

ANTHONY KORF
PRESENCES FROM AFORETIME

Riverside Symphony • George Rothman, Conductor
Riverside Symphony Principals • Anthony Korf, Conductor

Presences from Aforetime (1999) [16:08]

- 1 [6:33]
- 2 [9:35]

Robert Ingliss, *oboe & English horn*
Greg Hesselink, *cello*
Oren Fader, *guitar*
Stacey Shames, *harp*
Christopher Oldfather, *piano*
Anthony Korf, *conductor*

Six Miniatures for Flute with Piano (1997) [7:47]

- 3 [0:31]
- 4 [1:00]
- 5 [2:01]
- 6 [1:56]
- 7 [0:48]
- 8 [1:31]

Tara Helen O'Connor, *flute*
Christopher Oldfather, *piano*

Three Movements for Clarinet Solo (1992) [9:08]

- 9 *Don't Be Ridiculous!* [1:45]
- 10 *Meditation* [3:14]
- 11 *Of Differing Minds* [4:09]

Alan R. Kay, *clarinet*

Symphony No. 3 (2007) [28:45]

- 12 *Dust unto Dust* [13:29]
- 13 *Return to Forever* [15:16]

Riverside Symphony
George Rothman, *conductor*

Three of the four works contained in this collection spanning 15 years were written expressly for members of Parnassus, a thirteen-piece, New York-based contemporary music ensemble formed in 1975 by Anthony Korf, which he led until 2002. Many of these virtuoso instrumentalists were original members of Riverside Symphony, and several of them continue their association with the orchestra to this day.

The composer writes:

There comes a moment in the composing process when the work in progress seems to take on a life of its own, or so has been the case for me. In opera and song, where the music's presumed role is to illuminate the story or text, a work can be said to exist in some fashion before the first note has been put to paper. As for instrumental music, however, the dramatic implications of the originating materials may need some time to fully reveal themselves. The composer, almost as a third party, is left to interpret those melodic, harmonic or rhythmic motifs that will shape the narration and drama of the unfolding work.

In this manner, two of the pieces on this CD somehow became associated with old houses. Years before 2002 when my wife and I (with a \$2 donation from our then seven-year-old son) purchased an old farmhouse in the Hudson Valley, I was several weeks into a new chamber work commissioned by oboist Marcia Butler when a sense of working in some ancient medium and condition enveloped me. A haunted quality in the emerging passacaglia-like theme which opens the piece brought to mind a favorite poem by Thomas Hardy I gladly admitted as an inspiration. Although there was no attempt to follow the literary narrative of *The Two Houses*, from which the title of the first work on this CD, *Presences from Aforetime*, is drawn, the structural outline of Hardy's musings on the inevitable transformation of new to old—introduction, soliloquy and conclusion—mirrors or perhaps *shaped* (who knows which?) my own work's formal design.

By the time **Symphony No. 3** was in progress, old houses were on my mind more than ever. Indeed the history of our previously mentioned country home, especially the story of its past inhabitants and the circumstances that led to the lamentable condition we found it in, was obsessing more of my thoughts with every shovelful of old hardware and shards I would unearth planting trees and so forth. With a little luck and persistence I was eventually introduced to an elderly neighbor who had lived in our home in the early '50s, and who was able to put his hands on some photographs taken in and around the homestead from that bygone period.

The pictures revealed that much of that part of Columbia County, New York, was still under cultivation in those days, so from our backyard one could see rolling fields disappearing to the Catskill Mountains some 25 or so miles in the distance. These evocative black-and-white images of agrarian simplicity stirred in me an emotion best described as a longing for that which cannot be recaptured, an emotion which found voice in the second movement's ascending three-note motif which came to me in a dream the very night I saw those photos. I believe the reaching quality of the theme, through all its turbulent incarnations, conveys something of this feeling, to say nothing of the movement's scherzo meter, itself a nostalgic nod to earlier musical times.

The earliest origins of the Symphony, however, date back fifteen years to the solo clarinet piece included in this CD. A blustery transitional passage, which I earmarked for future use, remained frozen in time until I could fully grasp its potential and seize the opportunity to develop it.

Since the clarinet plays only one note at a time, it is curious that this earlier musical fragment found voice in my third symphony's opening passage as a series of two-note chords played by two solo violins. The inevitable progression of these simple, somber tones evoked in my mind an ancient, yet futuristic, image: a distant time traveler to

planet earth reading the history of a vanquished civilization on an old parchment—the fabled message in a bottle, floating in the middle of the sea.

While this set the mood for my newly forming piece, I had no intention to create a dramatic narrative based on such a melancholy vision. There was, however, plenty enough to obey in the progression of the chords, the antique quality of which is evident in their resemblance to early polyphonic church music, where one note, harmonized with one other, comprised the transition from plainchant to counterpoint in the development of Western music. In this way the first movement took shape, at all times these plainspoken harmonies determining the melodies, the expanding lengths of the phrases, the durations of the segments and the choices of orchestration.

The result of these varied sources and inspirations is this symphony of approximately a half an hour. The two movements, roughly equal in length, are each formed by three large segments. In the first movement, *Dust Unto Dust*, an inner section furnishes a thematically related “slow movement,” itself a miniature of the A-B-A form within which it is nested.

The second movement, *Return to Forever*, does not follow this symmetrical model, however. After the trio, or “B” section, the music returns not to the movement’s three-note theme but to the work’s opening scenario: the end then, the beginning, as the beginning is The End. I believe the movement titles reasonably evoke the Symphony’s dramatic and musical meaning, to which I can add only that the first movement looks back on the past from the future and the second movement views the past from the present. The Symphony’s final moments intone a highly personalized setting of the *Miserere Nobis* from the High Mass.

Symphony No. 3 was commissioned by John I. Forry, to whom the work is dedicated.

The composition of this work was also supported by The New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Composed for flutist Keith Underwood, **Six Miniatures for Flute with piano** is a quirky little work whose mercurial personality reflects the spontaneous and rapid circumstances of its creation. I have endeavored from time to time abandon my tendency to excessive deliberation in favor of a more improvisatory composing approach. Mining a different—if not deeper—level of musical subconscious, these forays, which feel something like a holiday from the larger-scale works, are also more likely to tip off the listener to my lifelong passion for jazz.

Aside from the second and forth movements, these miniatures, at turns ecstatic, melancholy or coy, are near manic in their changeability. Balancing this dramatic instability is a lean consistency of thematic material that may bring to mind a hybrid of *Tea for Two* and *Tenderly*, tunes that could hardly be more temperamentally at odds with one another. Similarly, the striding tenths in the piano left hand, which open the second miniature owe as much to the great jazz pianist Teddy Wilson as they do to the second movement of Prokofiev’s *Seventh Piano Sonata*.

Thus, if nothing else, does this virtually uncensored work reveal a few of my fondest musical affections and, perhaps, sensations and emotions in which we all share from time to time.

Three Movements for Clarinet Solo, a set of virtuosic character pieces dedicated to Alan R. Kay, was composed in a similar vein to the miniatures. If the jazzy elements seem less pronounced in this work than in the other, the bluesy quality of the middle movement is unlikely to escape the listener’s notice. The third and longest of the movements, in A-B-A form, restates in miniature the work’s overall design.

Anthony Korf was born on December 14, 1951 in New York City. His early musical training included piano, winds and percussion. He earned in Masters Degree in performance from The Manhattan School of Music in 1975.

Korf has composed three symphonies, a piano concerto, a requiem, a cantata, and various works for chamber ensemble and solo instruments. He has been commissioned by The American Composers Orchestra, The San Francisco Symphony, The Koussevitsky Music Foundation and The National Endowment for the Arts. His other honors include a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and a Godard Lieberon Fellowship from The American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has received career grants from the Jerome Foundation and the Astral Foundation and was first-prize winner in the inaugural ASCAP Grants to Young Composers.

Co-founder and artistic director of Riverside Symphony, Korf was also the founding artistic director and conductor of the Parnassus ensemble from 1975-2002. He is recorded as composer and conductor on Bridge, CRI, Koch International, New World and Summit records.



George Rothman, Music Director of Riverside Symphony since its inception, has guest conducted throughout the Far East, Europe, South America, and the United States. He has premiered well over 150 new orchestral compositions, and has championed seldom-heard works by composers as diverse as Biber, Haydn, and Sibelius, and local premieres of works by Prokofiev and Ravel. A native New Yorker, he trained at the Manhattan School of Music, The Juilliard School and, as a scholarship student, at Tanglewood Music Center, studying conducting under Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa.

Rothman has served on the faculties of Columbia and Yale universities and currently serves as Music Director and Conductor of Brooklyn College's Conservatory Orchestra.



Riverside Symphony, co-founded in 1981 by George Rothman and Anthony Korf, is unique in its focus on discovery — discovery of young artists, unfamiliar works by the great masters and important new pieces by living composers from around the world. Critically acclaimed for its vibrant performances of music from all periods, the orchestra counts New York's finest instrumentalists among its membership. In addition to its annual Alice Tully Hall concert series, Riverside Symphony's *International Composer Reading Project* has brought outstanding works by unheralded composers to wider attention through national composer competitions, workshop and major venue performances, and recordings.

Riverside Symphony CDs have brought international acclaim, including a 2000 Grammy nomination and Editor's Pick from Britain's Gramophone and The New York Times. The orchestra, under George Rothman's direction, can be heard on Bridge Records (9057 Ruders; 9091 Imbrie; 9112 Davidovsky) and New World Records (383 Davidovsky, Korf Wright).



left to right:
Anthony Korf
George Rothman

This recording has been made possible by The New York State Music Fund, established by New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and the generous support of Carter and Alexandra Swoope.

Producer and engineer: Adam Abeshouse

Mixing & Mastering engineer: Adam Abeshouse

Cover design: pAK Creative

Anthony Korf photo: Michael Harvey

Photo George Rothman and Anthony Korf: Adam Cohen

The music of Anthony Korf is available through Bill Holab Music
(www.billholabmusic.com)

Recorded: April 19, 2006, live performance at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center
(Symphony No. 3) September 17, 2008, at SUNY Purchase, New York (*Presences from Aforetime, Six Miniatures for Flute with Piano*) December 24, 2008, at Westchester Studios (*Three Movements for Clarinet Solo*)

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