

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OF
ARNOLD ROSNER
CONDUCTED BY
NICHOLAS PALMER



A MILLENNIUM OVERTURE, op. 112

A SEPHARDIC RHAPSODY, op. 95

Altoona Symphony Orchestra

CONCERTO FOR TWO TRUMPETS, STRINGS
AND TIMPANI, op. 107

THE TRAGEDY OF QUEEN JANE, op. 78

Owensboro Symphony Orchestra

Albany
RECORDS

A Millennium Overture, Op. 112

When my long-time friend David Amos commissioned a brief, spirited orchestral piece for his community orchestra in the San Diego area, in anticipation of the millennium, I pointed out that schedule considerations would make it difficult for me to conceive and finish a suitable new work in time. However, since writing my Cello Sonata No. 2, in 1990, I had always meant to orchestrate its rather exuberant finale as a stand-alone concert piece. I asked David if this was acceptable and he agreed.

I have not altered a single note in the original but have tried to fill it out with plenty of orchestra color—tambourine rhythms, blazing lines for four unison horns, and so forth. The conductor's beat is simple and "straight-ahead" but two's, three's and five's are often contrasted. At one point there is something of a "break-up" section, with proclamations by one orchestral component or another separated by pauses. As usual with my music, harmonies are relatively consonant but I hope, in the manner of composers such as Nielsen or Hindemith, that there is some definite "grit" in what is generally a joyous work.

A Sephardic Rhapsody, Op. 95

The Jewish population may be roughly divided into two ethnic components, the Ashkenazic people, found before the 1940s largely in eastern Europe, thriving now in Israel and the Americas, for whom Yiddish is the secular language; and the Sephardic people, expelled from Spain 500 years ago, and found throughout the middle east, and who speak many secular languages including Turkish, Arabic and Ladino (Renaissance Judeo-Spanish). At one time I came to know many old Sephardic songs and was motivated to compose some new ones myself, but could not find any texts which had not yet been put to music many times. The energy to compose a set thereby split into two channels. One solution was a cycle of songs based on Renaissance Spanish poetry, which I called *Besos sin Cuento*, (Albany TROY553). Somewhat later, for the same Maestro David Amos, I was composer-in-residence for a three-year period with his orchestra, and I wrote *A Sephardic Rhapsody* as one of three works under that arrangement.

The rhapsodies of Liszt, Enesco and others generally do not use actual folk songs, but manage to convey their ethnic flavor anyway, with

ed it to each of them on completion as an utter surprise. Soon after, I conducted the premiere with them, Ted McIrvine and Bruce McKinney, as soloists. Bruce and I remain colleagues at Kingsborough College, but Ted died of bone cancer at the premature age of 45 in August 2000, and it is to his memory that this recording is dedicated.

As my music goes, the concerto is relatively severe, perhaps because of the nature of the trumpet, or because the instrumentation suggested a certain neo-Baroque tightness, or because both friends, as composers, were rather less modal and more atonal than I. Of course, this only goes so far, and the harmonies and structure do not resemble those of the true serial composers. The second movement does, however, use a ground or passacaglia bass, the first phrase of which is a 12-note unit. It also borrows a page from Elliott Carter in presenting a gradual metric modulation, by incrementally slowing down to half its original speed.

The Tragedy of Queen Jane, Op. 78

In 1981 during dinner with a bridge partner, the discussion turned to theater. A full-time lawyer and part-time producer, he told me of

and her nine-day rule of England. Wine having been poured liberally that evening, I blurted out "that would make a nice opera", and I actually followed this instinct despite no hope at that point for a production.

Indeed, 20 years have elapsed, Ms. Stevenson has passed on, and there still has been no performance.

Of course, the tradition of a suite or symphony taken from an opera is venerable. It was easy to compile such a piece, although it does somewhat alter the dramatic sequence. The first movement is the Act I prelude, and contrasts eerie string harmonies with angry, perhaps frightening, brass interpolations. The second movement appears in the opera as wedding music in Act I, and is something of a mini-suite in itself. The third movement is *a la battaglia* and corresponds to the prelude to Act III. If the ending (as in Strauss's *Don Juan*) seems unexpectedly subdued, the skirmish described ends very badly for Queen Jane's forces. The finale is actually the Act II prelude of the opera, where it serves as the preceding king's funeral music. In this setting, however, it may be thought of as a dirge for Jane or for the symbol of the English crown in general.

ARNOLD ROSNER

Arnold Rosner is a prolific American composer whose music has been performed in the United States, Europe and Israel. His works exceed 100 in number and steer clear, generally, of both the post-serial avant-garde movement of the 1960's and the minimalist movement which followed it. His treatment of harmony and counterpoint, along with the occasional recourse to an ethnic, Middle Eastern flavor, places his music in the esthetic milieu of Paul Hindemith, Ernest Bloch and Alan Hovhaness.

Rosner is currently on the faculty of Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, where he teaches both standard and ethnic music. Having composed since the age of nine, he received advanced degrees from the State University of New York at Buffalo while studying with Leo Smit, Allen Sapp, Henri Pousseur and Lejaren Hiller, from all of whom, in his own words, "I learned practically nothing."

NICHOLAS PALMER

Nicholas Palmer is widely regarded as one of the most talented young conductors on the scene today. Maestro Palmer was the recipient of the 1990 Helen M. Thompson Award from the American Symphony Orchestra League as the nation's most outstanding young music director.

Nicholas Palmer is Music Director and Conductor of the Owensboro Symphony, Altoona Symphony, Nashville Ballet and the Evening Under the Stars Music Festival (MA).

A native of Hingham, Massachusetts, Palmer graduated cum laude from Harvard University and has received his Masters and Doctoral degrees in Orchestral Conducting from the New England Conservatory of Music and the University of Iowa, respectively. He has also studied at the Juilliard School, Pierre Monteux Domaine School, Aspen Music School, the Festival at Sandpoint, and the Accademia Chigiana in Italy, where he was a student of Franco Ferrara and Carlo Maria Giulini.