

CONCERTO FOR FLUTE, STRINGS AND PERCUSSION

Melinda Wagner (b. 1957) (24:30)

- 1. Playful (8:52)
- 2. Sad, simple; warm (10:34)
- 3. ♩ = ca. 100 (5:00)

Paul Lustig Dunkel, flute
Westchester Philharmonic
Mark Mandarano, conductor

CONCERTO IN PIECES (PURCELL VARIATIONS)

Poul Ruders (b. 1949)

(17:14)

- 1. Theme and Variation I, *Vivace maestoso* (:53)
- 2. Variation II, *Vivace scherzando* (1:06)
- 3. Variation III, *Parlando alla breve* (1:29)
- 4. Variation IV, *Largo recitativo* (2:29)
- 5. Variation V, *Allegretto capriccioso* (1:12)
- 6. Variation VI, *Martellato feroce* (1:20)
- 7. Variation VII, *Andante lamentoso* (1:53)
- 8. Variation VIII, *Adagio lontano* (2:25)
- 9. Variation IX, *Intermezzo* (1:04)
- 10. Variation X, *Finale fugato, Vivace* (3:19)

BBC Symphony Orchestra
Andrew Davis, conductor

- Poul Ruders on his background and *Concerto in Pieces* (6:43)
- Melinda Wagner on her background and
Concerto for Flute, Strings and Percussion (6:58)

CONCERTO FOR FLUTE, STRINGS and PERCUSSION

Notes by the composer

It was during a rehearsal of my orchestral work, *Falling Angels*, in October 1995, that conductor and flutist Paul Lustig Dunkel first suggested that I compose a concerto for him. Delighted and honored to be given such a wonderful opportunity, I quickly agreed, and in the following year the Westchester Philharmonic commissioned the work in anticipation of its forthcoming 15th Anniversary celebration.

Several concerns presented themselves at the outset. While the flute is an incredibly agile instrument, capable of producing its signature silvery pyrotechnics as well as tones of dark and mysterious loveliness, it does

not cut the same kind of "heroic" figure as the concerto "heavy hitters," the piano and the violin. Nor does it necessarily stand up, acoustically or spiritually, to huge orchestral forces, or comfortably carry off a certain brand of angst. For these reasons, I agreed with Maestro Dunkel to omit winds and brass from my plans, thus leaving me to "discover" the palette of colors used by Bartók in his landmark *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* (I added additional percussion to Bartók's forces).

From the outset, I had a strong desire to compose a truly serious work for the flute. I wanted to include, of course, the virtuosic, rapid-fire passagework that sounds so good on the flute. However, I did not want the instrument to merely bob and float delicately atop the piece, but rather to participate fully in its compositional and formal rigor—not as a "hero" beating the odds, but as an artistic beacon, or navigator. I was not as interested in pushing the flute to its limits with extended techniques (there are no key slaps, multiphonics or speaking into the instrument) as with exploring the performer's rich tone and command of musical line. Also, I wanted the accompanying ensemble to participate fully in the music; indeed the piece bears little resemblance to the *ritornello* forms of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Nonetheless, the first movement does owe a doff of the cap to the spirit of *Sonata Allegro* form with strongly delineated first and second themes. The first, appearing initially as an angular, somewhat strident fanfare, recurs throughout—often against, or in answer to a plangent bass—or with the more sprightly "wind-up-toy" sound of xylophone and

glockenspiel. The second more lyrical tune, a descending linear "sigh," is first heard in fragments, then in longer, more coherent phrases. After the cadenza the "sigh" is allowed full breath, so to speak, in a dreamy episode cushioned by strings. A quick recapitulation and coda ends the movement.

The lullaby tune that opens the second movement was composed to exploit the exceptional beauty of Paul Dunkel's lower register. I tried to create an intimate environment for the soloist by composing accompanying lines for various solo strings and string quartet. Often, the remaining players provide a backdrop or "scrim" in long pedal tones (I used the working title "Veils" for this movement). This movement is the most impassioned of the three, yet it is also, paradoxically, the most reserved and private.

The prominence of the piano and snare drum, coupled with its rondo-like form, sets the third movement apart from the others. Here the flute is truly light hearted! After a brief cadenza, the fanfare from Movement I briefly reappears, and the work merrily rushes to its noisy conclusion.

Melinda Wagner was born in Philadelphia in 1957. She received her graduate degrees from the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania where she studied with Richard Wernick, George Crumb, Shulamit Ran and Jay Reise. Ms. Wagner's music has been performed by the Chicago Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Society for New Music and other leading organizations. Ms. Wagner is the recipient of numerous honors, including an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, fellowships from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and Howard Foundation (Brown University), three ASCAP Young

Composer Awards and resident commissions from the Barlow Foundation, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust and the Fromm Foundation (Harvard University). Melinda Wagner's orchestral composition, *Falling Angels*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and premiered in 1993, was performed by the American Composers Orchestra in 1995, and again by the CSO in 1996 under the AT&T American Encore series. In 1999, Ms. Wagner was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Concerto for Flute, Strings and Percussion*. Melinda Wagner's compositions are published by Theodore Presser and her *Sextet* (1989) has been released on the Opus One label.

CONCERTO in PIECES

Notes by the composer

Concerto in Pieces was commissioned by the BBC as a celebration of two events in British musical history: the 1995 tercentenary of the death of Henry Purcell and the 50th anniversary of Benjamin Britten's *Young Persons' Guide to the Orchestra* in 1996. Being non-British, my first reaction to the commission was a mixture of feeling very honored and—as a foreigner—being quite scared of "messing around" with two such holy cows of a national tradition not my own.

On the other hand, the subjects stipulating the commission weren't that far away from my own upbringing: having been a member of the Copenhagen Boys' Choir, I'd come across both composers more than once. In fact, on the home front, my father owned quite a collection of old 78's of Purcell's music, which I heard all the time and loved very much. Later on in life, composers of Britten's mould—the highly professional orchestral dramatist—became a role model for my own artistic endeavors. So the challenge of trying to do a "showpiece" with an educational angle based on Purcell presented too much compositional temptation for me to resist.

One thing was clear, though, from the beginning: if I wanted to come out of this venture alive, I'd have to choose a Purcell theme as far away in shape and nature as possible from the marvelous one Britten selected for *Young*

Persons' Guide.. (a dance tune from *Abdelazar*, or *The Moor's Revenge*). For me to choose the same tune—well, I'd just as well jump out the window....

So I decided to use the fast, swinging *Ho-Ho-Ho* witches' chorus from the beginning of Act II of *Dido and Aeneas*. The original four-part "theme" appears intact, seamlessly merging into Variation I, both sections composed for full orchestra. I focus more on the various combinations of instruments—the many faces of the symphony orchestra—rather than Britten's presentation of the individual instruments.

Variation II—again in a movement growing organically out of the previous one—focuses on the orchestral phenomenon of "relay-running": various instruments handing off material to each other in order to provide a seamless flow.

In Variation III the technique of "hoqueting" is explored: a melodic line or group of musical statements moving around intact between the various instruments or groups of instruments. In this case, the (unlikely) similarity between piano and trombone, and the more obvious kinship between horns and trumpets, set off the variation and gradually the entire orchestra becomes engaged in huge collective dialogue.

Variation IV is a blues-like recitative for solo alto-saxophone and hushed, divided strings, peppered with synthesizer, "bending" flutes, horns, and tubular bells and gongs being lowered into water pails! The original theme—one might say—is already now well under water; the whole set of Variations becoming like a walk through a mirror-gallery. We begin with the recognizable musical "portrait," but the further we travel into the hall of mirrors, the more disfigured and contorted the picture becomes.

Variation V is an *Air* for tuba (a wonderfully mellow instrument) with an accompaniment of "yapping" horns with trumpets and trombones using various mutes to imitate human voices. Mr. Purcell himself appears fractionally in total recognizability here and there, paving the way for Variation VI in which the original "portrait" is completely and utterly atomized: a percussion (with piano) and double bass variation paying homage to the mood of the original *Ho-Ho-Ho*: that of mockery and ferocity.

In Variation VII, the harp takes the solo part in an almost "cubistic" version of the initial theme, surrounded by descending lines in flute, low trumpets, vibraphone and celeste. The concluding chorus of *Dido* (*With drooping wings ye Cupids come*) hovers lazily on the horizon.

Thus having reached the outer planets of this particular Purcell "solar system," Variation VIII is a recitative for muted trumpet and strings playing *sul ponticello* and *col legno battuto*—an icy fantasy on the last recitative from *Dido*, in which the spirit of the Sorceress descends to Aeneas in the likeness of Mercury.

The penultimate movement, Variation IX, is a pizzicato intermezzo (with underlying double bass harmonics) taking us back to near-visibility again. Variation X: *Finale fugato* is a huge, pulsating minimalist fugue on a condensed version of the original witches' chorus. It is scored for full orchestra, and toward the end, horns and trombones play Purcell's theme in unison, right through the surrounding orchestral whirl. Towards the very end the brass musicians rise from their seats, leading the rest of "the band" to a raucous conclusion.

Poul Ruders was born in Ringsted, Denmark, in 1949. He graduated from the Royal Danish Academy as an organist in 1975, and is largely self-taught in composition. The last decade has seen many major Ruders commissions, the largest being the recently (March, 2000) premiered opera, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Based on Margaret Atwood's futuristic novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* received ecstatic press accolades: "....the most important addition to the repertoire since Adams' *Nixon in China*, perhaps even since Britten" (*The Independent*); "Ruders is the Richard Strauss of the computer-age orchestra. Ruders's music is remarkable at every stage...the scoring is fabu-

lously inventive." (*The Guardian*). A recording of *The Handmaid's Tale* will be released this Spring on DACAPO. Other recent Ruders works available on CD include the *Symphony No. 2* and *Piano Concerto* (DACAPO 8.224125), *The Solar Trilogy* (DACAPO 8.224054 'Best of Year', American Record Guide) *Symphony No. 1*, *Thus Saw St. John*, *Tundra*, *Gong* (CHANDOS 9179); *Psalmodes*, *Nightshade*, *Vox in Rama* (BRIDGE 9037); and *The Christmas Gospel*, *The Bells*, *Etude and Ricercare*, *Violin Concerto No. 1* (BRIDGE 9057). Danish musicologist Per Erland Rasmussen of the Carl Nielsen Academy (Odense, Denmark) is currently working on a book about Ruders's music.

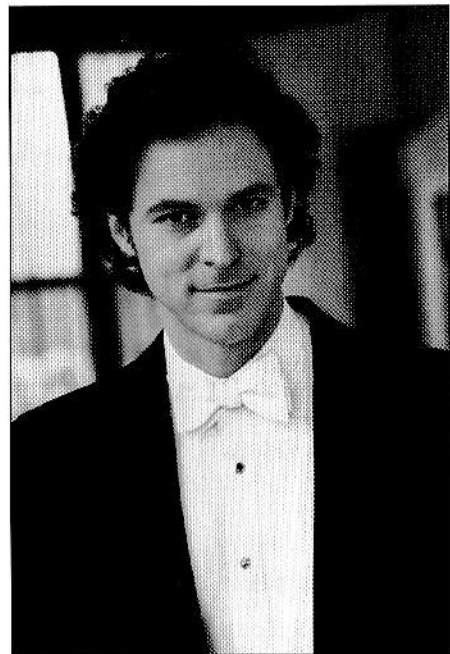


PHOTO: Christian Steiner

Paul Lustig Dunkel is best known as founding Music Director of the Westchester Philharmonic and Resident Conductor of the American Composers Orchestra, based in Carnegie Hall. Mr. Dunkel also enjoys an active career as a flute virtuoso, noted for his work in expanding the flute repertory through premieres and commissions. These premieres include Melinda Wagner's *Concerto for Flute, Strings and Percussion*, first played by Dunkel with the Westchester Philharmonic in May, 1998, and repeated in Carnegie Hall in September, 1998. In 1966, Leopold Stokowski named Mr.

Dunkel principal flutist of the American Symphony Orchestra, a post he has also held with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra, the New York City Ballet and numerous festival orchestras. Maestro Dunkel's many honors include the Leopold Stokowski Conducting Award from the American Symphony Orchestra and a Grammy nomination as a flutist.

Mark Mandarano is currently assistant conductor of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra in Orange County, California. In past seasons, he has served as resident conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and the American Russian Youth Orchestra, leading tours throughout the United States and Russia. Mr. Mandarano's guest engagements in Russia include The Moscow Chamber Orchestra, the Ural Philharmonic Orchestra and the Ulianovsk State Orchestra. In the US, he has guest conducted the American Composers Orchestra, the Richmond Symphony, the Westchester Philharmonic, the Kansas City Symphony and the Bard Festival Orchestra. A native of New Rochelle, NY, Mr. Mandarano served as assistant conductor of the Westchester Philharmonic from 1991 through 1996.





Sir Andrew Davis will become Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, beginning in September, 2000. Conductor Laureate of the Toronto Symphony, Mr. Davis also is Music Director of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and Music Director of the BBC Symphony, London, through 'Last Night of the Proms' in September, 2000, whereupon he will become that orchestra's first-ever Conductor Laureate. Recent seasons have included engagements such as the NDR Hamburg, the Vienna Symphony, the Stockholm Philharmonic, the

Boston and Toronto Symphonies, the NY Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In recognition of his services to music, Andrew Davis was awarded a CBE in May, 1992. In 1999 he was made a Knight Bachelor and thus, is now properly known as Sir Andrew Davis, CBE.

Westchester Philharmonic

Paul Lustig Dunkel, Music Director and Conductor

Under the direction of Paul Lustig Dunkel, the Westchester Philharmonic has in 17 seasons established itself as a major component in the musical life of metropolitan New York, and an orchestra of superb accomplishment. Together with Maestro Paul Dunkel, who has been hailed for his creative programming and wide-ranging musical interest, and such acclaimed guest soloists as Itzhak Perlman, Isaac Stern, Andre Watts, Midori, Gil Shaham, Vladimir Feltsman and Frederica von Stade, the Westchester Philharmonic offers up masterpieces of the past and present at Purchase College's Performing Arts Center to some 38,000 listeners a year. In addition, each season the orchestra presents "MusicAmerica," a musical tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that benefits local human-service organizations. The Westchester Philharmonic also presents a variety of programs for young listeners, including an Education Program serving thousands of students in 77 area schools.

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Music Director

The BBC Symphony Orchestra is the principal orchestra of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and is based in London. The orchestra was founded in 1930, with Adrian Boult as its permanent conductor. The world's leading conductors appeared as guests soon after its foundation, among them Richard Strauss, Felix Weingartner, Bruno Walter and Arturo Toscanini. The BBC Symphony Orchestra today, is widely recognized as a world leader in the performance and recording of contemporary orchestral music.

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Editors: Silas Brown (Wagner); Philip Ashley (Ruders)

Synthesizer sampling: Gert Sørensen (Ruders)

Design: Pâte Ciccione, Immaculate Concepts

Publishers: Theodore Presser Company (Wagner); Edition Wilhelm Hansen (Ruders)

Recorded at Purchase College, Purchase, N.Y., October 25, 1999 (Wagner)

BBC Studios, Maida Vale, London, May 31, 1995 (Ruders)

Concerto in Pieces is presented by arrangement with Dorling Kindersley Limited

Interviews with Poul Ruders and Melinda Wagner conducted by David Starobin

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Wagner interview engineer: Ted Trehwella, Mastersound, Astoria

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The recording of Melinda Wagner's *Concerto for Flute, Strings and Percussion* was made possible by a grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Recorded Music. Bridge also wishes to thank Peggy Levin and Sallie Stone of the Westchester Philharmonic; Judith Ilika of Theodore Presser Company; Peggy Monastra of G. Schirmer, Inc.; Tine Birger Christensen of Edition Wilhelm Hansen; and Robert Carl.

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