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20TH
CENTURY
MUSIC FOR
PIANO

KAREN WALWYN
PIANO

DARK FIRES

The significance of this four volume recording project is its celebration of twentieth century compositions for piano and some chamber works written by Americans of African descent that have either never been recorded or have had limited recording performance. Dr. Karen Walwyn first began her research on those 20th century composers, who are citizens of the United States of America with African heritage, when she became increasingly aware of the absence of the compositions of these Americans in the standard classical solo piano and chamber repertoire. Despite the significant number of important piano works by the composers, their compositions have rarely been programmed or studied in academic and non-academic arenas. Institutions of higher and secondary education concentrate mostly on the accomplishments in the idioms of Jazz, Soul, and Gospel. The contributions of the American composer of African descent to classical music is rarely addressed, and as a result, their music remains virtually unknown. Of the estimated 300 American composers of African descent listed in *Readings in Black American Music: a Biographical Dictionary*, few are known by most musicians, and little of their music is heard in concerts or on radio today. Furthermore, recordings of their classical music are difficult to locate because very little of this music is available on albums or compact discs. It is believed that this compilation of works will be vital in addressing the lack of availability of recordings.

This four volume series of music by American composers of African descent contributes to the unveiling of a cultural legacy. This presentation includes a unique historical content and a variety of styles both quoted and extracted from the various traditional idioms of the composers' heritage. The selected works offered are representative of 20th century styles and compositional ideas such as the 12-tone serial techniques of Hale Smith, the multimetric and asymmetrical writings of Adolphus Hailstork, the Neo-Classical style of Roger Dickerson, the polymetric writings of Jeffrey Mumford, the Cuban African traditions of Tania León, and the eclectic jazz-influenced style of David Baker. Individually, each of the works is musically intriguing and pianistically demanding. The display of the breadth of artistic styles in these American compositions lends to the necessary

Some of the composer's more celebrated works include: *Celebration*, recorded by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; *Out of the Depths*, which won the 1977 Belwin-Mills Max Winkler Award; *American Guernica*, awarded first prize in a national contest sponsored by the Virginia College Band Directors in 1983; and *Mourn Not the Dead* which received the 1971 Ernest Bloch Award for choral composition. In 1995 the chamber work *Consort Piece* was awarded First Prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music.

Some of Hailstork's most impressive larger works are: the triptych *Songs of Isaiah*, the oratorio *Done Made My Vow*, and the cantata *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes*. Recipient of the Meet-the-Composer/Reader's Digest/National Endowment for the Arts commission in 1990, Hailstork wrote a piano concerto for pianist Leon Bates. A consortium of five orchestras commissioned the work (Virginia, Louisville, Richmond, Rochester, and Phoenix). In 1991, *Celebration* was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra led by Maestro Daniel Barenboim. Most recently, the composer's first venture into opera, *Paul Laurence Dunbar: Common Ground* (commissioned by the Dayton Opera), received its world premiere in 1995. Hailstork was also commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music to write *Festival Music* for the Baltimore Symphony conducted under David Zinman. Later, *Festival Music* was performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Lorin Maazel.

He has held teaching positions at Michigan State University, Youngstown University and Norfolk State University (Virginia), where he is currently Professor of Music and Composer-in-Residence.

Sonata No. 1

The Sonata No. 1 for Piano, completed in 1980, was dedicated to Natalie Hinderas. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form with a recapitulation that alternates fragments of both themes. The second movement, Scherzo, is sprightly, with a bluesy middle section. The third movement, Nocturne, is quietly



Adolphus Hailstork

upon as a Black Composer or a woman composer because I work real hard at sounding like Lettie in my music. My works explore concepts from the soul and reflect my life and environment." — Lettie B. Alston

DOLORES WHITE

Dolores White, composer, pianist, and educator, received a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from Oberlin College conservatory and a Master of Music degree in piano performance and composition from the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Dolores White is a composer of choral and instrumental music. In 1986, she was a prize winner in the national choral competition: The Ithaca Choral Festival. Several of her arrangements have been published by Ludwig Music Publishing Company and several piano duets by The Boston Music Company.

Ms. White was selected as a finalist in the Detroit Symphony Orchestra 1994 Unisys African-American Orchestral Competition for her piece entitled: *Celebration*. Her orchestral piece with narrator and soprano *Give Birth to the Dream*, was performed in 1996 by the Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra. Several of her choral compositions were performed by the Robert Page/Cleveland singers at Cleveland State University. White is currently on the faculty at Cuyahoga Community College.

Toccata

The Toccata is improvisatory in style with great rhythmic, motoric drive. It consists of short expressive fragments that change moods and colors dramatically and constantly. This is the premiere recording of this work. "I like to explore combinations of sounds within different textures. I use humor in my works in different ways which helps to keep my optimistic views." — Dolores White



Dolores White

Congress, the Aspen Music Festival, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, London's Purcell Room, and Finland's Helsinki Festival.

Fragments from the surrounding evening

Fragments from the surrounding evening, written in 1984, was commissioned by the La Gesse Foundation. This is the premiere commercial recording of this work. "The work falls roughly into two large sections. The first half consists of a textural crescendo in which the materials are developed in a manner suggesting the collecting of clouds in advance of a thunderstorm. In the consequent section, the materials are dispersed as in a rainfall, and then dissipate as the clouds move away in the distance." This recording is dedicated to the memory of Bruce Anderson. — Jeffrey Mumford

ROGER DICKERSON

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, Roger Dickerson's musical quest began as a boy with formal piano lessons. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Music Education at Dillard University and his Master of Music in Composition at Indiana University. Dickerson was a recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship in Musical Composition, where he studied at the Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Vienna, Austria. He was a recipient of such awards as the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Hay Whitney Fellowship, American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), and an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the Peoples Republic of China. Notable commissions are from the New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, the Rockefeller Foundation, the New Orleans Bicentennial Commission, and the Afro-American Pavilion, 1984 Louisiana World Exposition.

Dickerson's honors include a Pulitzer Nomination for his "New Orleans



Roger Dickerson

Corporation. He was also active as an arranger and/or musical director for such jazz artists as Foreststorn ("Chico") Hamilton, Oliver Nelson, Quincy Jones, Eric Dolphy, Abbey Lincoln, and Ahmad Jamal. He wrote music for films, radio, and television and for the symphony orchestra, chamber ensemble, concert band, chorus, piano and voice.

Smith's best known works are: *Contours*, *Orchestral Set*, *Rituals and Incantations*, *Innerflexions*, the *Sonata for Piano and Cello*, *Anticipations*, *Introspections* and *Reflections*, *Faces of Jazz*, and *Evocation*. Some of his works have been performed with the National Symphony, New York Philharmonic, American Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and the Detroit Symphony. His teaching career included tenures at C.W. post College on Long Island, New York, and at the University of Connecticut at Storrs.

Evocation

Evocation is a work of lyrical gestures and chordal sonorities. "The entire piece derives from the row exposed in the first stave, and in several places, it has faint but definite rhythmic affinities with jazz phrasing. This doesn't mean that it is supposed to swing, it isn't, but the affinities are there." — Hale Smith

TANIA LEÓN

Born in Cuba in 1943, and having moved to New York, Tania León became the first music director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. In 1969, she went on to found the Dance Theatre's music department, music school, and orchestra. In September 1992, she conducted the Johannesburg Symphony during the Dance Theatre's historic trip to South Africa. The company was the first multi-racial arts group to perform and teach there in modern times. This was the focus of a segment on León by Eugenia Zuckerman on CBS's "Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt" in February, 1993.

León's first opera *Scourge of Hyacinths* won the BMW prize for Best Composition of the 1994 Munchener Biennale for New Music Theatre, commissioned by the City of Munich. Other recent commissions include *Drummin*, commissioned by Miami Light Project, the New World Symphony, Miami Dade Community College, and Arizona State University; *Singin' Septa*, a song cycle written for the

Mitchell and the late Larel Shook who were among the first supporters of my creative dreams." — Tania León

Producer: Karen Walwyn

Engineer: David Lau

Assistant Engineer: Matt Hanson

This recording was made on March 27 and July 24, 1997 at The Brookwood Studio, Inc., 1155 Rosewood, Suite A, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Photo of Karen Walwyn by David & Peter Smith.

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Publishers

Scores for Dolores White's *Toccatà*, Lettie Beckon Alston's *Three Rhapsodies for Piano*, and Jeffrey Mumford's *Fragments of a surrounding evening* can be obtained from the composers. Tania León's *Ritual* is published by Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. Hale Smith's *Evocaton* is published by Peters Edition. Adolphus Hailstork's *Piano Sonata No. 1* is published by MMB Music Company. Roger Dickerson's *Sonatina* is published by Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc.



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