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ROBERT STARER

Solo Piano Music, 1946-1996

JUSTIN KOLB, piano



performances include premieres of compositions of Robert Starer, Paul Alan Levi, and Jan Bach. Kolb's program of Starer's solo piano music in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall was hailed by *The New York Times* as, "A Piano Recital Program With A Difference." Kolb also performs much of the standard keyboard literature with an emphasis on Beethoven, Liszt, and Alkan.

While serving as artistic director, Mr. Kolb designed and developed The Belleayre Conservatory Summer Music Festival in the Catskill Mountains, and serves as program advisor to several arts organizations including the Woodstock Guild in Woodstock, New York and The Center for the Performing Arts in Rhinebeck, New York. Kolb is frequently engaged by colleges and universities to present his interactive lecture titled *KNOW THE SCORE:™ Inspiration and Motivation for Surviving in the Business of Music*. Also *Travels with a Piano Player* and *How to Avoid Being a Nerd* are two programs presented by Kolb to grades K-12. These music enrichment and student motivation programs are popular in the private and public school sectors. His musical impact in all areas prompted DePaul University to present him with the 1994 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Justin Kolb has appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Hamburg Philharmonic (Germany), Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra, Gary Indiana Symphony, Hamilton-Fairfield Symphony Orchestra (Ohio), the United States Military Academy Band at West Point, the Northshore Concert Band (Chicago), and the Pittsburgh Symphonic Winds.

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

first set. The three pieces chosen for this recording are *Khaki*, which was the color of uniforms at the time of my military service and stands for marching, drums and fifes; *Aquamarine*, which suggests the "blues"; and, *Silver and Gold*, in which a twelve note row in the left hand is juxtaposed to a very tonal melody in the right hand.

Piano Sonata No. 3

My first *Piano Sonata* dates from 1950 and is dedicated to my teacher Josef Tal. My second *Sonata* was written in 1968 during a brief serial period in my life. When I approached my seventieth birthday, I thought it was time for a third *Sonata*. The opening movement is rather gentle and I thought of calling the work "sonata lirica." I actually played the opening movement for the guests at the elaborate 70th birthday party Gail Godwin gave me. When Justin Kolb told me of his intention to give a recital of my music at Carnegie Recital Hall to celebrate that birthday, I offered him the world premiere of the piece. By that time I had added a delicately lighthearted second movement and a finale which opens "with declamatory strength" and continues "very fast, with a bounce." The work has become too vigorous to be called "lyrical" and was published simply as *Sonata No. 3*. After the superb performance Justin Kolb gave it at his concert I dedicated the work to him.

Twilight Fantasies

Twilight Fantasies (1985) is the work that brought Justin Kolb into my life. Having met him at a dinner party I sent him a copy the following morning. This led to an extended and intense professional relationship. *Twilight Fantasies* was the first piece of mine Justin Kolb played and he has played it many times and many places since. The title comes from a poem by Shelley, "...hopes and fears, and twilight fantasies." The work follows the wanderings of a musical mind rather than a preconceived structure. The opening chords recur in various guises throughout the piece, other musical ideas appear only as if in passing. The work ends as it began

in the mist of twilight.

The Ideal Self (Fantasy, Variations and Fugue on a Song) (1981)

"Each of us has an ideal self..." is the opening line of a poem by Gail Godwin which played a significant part in my opera "Apollonia." My setting of it was published as a separate song and widely performed as such. It gave me the urge to try to do in our century what had been a popular form in earlier times, namely to write a set of variations on one's own tune. The work opens with a fantasy in which elements of the melody are gradually introduced until the song is stated in its entirety. This is followed by seven variations which lead to an elaborate fugue, another early form recently resurrected.

The Contemporary Virtuoso

These seven studies were written in January, 1996. They deal with aspects of piano playing that have interested me for a long time. I began playing the piano in early childhood and have played it ever since, professionally and for my own enjoyment. While I did not switch to composing as my chief activity until my mid-twenties, I enjoyed improvising ever since I started playing the piano. Luckily my mother, who insisted that I practice daily, could not tell the difference between the music I was supposed to play and what I made up as I went along. So I got away with it, convinced that it was a sinful waste of time. It was not until much later that a piano teacher who heard me doodle, asked, "What is this you are playing?" When I answered, "Oh, nothing, just whatever comes to my mind," he told me to write it down and show it to him. He liked what he saw and then he explained the difference between improvisation and composition to me.

These studies deal with crossing hands, changing fingers while repeating notes, developing a singing tone and skipping without looking among other things. They can be played separately or in any order desirable. Some of them are meant to sound quite brilliant. That is why the word *virtuoso* is in the title.

Robert Starer