BCD 9048; *The New Danes* BCD 9054.

Malmö Symphony Orchestra has in recent years come to the attention of the international public through their recordings on the Swedish label BIS. Their largest collaboration thus far has been a series of discs of music by Alfred Schnittke. Upcoming projects include a series of recordings of music by Zoltan Kodály. The current chief conductor of the orchestra is the Estonian, Paavo Järvi.

Ola Rudner was born in Sweden and has pursued a double career as violinist and conductor. A prizewinner of the 1977 Paganini Competition, Mr. Rudner has performed throughout the world as soloist and chamber musician. Mr. Rudner has conducted the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Osaka Philharmonic, Helsingborg Symphony, Malmö Opera Orchestra, Orchestra da Camera di Santa Cecilia Roma, Vienna Volksopera and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

Violin Concerto No. 1

Producer: Judith Sherman; Engineer: Judith Sherman; Edited by Silas Brown and Michael Calvert; Recorded November 9, 1994 at SUNY Purchase, Theater C

Etude and Ricercare

Producer: Michael Calvert; Engineer: Ben Rizzi; Assistant Engineer: David Merrill Edited by Silas Brown; Recorded June, 1995, MasterSound Astoria

The Bells

Producers: Judith Sherman and Michael Calvert; Engineer: Judith Sherman Editors: Michael Calvert and Silas Brown; Recorded April 21, 1994 at the American Academy of Arts and Letters

The Christmas Gospel

Film Producer: Fredrik Vogel; A co-production of Filmforsyningen, Danish Television, Swedish Television, and the National Film Board of Denmark

Produced/ Engineered by Karl-Henry Gobrand, Åke Håkansson, Magnus Veigas Recorded in October, 1994 in Malmö, Sweden

Executive Producer: Becky Starobin

Mastering Engineer: Adam Abeshouse

Cover photographs from the film "The Return of the Light" by Trine Vester

Photograph of Poul Ruders by Becky Starobin

Bridge Records wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals who have helped to make this recording possible: Edition Wilhelm Hansen, Jens Rossel and The Danish Music Information Centre, The Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, The Fromm Foundation of Harvard University, Anthony Korf, Tine Birger Christensen, Svend Johansen, Ole Hansen, Fredrik Vogel, Gunilla von Bahr.

