

GEORGE CRUMB (b. 1929)
Complete Crumb Edition, Volume Four

ZEITGEIST (1987, rev. 1988) (29:27)
(Six Tableaux for Two Amplified Pianos)

- 1 I PORTENT *Molto moderato, il ritmo ben marcato* (7:16)
- 2 II TWO HARLEQUINS *Vivace, molto capriccioso* (4:02)
- 3 III MONOCHORD *Lentamente, misterioso* (5:09)
- 4 IV DAY OF THE COMET *Prestissimo* (3:02)
- 5 V THE REALM OF MORPHEUS
("...the inner eye of dreams") (4:17)
- 6 VI REVERBERATIONS *Molto moderato, il ritmo ben marcato* (5:36)

QUATTRO MANI

Susan Grace, Piano 1 Alice Rybak, Piano 2

**MUSIC FOR A SUMMER EVENING
(Makrokosmos III) (1974)** (35:05)
For Two Amplified Pianos and Percussion (two players)

- 7 I NOCTURNAL SOUNDS (The Awakening) (5:44)
Magical, suspenseful
- 8 II WANDERER-FANTASY (4:51)
Calling, echoing
- 9 III THE ADVENT (7:13)
*Very slow; majestic, like a larger rhythm of nature;
"Hymn for the Nativity of the Star-Child"*
- 10 IV MYTH (5:17)
Adagio isoritmico; lonely, bleak
- 11 V MUSIC OF THE STARRY NIGHT (11:56)
*Fantastic, oracular; "Song of Reconciliation" joyous,
ecstatic, with a sense of cosmic time*

Susan Grace, Piano 1 Alice Rybak, Piano 2
John Kinzie, Percussion 1 David Colson, Percussion 2



Notes by George Crumb

Zeitgeist (*Six Tableaux for Two Amplified Pianos, Book I*) was composed in 1987. The work was commissioned by the European piano-duo team of Peter Degenhardt and Fuat Kent, who subsequently gave the premiere performance at the Charles Ives Festival in Duisburg, Germany on January 17, 1988. *Zeitgeist* was extensively revised after this initial performance.

For a German-speaking person, the expression "Zeitgeist" has a certain portentous and almost mystical significance, which is somewhat diluted in our English equivalent: "spirit of the time." The title seemed to me especially appropriate since the work does, I feel, touch on various concerns which permeate our late-twentieth century musical sensibility. Among these, I would cite: the quest for a new kind of musical primitivism: (a "morning of the world" vision of the elemental forms and forces of nature once again finding resonance in our music); an obsession with more minimalistic (or at least, more simple and direct) modes of expression; the desire to reconcile and synthesize the rich heritage of our classical Western music with the wonderfully vibrant ethnic and classical musics of the non-Western world; and, finally, our intense involvement with acoustical phenomena and the bewitching appeal of *timbre* as a potentially structural element.

In many of its aspects--compositional technique, exploitation of "extended-piano" resources, and emphasis on poetic content--

Zeitgeist draws heavily from my earlier piano compositions, especially the larger works of my *Makrokosmos* cycle (*Music for a Summer Evening* [1974] for two amplified pianos and percussion, and *Celestial Mechanics* [1979] for amplified piano, four-hands).

The opening movement of *Zeitgeist*, entitled *Portent*, is based primarily on six-tone chordal structures and a rhythmically incisive thematic element. The music offers extreme contrasts in register and dynamics. A very characteristic sound in the piece is a mysterious glissando effect achieved by sliding a glass tumbler along the strings of the piano while the keys are being struck.

The second movement--*Two Harlequins*--is extremely vivacious and whimsical. The music is full of mercurial changes of mood and comical *non sequiturs*. Although this piece is played entirely on the keyboard, an echoing ambiance resonates throughout.

Monochord (which in the score is notated in a symbolic circular manner) is based entirely on the first 15 overtones of a low B^b. A continuous droning sound (produced alternately by the two pianists) underlies the whole piece. This uncanny effect, produced by a rapid oscillating movement of the fingertip in direct contact with the string, results in a veritable rainbow of partial tones. In addition, paper strips placed over the lower 10 strings of each piano produce an almost sizzling effect.

The title of the fourth movement--*Day of the Comet*--was suggested by the recent advent of Halley's comet (the previous visitation was commemorated by H.G. Wells in his science fiction novel of the same

title). The piece, played at *prestissimo* tempo and consisting of polyrhythmic bands of chromatic clusters, is volatile, yet strangely immaterial. Perhaps Debussy's *Feux d'artifice* (*Préludes*, Book II) is the spiritual progenitor of this genre of composition.

The fifth movement--*The Realm of Morpheus*--is, like *Monochord*, symbolically notated. The bent staves take on the perceptible configuration of the human eye ("...the inner eye of dreams"). Each of the two pianists plays independently, and the combined musics express something shadowy and ill-defined--like the mysterious subliminal images which appear in dreams. Disembodied fragments of an Appalachian folk-song ("The Riddle") emerge and recede.

The concluding movement of the work--*Reverberations*--recalls the principal thematic and harmonic elements of the first movement. This piece is constructed in its entirety on the "echoing phenomenon"--that most ancient of musical devices.



Music for a Summer Evening (Makrokosmos III), for two amplified pianos and percussion, was completed in February, 1974. The work was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation and is dedicated to Gilbert Kalish, James Freeman, Raymond DesRoches and Richard Fitz. These four gifted performers premiered the work at Swarthmore College on March 30, 1974.

Summer Evening projects a clearly articulated large expressive curve over its thirty-five minute duration. The first, third and fifth movements are scored for the full ensemble and are laid out on a larger scale. The wistful "Wanderer-Fantasy" (II--mostly for the two pianos alone) and the somewhat atavistic "Myth" (IV--for percussion instruments) were conceived of as dream-like pieces, functioning as intermezzos within the overall sequence.

The three larger movements carry poetic quotations which were very much in my thoughts during the sketching-out process, and which, I believe, find their symbolic resonance in the sounds of *Summer Evening*. "Nocturnal Sounds" is inscribed with an excerpt from Quasimodo: "*Odo risonanze effimere, oblio di piena notte nell'acqua stellata*" ("I hear ephemeral echoes, oblivion of full night in the starred water"); "The Advent" is associated with a passage from Pascal: "*Le silence eternel des espaces infinis m'effraie*" ("the eternal silence of infinite space terrifies me"); and the last movement, "Music of the Starry Night," cites these transcendently beautiful images of Rilke: "*Und in den Nächten fällt die schwere Erde aus allen Sternen in die Einsamkeit, Wir alle fallen. Und doch ist Einer, welcher dieses Fallen unendlich sanft in seinen Händen hält.*" ("And in the nights the heavy earth is falling from all the stars down into loneliness. We are all falling. And yet there is One who holds this falling endlessly gently in His hands.")

The combination of two pianos and percussion instruments was, of course, first formulated by Béla Bartók in his *Sonata* of 1937, and it is

curious that other composers did not subsequently contribute to the genre. Bartók was one of the very first composers to write truly expressive passages for the percussion instruments; since those days there has been a veritable revolution in percussion technique and idiom and new music has inevitably assimilated these developments. The battery of percussion instruments required for *Summer Evening* is extensive and includes vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel, tubular bells, crotales (antique cymbals), bell tree, claves, maracas, sleighbells, wood blocks and temple blocks, triangles, and several varieties of drums, tam-tams, and cymbals. Certain rather exotic (and in some cases, quite ancient) instruments are occasionally employed for their special timbral characteristics, for example: two slide-whistles (in "Wanderer-Fantasy"); a metal thunder-sheet (in "The Advent"); African log drum, quijada del asino (jawbone of an ass), sistrum, Tibetan prayer stones, musical jug, alto recorder, and, in "Myth," African thumb piano and guiro (played by the pianists). Some of the more ethereal sounds of *Summer Evening* are produced by drawing a contrabass bow over tam-tams, crotales and vibraphone plates. This kaleidoscopic range of percussion timbre is integrated with a great variety of special sounds produced by the pianists. In "Music of the Starry Night," for example, the piano strings are covered with sheets of paper, thereby producing a surrealist distortion of the piano tone when the keys are struck.



Quattro Mani

Pianists Susan Grace and Alice Rybak bring together two distinguished careers. Each has earned recognition as a soloist and chamber musician in the United States and abroad. The duo's special interest in twentieth century repertoire has led to collaborations with many composers, including George Crumb, Joan Tower and Frederic Rzewski. Quattro Mani is frequently featured at contemporary music festivals, including recent engagements at the Jornadas de Musica Contemporanea in Madrid, Granados and Santiago de Compostela; the Festival of the Millennium and Vanguard Series at the University of Oregon; Festival 2000 at Florida International University; and the New Music Symposium at Colorado College.

Susan Grace performs frequently as soloist and chamber player, and has been soloist with orchestras in the United States, Europe, Soviet Union, and China. Currently Ms. Grace is Artist-in-Residence and Lecturer in Music at Colorado College, Artistic Director of the Colorado Summer Conservatory and Music Festival, and a member of the

Colorado College Trio. She has recorded for the Belgium National Radio, WFMT, the Society of Composers, and Wilson Audio.

Alice Rybak teaches piano and is director of the accompanying program at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music. Ms. Rybak entered the Juilliard School at age seven, studying with Herbert Stessin, and went on to work with Menahem Pressler, Abbey Simon, and Janos Starker at Indiana University. She has performed throughout the USA, and has toured India, Thailand, and Malaysia with the State Department's Artistic Ambassador Program.



John Kinzie is the principal percussionist of the Colorado Symphony, and before that, held the same position with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Kinzie has also performed with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and is presently on the faculty of the Lamont School of Music of the University of Denver.

David Colson is active as composer, conductor and percussionist. Currently teaching composition and percussion at California State University, Chico, David Colson was also the Music Director of the Chico Symphony Orchestra, from 1994-2000. Mr. Colson received his doctorate in composition from Rice University, where he founded and conducted Rice's new music ensemble.

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