

George Crumb

(b. 1929)

~Premiere recordings performed by Speculum Musicae~

Quest (1989-94) (24:12)

Solo Guitar, Soprano Saxophone, Harp, Contrabass, Percussion (two players)

- 1 Refrain 1 (:53)
- 2 I. Dark Paths (4:25)
- 3 II. Fugitive Sounds (2:11)
- 4 Refrain 2 (:40)
- 5 III. Forgotten Dirges (4:10)
- 6 IV. Fugitive Sounds (:59)
- 7 Refrain 3 (1:02)
- 8 V. Nocturnal (9:51)

David Starobin, guitar and concertina

Donald Sinta, soprano saxophone; Karen Lindquist, harp

Donald Palma, contrabass; Daniel Druckman, Erik Charlston, percussion

William Purvis, conductor

Total Time: 58:52

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Federico's Little Songs for Children (1986) (14:03)

(Soprano, Flute (and Piccolo, Alto Flute, Bass Flute) and Harp

- 9 1. La Señorita del Abanico (2:04)
- 10 2. La Tarde (2:00)
- 11 3. Canción Cantada (1:26)
- 12 4. Caracola (2:40)
- 13 5. ¡El Lagarto está Llorando! (2:15)
- 14 6. Cancioncilla Sevillana (2:00)
- 15 7. Canción Tonta (1:38)

Susan Narucki, soprano Susan Palma Nidel, flutes Stacey Shames, harp

Night Music I (1963, revised 1976) (20:24)

(Soprano, Piano (and Celesta), and Percussion (two players)

- 16 1. Notturmo I: Giocoso, estatico (3:20)
- 17 2. Notturmo II: "Piccola Serenata" (1:44)
- 18 3. Notturmo III: "La Luna Asoma" (3:00)
- 19 4. Notturmo IV: Vivace, molto ritmico (2:19)
- 20 5. Notturmo V: "Gacela de la Terrible Presencia" (5:46)
- 21 6. Notturmo VI: "Barcarola" (2:08)
- 22 7. Notturmo VII: Giocoso, estatico (2:07)

Susan Narucki, soprano Christopher Oldfather, piano and celesta

Daniel Druckman, percussion James Baker, percussion

Notes by the Composer

Quest was composed at the request of the guitarist David Starobin and was commissioned by Albert Augustine, Ltd.. The final revised version of the work was completed in February, 1994 and is dedicated to David and Speculum Musicae.

Over the years David had played virtually all the various parts I had composed for plucked instruments--mandolin (in *Ancient Voices of Children*), electric guitar (in *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death*), sitar (in *Lux Aeterna*), and banjo (in *Night of the Four Moons*). In requesting this new piece David specified only that I write for acoustic guitar and that the guitar part be treated soloistically.

I initially toyed with the idea of a piece for guitar alone, but feelings of insecurity in regard to guitar technique and idiom led me quickly to the conception of an ensemble work. Within the chosen sextet of players the guitar remains the principal protagonist, but other instruments (especially the soprano saxophone) can also take over the principal "voice". The inclusion of a wide variety of percussion instruments gave me an exceptionally colorful palette of timbral and sonic possibilities. I would specifically cite rather unusual instruments such as the Appalachian hammered dulcimer, the African talking drum, and the Mexican rain stick.

The poetic basis for *Quest* was never very clearly articulated in my thinking. I

recall pondering images such as the famous incipit of Dante's *Inferno* ("In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy mood, astray...") and a line from Lorca ("The dark paths of the guitar"); also the concept of a "quest" as a long tortuous journey towards an ecstatic and transfigured feeling of "arrival" became associated with certain musical ideas during the sketching process. But although the movement titles are poetic and symbolic, there is no precise programmatic meaning implied. There is one use of musical quotation in the work: phrases from the famous hymn tune *Amazing Grace* are played by the soprano saxophone--initially, at the conclusion of *Dark Paths* (over a delicate web of percussion sonority), and finally, in *Nocturnal* (over a sequentially slowing ostinato of bare fifths in the harp and contrabass). On the very last page of the score a distant echo of the tune is intoned by a harmonica, or, as in this recording, a concertina.

The composition of *Quest* turned out to be much more of an arduous "quest" than I could ever have imagined! An incomplete version was first performed in Amsterdam as early as 1989 (as a work-in-progress). But only after several more years of constant revision did the work reach its present form.

Federico's Little Songs for Children, written for the Jubal Trio, was completed during the summer of 1986. In 1970, after the composition of *Ancient Voices of Children* (the eighth work of a Lorca cycle initiated in 1963 with *Night Music I*), I felt that I had exhausted the potential of Lorca's poetry as a catalytic agent for my own music. I therefore turned my attention towards traditional Latin texts (in *Lux Aeterna* and *Star Child*), and then followed settings of Walt Whitman (in

Apparition) and Edgar Allan Poe (in *The Sleeper*). However, there remained a number of Lorca's poems which I eventually hoped to treat musically, should inspiration return. Among these, the *Canciones para Niños* (*Songs for Children*) especially intrigued me, perhaps because the light-hearted and whimsical character of these little poems contrasted so sharply with the more somber poetry I had chosen for my earlier settings. And thus, after a hiatus of sixteen years, I found myself once again immersed in Lorca's magical imagery.

The seven little poems constituting the *Canciones para Niños* reflect many different aspects of a child's fantasy world. The mood can be reflective, playful, mock-serious, gently ironic, or simply joyous. At an early stage in the sketching process I decided to include all four instruments of the flute family so that I might associate an appropriate timbre with the innate character of each poem. Of course the varied treatment of voice and harp, together with purely compositional choices likewise help delineate the desired mood.

The opening song, *Señorita of the Fan* (*Vivace, giocosamente*; scored with piccolo), is set for the most part in a quintuple measure. The reference to "crickets" is illustrated by a chirping piccolo motif. *Afternoon* (*Andantino quasi barcarola*; with flute in C) is delicate and idyllic throughout. *A Song Sung* (*Molto moderato, poco bizarramente*; with alto flute) is set in a very capricious style. The alto flute personifies Lorca's "Griffon bird". The central song of the cycle, *Snail* (*Lento, languidamente*; with bass flute), projects a sense of timelessness and wonder. The soprano whispers the opening and concluding lines of the poem; for the central portion, the soprano sings in "Sprechstimme

style," combined with a highly coloristic use of the harp. In *The Lizard is Crying!* (*Lentamente e lamentosamente*; with alto flute), the singer alternates between a quasi-cadenza style of declamation and rhythmically articulated spoken passages. The alto flute participates in the general sobbing! *A Little Song from Seville* (*Tempo di Habanera; scherzando, un poco buffo*; with flute in C) parodies a well-known type of Spanish popular music (and contains references to Debussy's *La Puerta del Vino*). The concluding piece, *Silly Song* (*Prestissimo* [and alternately: *molto più lento*]; with piccolo), is...just a silly song!

Night Music I was written in 1963 and revised in 1976. This is the first recording of the revised version. The work as a whole is a projection of the violently contrasting moods of the two poems: *La Luna Asoma* (The Moon Rises), with its aura of almost ecstatic lyricism, and the intense, sardonic *Gacela de la Terrible Presencia* (Gacela of the Terrible Presence). The conflict of mood remains unresolved at the conclusion of the work. Structurally speaking, the seven movements of the composition form a readily perceptible arch design in which the Lorca poems stand as buttress points. I have endeavored to enhance Lorca's surrealistic images by means of a highly colored chromaticism and unusual juxtapositions of timbre, register and rhythmic forms.

Federico's Little Songs for Children

1. La señorita del abanico

La señorita
del abanico,
va por el puente
del fresco río.

Los caballeros
con sus levitas,
miran el puente
sin barandillas.

La señorita
del abanico
y los volantes,
busca marido.

Los caballeros
están casados,
con altas rubias
de idioma blanco.

Los grillos cantan
por el Oeste.

(La señorita,

1. Señorita of the Fan

The señorita
of the fan
goes over the bridge,
over the cool river.

The gentlemen
in their waistcoats
look at the little bridge
without railings.

The señorita
of the fan,
with skirts a-flying,
is seeking a husband.

The gentlemen
are already married
to tall blond ladies
of the white language.

Crickets are singing
in the west.

The señorita

va por lo verde.)

Los grillos cantan
bajo las flores.

(Los caballeros,
van por el Norte.)

2. La tarde

La tarde equivocada
se vistió de frío.

Detrás de los cristales,
turbios, todos los niños,
ven convertirse en pájaros
un árbol amarillo.

La tarde está tendida
a lo largo del río.
Y un rubor de manzana
tiembla en los tejadillos.

3. Canción cantada

En el gris,

walks through the greenery.)

Crickets are singing
under the flowers.

(The gentlemen
go towards the north.)

2. Afternoon

The mistaken afternoon
was dressed in cold.

Behind the murky windowpanes
all the children watch
a yellow tree change
into birds.

The afternoon stretches out
along the river.
And a blush of apple
trembles in the roof tiles.

3. A Song Sung

In cold gray

el pájaro Griffón
se vestía de gris.
Y la niña Kikiriki
perdía su blancor
y forma allí.

Para entrar en el gris.
me pinté de gris.
¡Y como relumbraba
en el gris!

4. Caracola

Me han traído una caracola.

Dentro le canta
un mar de mapa.
Mi corazón
se llena de agua,
con pececillos
de sombra y plata.

Me han traído una caracola.

5. ¡El lagarto está llorando!

The Griffon bird
was clothed in gray.
And there from little Kikiriki
whiteness and shape
were taken away.

To enter cold gray
I painted myself gray.
And how I sparkled
in the cold gray!

4. Snail

They have brought me a snail.

Inside it sings
a map-green ocean.
My heart
swells with water,
with small fish
silvery, shadowy.

They have brought me a snail.

5. The Lizard is Crying!

El lagarto está llorando.
La lagarta está llorando.

El lagarto y la lagarta
con delantalitos blancos.

Han perdido sin querer
su anillo de desposados.

¡Ay, su anillito de plomo,
ay, su anillito de plomado!

Un cielo grande y sin gente
monta en su globo a los pájaros.

El sol, capitán redondo,
lleva un chaleco de raso.

¡Miradlos qué viejos son!
¡Qué viejos son lagartos!

¡Ay, cómo lloran y lloran,
¡ay!, ¡ay!, cómo están llorando!

6. Cancioncilla sevillana

Amanecía

Mr. Lizard is crying.
Mrs. Lizard is crying.

Mr. and Mrs. Lizard
in little white aprons.

Have gone and lost
their wedding ring.

Ah, their little leaden wedding ring,
ah, their little ring of lead!

A large sky without people
carries the birds in its balloon.

The sun, rotund captain,
wears a satin waistcoat.

Look how old they are!
How old the lizards are!

Oh, how they cry and cry,
Oh! Oh! How they go on crying!

6. A Little Song from Seville

Dawn is awakening

en el naranjel.
Abejitas de oro
buscaban la miel.

¿Dónde estará
la miel?

Está en la flor azul,
Isabel.
En la flor,
del romero aquel.

(Sillita de oro
para el moro.
Silla de oropel
para su mujer.)

Amanecía
en el naranjel.

7. Canción tonta

Mamá.
Yo quiero ser de plata.

Hijo,
tendrás mucho frío.

in the orange grove.
The little golden bees
are looking for honey.

Where will they find
the honey?

It's in the blue flower,
Isabel.
In the flower
of that rosemary yonder.

(A little chair of gold
for the Moor.
A chair of brass
for his wife.)

Dawn is awakening
in the orange grove.

7. Silly Song

Mamá,
I wish I were silver.

Son,
you'd be very cold.

Mamá.
Yo quiero ser de agua.

Hijo,
tendrás mucho frío.

Mamá.
Bórdame en tu almohada.

¡Eso sí!
¡Ahora mismo!

Night Music 1

La Luna Asoma

Cuando sale la luna
se pierden las campanas
y aparecen las sendas
impenetrables.

Cuando sale la luna,
el mar cubre la tierra
y el corazón se siente
isla en el infinito.

Mama,
I wish I were water.

Son,
You'd be very cold.

Mama,
Embroider me on your pillow.

That I will!
Right away!

The Moon Rising

When the moon rises,
the bells hang silent,
and impenetrable footpaths
appear.

When the moon rises,
the sea covers the land,
and the heart feels
like an island in infinity.

Nadie come naranjas
bajo la luna llena.
Es preciso comer,
fruta verde y helada.

Cuando sale la luna
de cien rostros iguales,
la moneda de plata
solloza en el bolsillo.

Gacela de la terrible presencia

Yo quiero que el agua se quede sin cauce.
Yo quiero que el viento se quede sin valles.

Quiero que la noche se quede sin ojos
y mi corazón sin la flor del oro;

que los bueyes hablen con las grandes hojas
y que la lombriz muera de sombra;

que brillen los dientes de la calavera
y los amarillos inunden la seda.

Puedo ver el duelo de la noche herida
luchando enroscada con el mediodía.

No one eats oranges
under the full moon.
One must eat fruit
that is green and cold.

When the moon rises,
moon of a hundred equal faces,
the silver coinage
sobs in the pocket.

Ghazal of the Terrible Presence

I want the water reft from its bed,
I want the wind left without valleys.

I want the night left with no eyes
and my heart without the flower of gold.

And the oxen to speak with great leaves
and the earthworm to perish of shadow.

And the teeth of the skull to glisten
and the yellows to overflow the silk.

I can see the duel of the wounded night
writhing in battle with noon.

Resisto un ocaso de verde veneno
y los arcos rotos donde sufre el tiempo.

Pero no ilumines tu limpio desnudo
como un negro cactus abierto en los juncos.

Déjame en un ansia de oscuros planetas,
pero no me enseñes tu cintura fresca.

I resist a setting of green venom
and the broken arches where timesuffers.

But do not show me your immaculate nude
like a black cactus open in the reeds.

Leave me in an anguish of dark planets,
but do not show me your cool waist.

Speculum Musicae specializes in the performance and recording of twentieth century repertoire. Based in New York City, the musicians of Speculum Musicae present an annual series of concerts in New York and Philadelphia and tour throughout the United States and Europe. Other Speculum discs on BRIDGE include: Elliott Carter/9014; George Crumb/9028; Poul Ruders/9037; Stefan Wolpe/9043; Stephen Jaffe/9047; Gyorgy Kurtág/9048; *The New Danes*/9054.

Susan Narucki's repertoire ranges from Mozart and Handel to the foremost composers of the twentieth century. The San Francisco Chronicle recently wrote: "No matter what the repertoire, a performance by Susan Narucki is always an important event."

David Starobin's recordings for BRIDGE include discs of music by 19th Century composers: Giuliani/9029; Regondi/9039 & 9055; as well as a series of 20th century discs. Starobin heads the Guitar Department at the Manhattan School of Music, and is the founder and President of Bridge Records, Inc..

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Producer's acknowledgement

This recording has endured the longest gestation of any with which I've been associated. I date its conception to 1971, when I first asked George Crumb for a guitar piece. It now being 1996, the quarter century was, I believe, well worth the wait. Thank you, George! And thank you to my friends -- the inspired performers whose work graces this disc. Without their dedication, these beautiful, fragile pieces would not speak as lovingly as they do. -- DS

Also available: Music of George Crumb: *Songs, Drones & Refrains of Death; Apparition; Little Suite for Christmas*; DeGaetani, Kalish, Sylvan; *Speculum Musicae*

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