

The American String Quartet

Kenneth Fuchs Quartets 2,3,4



RICHARD DANIELPOUR ON KENNETH FUCHS

“I met Kenneth Fuchs some 20 years ago at The Juilliard School when we were being interviewed for the master's program by an auspicious panel of composers: Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, David Diamond, Vincent Persichetti, and Roger Sessions. I was impressed by my initial conversation with him and happy that we each had been accepted into the program. I remember his very first string quartet as one of the few works of substance that I heard by a fellow composer during my six years there. Many years later we found ourselves at another school—the Manhattan School of Music. This time Ken was Dean of Students, as I took my place on the composition faculty. This happy confluence of appointments gave me the opportunity again to become acquainted with his music.

The fourth quartet displays a formidable sense of craft and imagination with the utmost economy. It is perhaps the most powerful of all his works. The third quartet, with its undertones of Whitman, is at once the darkest and most virtuosic. Unfolding with great assurance, it has a muscular quality that reminds me of the American composers Ken admired so much when he was a student—Schuman, Mennin, and Copland. Nonetheless, this third quartet, like the other two represented here, sings with its own voice from the first moment to the last. The second quartet is almost impressionistic (Motherwell aside), but it is never without the clarity of purpose that is a hallmark of his writing. The composer who is able to evoke joy, tenderness, humor, wildness, and a sense of the tragic coherently within the same work does many of us a great service: he reminds those of us who love music why we continue to embrace it as an integral part of our lives. I have been privileged to know Kenneth Fuchs over the years and will be delighted to give this disc an honored place in my collection of much-loved CDs. That we are fortunate to have such extraordinary performances of these works by the American



The Other Side

musical preoccupations through a musical collage juxtaposing and reorganizing a few disparate musical ideas over the course of several short movements.

I selected five collages that visually represent this concept most clearly to me—*Heart of Darkness*, *The Other Side*, *The Marriage*, *They Are Not Heard at All*, *Where Have You Been?*—and set about creating a work that would parallel in sound what I had experienced while viewing the collages.

During the composition of *Where Have You Been?*, I used my responses to the collages as emotional guideposts to explore my current musical concerns: use of pitch classes, minimalism, diatonicism, and serialized musical elements. The purity

of the quartet medium allowed me to explore and further define these concerns in depth and on a small scale.

As with my other compositions after Motherwell's images, my intention is not to illustrate musically his works, but by studying them closely, to gain a working method. I approach musical materials in much the same

The Marriage



WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

String Quartet No. 3

After Poems by Walt Whitman 19:21

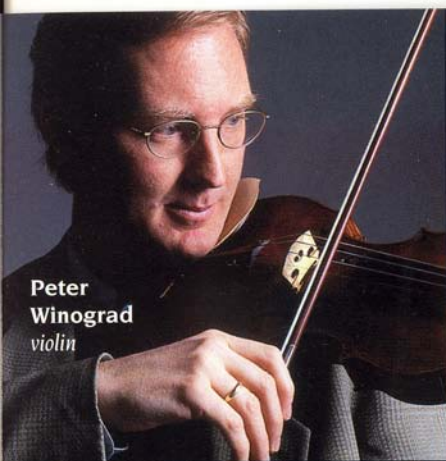
- 6 Allegro agitato 4:00
- 7 Largo misterioso: Introduzione;
Poco più mosso: Tema con variazioni;
Affrettando 9:20
- 8 Gioioso 5:57

Whispers of Heavenly Death is a gift for the American String Quartet. We formed a joyous relationship during the creation and performances of *Where Have You Been?*, traveling across the United States and to Europe, and we agreed to work together again immediately. The work was composed from September 1995 through October 1996 in New York City, and its world première performance was given on February 7, 1999, at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Walt Whitman's haunting cycle of poems *Whispers of Heavenly Death* has been a source of reflection and

about physical death and spiritual afterlife (*Darest Thou Now O Soul; Whispers of Heavenly Death; Of Him I Love Day and Night; Quicksand Years; That Music Always Round Me; O Living Always, Always Dying; The Last Invocation; Pensive and Faltering*) provided the inspiration for this new string quartet.

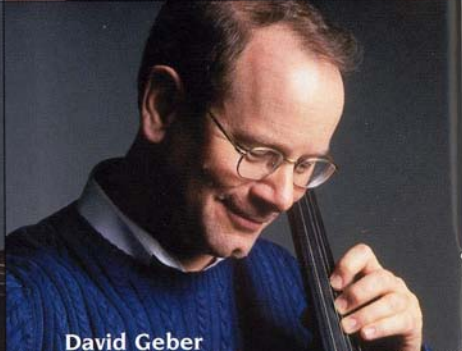
Each of the quartet's three movements is prefaced by a quotation from *Darest Thou Now O Soul* (the opening poem of Whitman's cycle) that sets the mood for the music to follow. The first movement (*Darest thou now O soul, Walk out with me toward the unknown region, Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?*) begins with a forceful tutti statement and introduces the principal pitch class—A, B, C, D, E-flat, F-sharp, G-sharp—of the first and second movements, and the principal rhythmic pulse—two sixteenths followed by an eighth, two eighths by a quarter, two quarters by a half



**Peter
Winograd**
violin



**Laurie
Carney**
violin



David Geber

KENNETH FUCHS

Composer, conductor, and music executive, Kenneth Fuchs has received numerous awards and honors for his music, including the Charles E. Ives Scholarship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, grants from Meet The Composer, the ASCAP Foundation, the American Bandmasters Association, and residencies at The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, and the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation of New Mexico. The University of Miami School of Music named him Distinguished Alumnus for the Year 2000.

He has written for orchestra, band, chorus, jazz ensemble, and various chamber ensembles. In addition, he created with playwright Lanford Wilson three chamber musicals, *The Great Nebula in Orion*, *A Betrothal*, and *Brontosaurus*, which were presented by Circle Repertory Company in New York City. His compositions have been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic

String Quartet, Manhattan School of Music, and the University of Miami, and have been performed throughout the United States and in Europe.

Dr. Fuchs is currently Professor of Music and Director of the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma, where he was appointed to direct the opening of the Stanley B. Catlett Music Center, a new \$25 million state-of-the-art comprehensive music educational facility. He previously served as Dean of Students and Academics at Manhattan School of Music.

He received his Bachelor of Music degree in composition from the University of Miami (*cum laude*) and his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in composition from The Juilliard School. Dr. Fuchs' composition teachers include Milton Babbitt, David Del Tredici, David Diamond, Vincent Persichetti, Alfred Reed, and Stanley Wolfe. His music is published by Theodore Presser Company and Veltan Rhodes Music.

