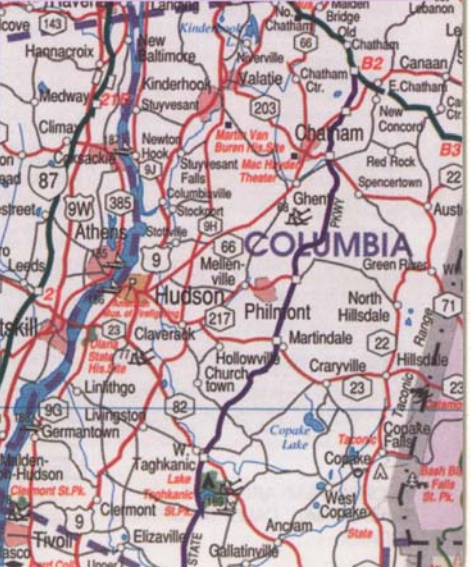




Robert
Starer
*Excursions for a Pianist
& other solo piano works*
Gerald Berthiaume, piano



Robert Starer

Robert Starer was born in Vienna in 1924 and received his musical education at the State Academy in Vienna, the Jerusalem Conservatoire and the Juilliard School. He has lived in New York since 1947 and became an American citizen in 1957. From 1949 to 1974 he taught at Juilliard and from 1963 to 1991 at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of The City University of New York where he was named a Distinguished Professor in 1986. Among his honors are two Guggenheim Fellowships. He was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1994. In 1996 he was awarded the achievement award by the Music Teachers National Association "in recognition of his distinguished career in music and outstanding contributions to his profession as composer and educator."

His stage works include three operas and ballets for Martha Graham and Anna Sokolow. His orchestral works have been performed by major orchestras in the United States and abroad under such conductors as Mitropoulos, Bernstein, Steinberg, Leinsdorf and Mehta. Interpreters of his music include Roberta Peters, Leontyne Price and Janos Starker. The recording of his *Violin Concerto* (Itzhak Perlman with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa) was nominated for a Grammy award in 1986. His Book *CONTINUO: A Life in Music* was published by Random House in 1987. Excerpts from it have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Musical America*, and the *London Times*.

More of Mr. Starer's music can be found on Albany Records (TROY151 and TROY152).

Gerald Berthiaume

Dr. Gerald Berthiaume has performed internationally as a soloist, accompanist and chamber musician. Berthiaume has also been active in the Northwest, performing in Seattle, Olympia, Spokane, Tacoma, Richland, Yakima, Vancouver, Colville, Bremerton, and Port Angeles. He has given performances for meetings and conventions of the Music Teachers National Association,

Excursions for a Pianist (1991), commissioned by the New England Piano Teachers' Association, is one of Robert Starer's most recent compositions for piano. The sonic explorations in this work have immediate appeal and charm from the dramatic opening to the jazzy feel of swing, to the exciting closing march and finally to the return of the opening material. The musical challenges contained in this "tour-de-force" recital piece present a wonderful excursion for both the pianist and audience.

Sketches in Color (1964) has long been admired by teachers as accessible 20th century music for young pianists. Within the seven short compositions of Set One the student encounters polytonality, pentatonic scales, jazz syncopations, and serial techniques.

At Home Alone (1980) resembles the lines of *Sketches in Color* as a popular teaching work for the intermediate level student. These twelve short pieces have descriptive titles that increase imagination and creativity in young performers. Compositionally, the pieces incorporate interval sets, chord clusters, metric changes, sharp contrasts in register and dynamics, and the "pop" style.

The *Three Israeli Sketches* (1957) are an attractive group of short pieces for both performer and listener. The individual character of each piece ranges from the lamenting, song-like "Pastorale," to the innocent playfulness of "Little White Sheep," to the concluding brilliant and fast-paced "Dance." As a set, the sketches explore all registers of the instrument and display precise details of phrasing, dynamics and articulation, the trademark of this internationally recognized composer.

Between flashes of lightning, the opening notes of the Gregorian *Kyrie* of the *Missa Apostolorum* are combined with rich chordal timbres to portray the singing of a church choir from afar. Brilliant virtuoso passages in the fortississimo climax are followed by beautiful, pianissimo bitonal chords which decrescendo to a peaceful conclusion.

Five Caprices (1948) and the *Sonata for Piano* (1950) are musically more complex in that they present a higher degree of dissonance, intensity and depth of emotion than the works for younger students. These two works encompass varied characteristics, styles and moods that demand fine control, subtle nuance and great virtuosity from the performer.

Robert Starer has composed various other works for piano including three piano concerti. This body of literature has provided us with a wealth of 20th century music for study and listening enjoyment.

— Notes by Gerald Berthiaume

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Produced by Skip Brunner and Charles Argersinger. Recorded and edited by Skip Brunner at the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. *Three Israeli Sketches* and *Electric Church* were recorded at Washington State University and edited by Kenneth Babb. All other works were recorded and edited by Skip Brunner at The Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. Original digital mastering (1991) by Allan Tucker at Foothill Digital, New York. Post production and revised digital master (1996) by Kenneth Babb, New York.