

The Music of ELLIOTT CARTER Volume Four

Performed by *Speculum Musicae*

- 1 **Shard** (1997) (2:37)
Guitar solo
David Starobin, guitar
- 2 **Luimen** (1997) (10:11)
Trumpet, Trombone, Harp, Mandolin, Guitar and Vibraphone
Speculum Musicae
Raymond Mase, trumpet Michael Powell, trombone
June Han, harp William Anderson, mandolin
David Starobin, guitar Pablo Rieppi, vibraphone
William Purvis, conductor

Tempo e Tempi (1999) (15:22)

*Soprano, Oboe (English Horn), Clarinet (Bass Clarinet),
Violin, and Violoncello*

- 3 I. **Tempo e Tempi** (2:06)
4 II. **Ed è Subito Sera** (0:39)
5 III. **Obœ Sommerso** (2:01)
6 IV. **Una Columba** (0:44)
7 V. **Godimento** (1:11)
8 VI. **L'Arno a Rovezzano** (3:29)
9 VII. **Uno** (1:34)
10 VIII. **Segreto del Poeta** (3:38)

Speculum Musicae

Susan Narucki, soprano

Stephen Taylor, oboe, english horn

Allen Blustine, clarinet, bass clarinet

Curtis Macomber, violin Chris Finckel, violoncello

Eight Pieces for Four Timpani (1950/1966) (24:18)

Timpani solo

- 11 I. **Improvisation** (3:02)
12 II. **Saëta** (5:03)
13 III. **Moto Perpetuo** (1:31)
14 IV. **Recitative** (3:21)
15 V. **Canto** (3:03)
16 VI. **March** (2:51)
17 VII. **Adagio** (2:03)
18 VIII. **Canaries** (3:24)
Daniel Druckman, timpani

The Music of Elliott Carter, Volume Four

Critics often write as if technique and expression - or indeed form and content - are entirely separate. As if the manipulations of tone and rhythm, line and harmony, which the composer must perform in order to create his music are somehow divorced from, if not actually inimical to, the music's emotional life. Yet in the greatest composers there is of course no such opposition: technique exists to project and embody the poetry, the imaginative fire, that audiences respond to whether or not they know or care about the music's inner workings. Technique is expression.

Thus it is with Elliott Carter. Now launched into his tenth decade, he is still producing works with a fertility, and an inventive vitality, that would be startling in composers half his age. In the very recent works on this disc it becomes ever clearer that Carter's voracious interest in *process* (how one moves from one metre to another, how one segments *that* harmonic field into *those* registers, how one makes *this* grouping coincide with another just *there*) leads him by some mystical alchemy to touch the very quick of music, releasing an expressive charge - mercurial, capricious, profoundly elegiac - that finally transcends all consideration of the methods employed. His questing intellect loves to experiment, but the experiments are a means to an end, issuing in fully-realized and self-consistent works.

The set of *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* is eloquent illustration of this tendency. It constitutes a collection rather than a suite, and Carter has requested that no more than four should be performed in public at any



one time. There were originally only six pieces, composed in 1950. Carter viewed them as studies in tempo modulation - the 'metrical modulation' technique for which he would become famous - and also studies in the use of the four-note chords which were currently becoming his favoured means of organizing harmony. Various New York percussionists performed some of these pieces over the next decade, but the composer was uncertain of their effectiveness and allowed only the 'Recitative' and 'Improvisation' to be published although the other pieces continued to circulate in manuscript. Eventually he undertook a thorough revision of all six pieces, assisted by the percussionist Jan Williams, and also in 1966 composed two more, the 'Adagio' and 'Canto' - which, unlike the preceding six, call for pedal timpani. All eight pieces were finally published together in 1968: the two new numbers carry a dedication to Williams while the others are individually dedicated to percussionists who had performed them over the years. It will be noted that several of the titles of the pieces refer to or imply song, or at least vocal writing: if this is a paradox for music composed for drums it also indicates one of the challenges that Carter had set himself - that of mimicking vocal expression in terms of percussion.

'Saëta' takes its name from a kind of improvisatory Andalusian song appropriate to a religious procession at Easter-time; Carter notes that the song is supposed to have originated in a rain ceremony where an arrow (saëta) was shot at the rain-clouds. The piece suggests an act of ritual. It is built on two kinds of rhythmic acceleration, rapid and freely-notated in the outer sections and much more gradual and strictly notat-

ed in the main body of the movement. 'Moto perpetuo', as its title implies, is a swift-moving piece in a single unbroken pulse, played mostly softly with the drums tuned in a chromatic cluster but with many variations in tone colour depending on where the drums are struck.

'Adagio', the first of the two later pieces, is a study in aspects of timpani playing that are often considered *outré* - vibratos, harmonics, glissandi, sympathetic vibrations. Elusive, almost hallucinatory, it relates to the timpani part of Carter's *Piano Concerto*, being written at the same period. The 'Recitative' is a second, more dramatic Adagio developing three different elements: a tremolo, a bolero rhythm and a more irregular pulse. These are freely intercut and developed, provoking a rhetorical climax. The ensuing 'Improvisation' uses a set of pitches in the same relationship at those of the 'Moto Perpetuo' but now with octave displacement giving a different palette of sound, and continually speeding up or slowing down rather than the regular pulse of the earlier piece.

'Canto', the other 1966 piece, uses snare drum sticks and pedal glissandi to create the impression of a continuous melodic line. 'Canaries' refers to a Renaissance dance attributed to natives of the Canary Islands and is a study in contrasted dance-rhythms. These are intercut, speeded up, played simultaneously as polyrhythms or even at multiple tempi, one pulse remaining constant while the other rhythm accelerates. 'March' has been likened to some of Charles Ives's polyrhythmic inventions with counter-marching bands playing different tunes. Two separate march-rhythms, one played with the heads of the sticks, the

other with the wood, are combined at two different speeds, suggesting a contest between two drummers but creating in the process a virtuoso instrumental challenge for the single timpanist who must simultaneously impersonate both.

A feature of Carter's output since the 1970s has been a steady stream of miniature compositions, short pieces usually for one or two solo instruments, designed as tributes to friends and respected colleagues. Sometimes presented as 'chips from the workbench' and often giving the appearance of spontaneous improvisation, these little works are in fact just as highly structured as his larger creations. In the subtle internal relationships between their different rhythmic subdivisions of the beat, and their division of the harmonic materials, they continue the line that was adumbrated in the *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* but in the composer's marvellously flexible late manner. The result, as the critic David Schiff has memorably phrased it, is a series of 'tennis matches for the imagination' - but also a deliciously capricious mix of activity and poetry.

Shard is such a piece. This short composition for solo guitar was written in 1997 and is dedicated to the guitarist David Starobin, who had already been the recipient of Carter's solo work *Changes* in 1983. The title *Shard* suggests a piece split off from a larger entity, and indeed it forms a significant element in *Luimen* - the ensemble work composed immediately afterwards. Chronologically, *Shard* began life as an independent invention, no matter how soon Carter may have seen it as providing material for *Luimen*. In character it presents a splintered, jagged surface, also justifying the title: a kaleidoscope of swiftly-changing

moods and playing-styles, defined principally by rhythm and tempo. The almost militaristic fanfare of the first bar sets off a rapid running motion which is contrasted with wide-spanned melodic phrases and grave chordal writing. The final, and most sustained effusion of athletic scurrying issues in a brief flourish of *rasgueado* chords before the melodic line ascends into a haze of evanescent harmonics.

As already mentioned, *Shard* was incorporated *in toto* into the next work that Carter wrote, *Luimen* - which he describes as a 'one-movement fantasy' for an unusually-constituted sextet of trumpet, trombone, vibraphone, mandolin, guitar and harp. For some years he had been harbouring a desire to write a piece that would be based on the sound of plucked instruments such as harp, mandolin, and guitar. (Perhaps, though this is pure speculation, he was intrigued by the *Seconda Serenata-Trio* of his good friend Goffredo Petrassi, which is for precisely those instruments.) A commission from the Dutch Nieuw Ensemble furnished the occasion to realize this desire, as their personnel included excellent executants on the plucked instruments. Carter composed the new piece during the early summer of 1997, completing it in July, and it was premiered in Amsterdam on 31 March 1998 by the Nieuw Ensemble conducted by Ed Spanjaard. Carter left it to the players themselves to choose the title. *Luimen* (pronounced, approximately, 'laow-men'), an archaic Dutch word meaning 'whimsical moods', seems highly appropriate to the music's eventful succession of colours and characters.

The unorthodox ensemble gives *Luimen* a sonority, a personal

sound-world, quite unlike any other Carter piece - magical, dream-like, tremulous. If the guitar is the core instrument, and *Shard* is the source of the material, then the harp and mandolin may be seen as reflections and siblings of the guitar, mirroring its figures and sonorities back to it, always subtly changed. And the piece as a whole transforms and extends the harmonies and rhythms of the guitar piece into new kinds of movement and into the intricacies of ensemble playing. The vibraphone partly functions in a similar fashion to the harp and mandolin, as yet another sound-sibling of the guitar; but it also mediates between the plucked instruments and the two blown ones, helping to sustain harmonies, bind together and punctuate the ongoing stream of invention, as do the trumpet and trombone.

Luimen falls into four pretty clearly-defined spans. The first is in a sense introductory, but it is also a remarkable invention in its own right. Here Carter fully exploits the colouristic potential of the plucked instruments in a wide range of tremulous, shimmering, tintinnabulating textures abruptly interrupted by changes in figuration and brief solos in which each individual instrument introduces itself and makes its presence and character felt. (We note that the trumpet and trombone seem to have spent some time in the world of jazz.) Eventually the most substantial solo so far, a bravura cadenza-like passage for the harp, links to the second span. This new section is slow-moving, almost chorale-like, with deliberate motion in brass and harp and plangent chords in the vibraphone - all this as background to quicker, mercurial phrases in mandolin and guitar.

The third section of the work takes on the character of a kind of chamber concerto, with the guitar as soloist. What the guitarist plays is *Shard*, complete, with an accompaniment from the ensemble that begins very discreetly but becomes more assertive - *sforzando* tutti chords and little vibraphone riffs - as the solo part proceeds. The brass come to the fore as the fourth and final span begins, with a lightly swinging melodic invention against the modern-jazz cool of vibraphone and mandolin, which works up to an effervescent coda featuring the whole ensemble.

Carter's song-cycle *Tempo e Tempi* is another work that grew from a single 'shard', though by a rather different process. The 1998 Pontino Festival in Italy was dedicated to celebrating the composer's ninetieth birthday and also commissioned a short work from him. One of its directors, Carter's friend Raffaele Pozzi, sent him two poems by Eugenio Montale with a request that he should consider them for vocal texts. The first, 'Tempo e Tempi' chimed perfectly with the composer's creative concerns. (The opening lines read in translation: 'There's not one tempo: there are many strands / that glide in parallel / often in opposite directions and seldom / intersect ...' - almost a description of any late Carter piece.) Accordingly he composed a setting in June 1998 for soprano with violin, cor Anglais and bass clarinet. The premiere at the Pontino Festival was so warmly received that Carter went on to set the other Montale poem ('L'Arno a Rovezzano') for voice with oboe, clarinet, violin and cello. These two settings having provided his basic four-player ensemble (oboe doubling cor anglais, clarinet doubling

bass clarinet), he sought out six more poems (two by Quasimodo, four by Ungaretti) to create an eight-song cycle, all of whose texts refer to the passage of time. Completed in 1999, the cycle was first performed complete in London by the soprano Lucy Shelton and four instrumentalists from the London Sinfonietta conducted by Oliver Knussen.

Carter's fascination with Italian literature and culture goes back to the 1920s, when he first visited Rome, and the *Tempo e Tempi* cycle is a 'gesture of gratitude' to that culture and to the musicians who have been faithful supporters of his work. Each song bears a different dedication. The second, fourth, fifth and seventh songs are brief aphorisms. Only the fifth, sixth and eighth use the same instrumental line-up; the third, fourth and seventh are for voice accompanied by only one instrument. Thus Carter secures a maximum of contrasts in scale and texture, throwing the expressive weight on the first, sixth and last songs.

In the initial number 'Tempo e Tempi' (dedicated to Raffaele Pozzi and marked *Drammatico*), he enacts the ideas of Montale's opening lines by means of a retrograde canon between voice and violin, accompanied by a second canon in which the bass clarinet shadows the cor Anglais in augmentation and inversion. If such a description evokes the Second Viennese School (shades of Schoenberg's *Pierrot*, Berg's *Lyric Suite*), the generous impassioned lyricism of the long lines evokes this ancestry too, though in Carter's own inimitably capricious fashion.

A pair of canons by inversion likewise shape the accompaniment of Quasimodo's 'Ed è subito sera', though here the voice-part is free. 'Oboe sommerso', almost inevitably dedicated to Carter's friend, the

renowned oboist-composer Heinz Holliger, is an elegant two-part invention, the wind instrument taking on more the 'speaking' role than the voice. Reduced to the scale of a single shard (or perhaps feather), 'Una Colomba', dedicated to clarinettist Charles Neidich, sets its still voice-phrase against a tremulous murmuring from the clarinet.

'Godimento' (dedicated to the composer Roman Vlad and his wife) is a lithe polyrhythmic scherzo, each of the four instruments playing a different rhythmic grouping, almost a textbook example of Carter's means of rhythmic construction, while the voice rides above in longer note-values. Less systematic - though full of subtle rhythmic variations and correspondences between the instrumental parts, the second Montale setting 'L'Arno a Rovezzano' is a kind of miniature tone-poem, painting the ruins and the 'inexorable nullity' of the river in bravura instrumental evocation with fugitive touches of nostalgia. After this, in 'Uno', the voice's two expressive phrases form the frame to the cello's passionate, cadenza-like solo (the piece is dedicated to the cellist Fred Sherry). The long-sustained pitches and intense inwardness of the ravishing final song, 'Segreto del Poeta', mark it off as a deeply-considered epilogue and also perhaps a self-communing one, infused by Carter's ripest wisdom in terms of harmonic process. Overlapping entries create vibrant, transparently-spaced chords that create the 'light' the poem moves towards. It brings to a magical close one of the most beautiful song-cycles of recent times.

Notes by Malcolm MacDonald

TEMPO E TEMPI

Non c'è un unico tempo: ci sono molti nastri
che paralleli slittano
spesso in senso contrario e raramente
s'intersecano. È quando si palesa
la sola verità che, disvelata,
viene subito espunta da chi sorveglia
I congegni e gli scambi. E si ripiomba
poi nell'unico tempo. Ma in quell'attimo
solo I pochi viventi si sono riconosciuti
per dirsi addio, non arrivederci.

—Eugenio Montale

ED È SUBITO SERA

Ognuno sta solo sul cuor della terra
trafitto da un raggio di sole:
ed è subito sera.

—Salvatore Quasimodo

TIME AND TIMES

(Montale speaks of parallel paths "that rarely intersect." When these paths do cross, the observer experiences their intersection as a single moment, negating their multiplicity. Yet in that moment, the observer perceives that only 'addio' [farewell] is possible, not 'arrivederci' [see you again].)

AND IT'S SUDDENLY EVENING

We are alone on the living earth
transfixed by a ray of sunlight:
and it's suddenly evening.

OBOE SOMMERSO

Avara pena, tarda il tuo dono
in questa mia ora
di sospirati abbandoni

Un oboe gelido risillaba
Gioia di foglie perenni,
non mie, e smemora;

in me si fa sera:
l'acqua tramonta
sulle mie mani erbose.

Ali oscillano in fioco cielo,
Làbili: il cuore trasmigra
ed io son gerbigo,

e I giorni una maceria.

—Quasimodo

UNA COLOMBA

D'altri diluvi una colomba ascolto.

—Giuseppe Ungaretti

SUNKEN OBOE

Greedy pain, delay your gift
in this my hour
of sighed-for abandon.

An oboe coldly parses
joy of everlasting leaves,
not mine, absent-mindedly;

in me the evening comes
like water falling
on my grassy hands.

Wings flap in the dim sky,
weakly: the heart runs out,
leaves me futile,

and my days rubble.

A DOVE

I hear a dove from other floods.

GODIMENTO

Mi sento la febbre
di questa
piena di luce

Accolgo questa
giornata come
il frutto che si addolcisce

Avrò
stanotte
un rimorso come un
latrato
perso nel
deserto

-Ungaretti

PLEASURE

I glow
with the fever
of this abundance of light

I greet this
day like
a fruit that sweetly ripens

Tonight
will bring
remorse like
a dog's howl
lost in the
desert.

L'ARNO A ROVEZZANO

I grandi fiumi sono l'immagine del tempo
crucele e impersonale. Osservati da un ponte
dichiarano la loro nullità inesorabile.
Solo l'ansa esitante di qualche paludoso
giuncheto, qualche specchio
che riluca tra folte sterpaglie e borraccina
può svelare che l'acqua come noi
pensa se stessa
prima di farsi vortice e rapina.
Tanto tempo è passato, nulla è scorso
da quando ti cantavo al telefono 'tu
che fai l'addormentata' col triplice cacinno.
La tua casa era un lampo visto dal treno. Curva
sull'Arno come l'albero di Giuda
che voleva proteggerla. Forse c'è ancora o
non è che una rovina. Tutta piena,
mi dicevi, di insetti, inabitabile.
Altro comfort fa per noi ora, altro
sconforto.

-Montale

THE RIVER ARNO AT ROVEZZANO

(A great river is likened to
time itself, "cruel
and impersonal." Only when its flow is
disrupted or reflected does it betray any
awareness of itself, as we do
"before turning
to rage or destruction." The poet recalls
incidents in a house on
the Arno belonging
to a former intimate, and
speculates that it is
now abandoned - "full of insects...
uninhabitable." Life, like the river, moves
on inexorably to "other comfort, other
discomfort.")

UNO

S'incomincia per cantare
E si canta per finire

—Ungaretti

SEGRETO DEL POETA

Solo ho amica la notte.
Sempre potrò trascorrere con essa
D'attimo in attimo, non ore vane;

Ma tempo cui il mio palpito trasmetto
Come m'aggrada, senza mai distrarmene.
Avviene quando sento,
Mentre riprendre a distaccarsi da ombre,
La speranza immutabile
In me che fuoco nuovamente scova
E nel silenzio restituendo va,
A gesti tuoi terreni
Talmente amati che immortali parvero,
Luce.

—Ungaretti

ONE

Sing to start
and sing to end

THE POET'S SECRET

I have only the night as a friend.
Always I can go with her
From moment to moment,
not spending pointless
hours; Yet time during which I perceive
my pulse beat as I wish, never distracts me.
It happens, when I feel,
while once again I draw out from shadows,
the immutable hope
in me, which fire newly dislodges
and is restoring to silence again,
Your mundane deeds,
So much loved they will seem immortal,
Light.

(Translations by Elliott Carter)

TEMPO E TEMPI AND L'ARNO A ROVEZZANO

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UNO, UNA COLOMBA, GODIMENTO, AND SEGRETO DEL POETA

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OBOE SOMMERSO AND ED È SUBITO SERA

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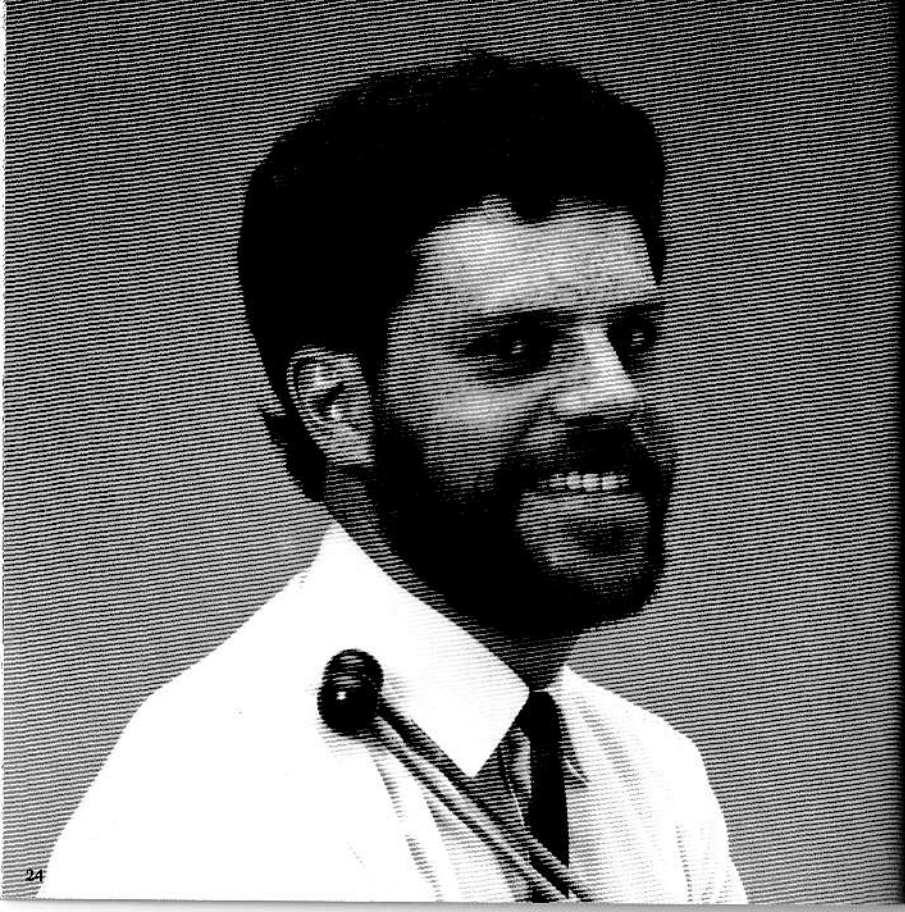


Susan Narucki is much admired for championing today's music as well as for her insightful performances of music of the past. During the 1999-2000 season, she made her Netherlands Opera debut creating the role of Catherina Bolnes in *Writing to Vermeer*, the collaboration of composer Louis Andriessen and film director Peter Greenaway. Ms. Narucki was also featured in the leading soprano role of the Netherlands Opera production, *Reves d'un Marco Polo*. The opera was based on the music of the late Claude Vivier, and will be heard in 2002 at festivals in Amsterdam, New York and Edinburgh. Ms. Narucki's recent orchestral performances include the US premiere of Scriabin's *Mysterium: Humanity* with the San Francisco Symphony, Vladimir Ashkenazy, conductor; the world premiere of Mauricio Kagel's *Duodramen* in Brussels, the role of Pat Nixon in John Adams's *Nixon in China* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the baton of the composer, and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with the San Francisco Symphony at Carnegie Hall, Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor. Ms. Narucki's extensive discography includes the premiere recording of George Crumb's *Star-Child* (Bridge), which earned a Grammy Award in 2001.



Speculum Musicae recently celebrated its 30th anniversary season as one of America's leading ensembles devoted to the music of our time. Based in New York City, Speculum Musicae is in residence at Columbia University, where the group performs and teaches a series of master classes. This CD marks Speculum's eleventh album for Bridge, a catalog which includes works by Elliott Carter, Stefan Wolpe, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, Mario Davidovsky, Poul Ruders, Karl Aage Rasmussen, Stephen Jaffe, Hans Abrahamsen, and Bent Sørensen. The members of Speculum Musicae are: Susan Nidel, flute; Stephen Taylor, oboe; Allen Blustine, clarinet; Donald MacCourt, bassoon; William Purvis, french horn; Aleck Karis, piano; Daniel Druckman, percussion; David Starobin, guitar; Curtis Macomber, violin; Maureen Gallagher, viola; Eric Bartlett, violoncello; and Donald Palma, contrabass.

Left to right: Curtis Macomber, Chris Finckel, Allen Blustine, Elliott Carter, Susan Narucki, Stephen Taylor



Daniel Druckman is active as soloist, chamber and orchestral musician, and recording artist. A member of the New York Philharmonic since 1991, Mr. Druckman has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Composer's Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic's Horizon concerts, and the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music series. An integral part of New York City's music community as a member of the New York New Music Ensemble and Speculum Musicae, Daniel Druckman has premiered works by Babbitt, Carter, Knussen, Ruders, Shapey, Wuorinen and numerous others. Mr. Druckman is the son of composer Jacob Druckman, whose music he has frequently performed and recorded. Daniel Druckman is a faculty member of the Juilliard School where he serves as coordinator of the percussion department and director of the percussion ensemble.

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The Music of Elliott Carter

Volume One

A Mirror on Which to Dwell (1975)

In Sleep, In Thunder (1981)

Syringa (1978)

Three Poems of Robert Frost (1942, orchestrated 1980)

Speculum Musicae with Christine Schadeberg, soprano

Katherine Ciesinski, mezzo; Jon Garrison, tenor

Jan Opalach, bass-baritone; Patrick Mason, baritone

BRIDGE 9014

Volume Two

Gra (1993); Enchanted Preludes (1988); Duo (1974)

Scrivo in Vento (1991); Changes (1983)

Con Leggerezza Pensosa (1990); Cello Sonata (1948)

Riconoscenza per Goffredo Petrassi (1984)

The Group for Contemporary Music

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Volume Three

Night Fantasies (1980); 90+ (1994)

Piano Sonata (1945-46)

Charles Rosen, piano

Conversation with Elliott Carter and Charles Rosen

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