

PHCD

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WILLIAM MAYER

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STANISLAW SKROWCZEWSKI

CONCERTO FOR ENGLISH HORN AND ORCHESTRA

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MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

STANISLAW SKROWACZEWSKI, CONDUCTOR

THOMAS STACY, ENGLISH HORN

(A)(D)(D)



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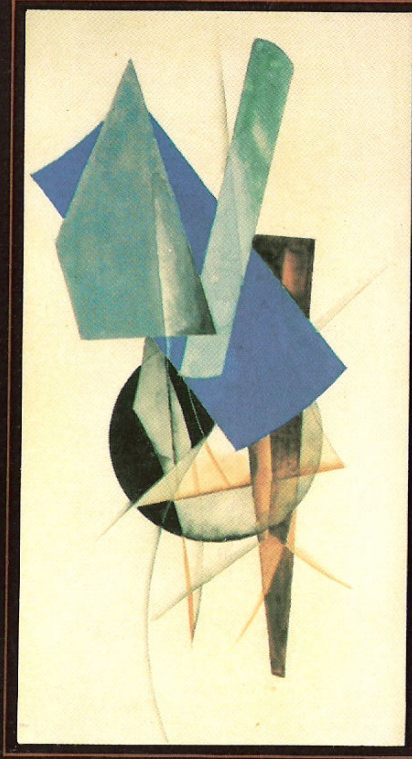
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Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

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TWO PASTELS

By William Mayer

William Mayer, a native New Yorker, composed *Two Pastels* in 1959, working both in the city and the New Hampshire countryside. He had recently finished his *Overture for an American*, commissioned in honor of the Theodore Roosevelt centennial and later recorded by the London Philharmonic. "It was a piece that for the most part was very much of this world," he recalls. "I remember feeling an urge to write something entirely different, a work that would capture, if possible a sense of other worldliness."

He continues: "Two specific lines prompted the *Pastels* (this reversed my normal habit of writing the music and then desperately hunting for an appropriate title). The lines

*'Fresh is the snow
And beautiful the footprints left there —
Someone very great must have passed by'*

prompted the first *Pastel*, while the image 'Of fireflies and a summer night' prompted the second".

Each of the *Pastels* is an impressionistic but tightly-structured piece; each suggests the atmosphere evoked by its poetic basis. The composer writes: "The first is concerned with the feeling of mystery we experience during those rare moments when we stand away from ourselves and ask what in the world existence is all about. The second is concerned with the gentle mournfulness and drowsiness of certain summer nights. Both share, however, a sense of remoteness."

"The work opens with ascending fifths on the harp, answered by a descending motif from the piccolo. A cello passage appears and leads into a long line carried upwards by the violins. This gives way to solo passages for English horn and piano. Preceding motifs combine and lead to a climax of dotted figures in the brass. The texture thins; a contrabassoon leads the way back to the fifths heard in the beginning. The first *Pastel* closes as it began, except for the answering piccolo figure, which ascends for the first time, achieving an untouched plane.

"A short interlude of rushing strings directly to the heart of the second *Pastel*: a plaintive pattern of six widely separated notes, each voiced by a different instrument. Shifting spots of color contrast with the longer lines of the previous movement. Tempus advance; sonorities thicken. A flute solo over woodwind and vibraphone chords then brings the movement back to its gentle beginnings.

"There are two pictorial touches in the second *Pastel*. The upper 'ping' on the piano, for me at least, is the lighting-up of a firefly. And, in addition to its musical function, the tiny upward blurt of the piano at the very end of the work is the flying-off of a firefly, causing the scene to evaporate."

ANDANTE FOR STRINGS

By William Mayer

The composer has supplied the following notes for his *Andante for Strings*: "*Andante for Strings*, based on the second movement of an early string quartet, was orchestrated for a full body of strings in 1958. The work is elegiac in mood with a repeated pattern of chords appearing in both the first and last sections. The Pattern itself traces a gentle rise and fall of both melody and harmonic dissonance. A duet of muted violins introduces the middle section; more strings enter and serenity gives way to a growing turbulence. A denouement follows with a solo cello bringing the section to a close. The last section combines the passacaglia-like pattern of the beginning with the more intimate theme played by the solo violin. A climax of unison strings is reached. The intensity soon ebbs with the first violins echoing the second theme in the last few measures."

CONCERTO FOR ENGLISH HORN AND ORCHESTRA

By Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's *Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra*, dedicated to Mr. Stacy, is the first concerto of major proportions written for the instrument.

The Concerto consists of three movements that are alternately fast, slow (an aria) and again fast. The spiritual climax of the finale breaks into a chorale of four triads, each of three different notes so that all twelve tones of the octave are used. The choice of these chords is such that any order of them gives the B-A-C-H pattern — a kind of homage to Bach. Nevertheless, the work does not proceed from any particular school or "ism". Whatever aspects of twelve-tone technique it has absorbed are almost accidental, for they function as the by-product of expressive development of melody. By eliminating all other needs, the scoring focuses on the instrument's distinctive timbre. The only other representatives of the woodwind family are three flutes (the third doubling piccolo).

According to its composer, the purpose of this Concerto is not merely to provide a vehicle for English horn but to show off the orchestra in relation to the solo instrument; in its way, the work is a minuscule concerto for orchestra. The strings play not as sections but as persons. Much of the time each player is allotted different musical material. The Concerto exploits some possibilities for English horn that have never before been used, such as *multiphonic-fingerings* (producing chord-like sounds), *harmonics* and *sympathetic vibrations* (effected by playing directly into the sounding board of the piano, causing sympathetic vibrations in its strings).

WILLIAM MAYER

William Mayer graduated from Yale University and the Mannes College of Music. In addition, he studied composition with Roger Sessions and Otto Luening. His many awards and honors include two NEA grants, a citation from the National Institute for Music Theatre for contributing to "the advancement of American musical theatre" — his Agee-based opera *Death in the Family* was named the best new work of its type for 1983 — and both Guggenheim and MacDowell Fellowships, as well as grants from the Ford Foundation and the New York and Michigan State Arts Councils. His versatility is manifest in his ongoing interest in all kinds of music (including music for children and show music), his administrative abilities — he has been particularly active at Composers Recordings Inc., having served as Chairman of the Board — and his not infrequent contributions as a writer. Varying assignments for the U.S. Information Agency attest to Mayer's versatility: writing a piano work (*Abandoned Belts*) for its Artistic Ambassador Series; interviewing Rostropovich; organizing a lecture series on American opera for overseas use; and serving as moderator at the auspicious first meeting between composers Aaron Copland and Aram Khatchaturian.

The breadth of Mayer's musical and human perceptions has been one of his distinguishing characteristics. Thus, John Vinton, in his *Dictionary of Contemporary Music*, cites Mayer's principal influences as Bartok, Stravinsky, Barber, and show music, especially the songs of Jerome Kern, an attribution echoed in *AmeriGrove* which adds that "his style is characterized by a contrasting of transparent textures with humorous, highly rhythmic and densely scored passages." In his *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, Joseph Machlis writes: "His is a lyrical music that follows the middle of the road, favored with an unusual flow of fancy and wit, and marked by what he calls 'a free use of compositional techniques and disparate material with the aim of synthesizing so-called opposites into a coherent whole.'"

STANISLAW SKROWACZEWSKI

In ten years as Music Director of the renowned Minnesota Orchestra (formerly Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra), Stanislaw Skrowaczewski has established himself as a conductor of brilliance and power, a man with a distinct and exciting musical personality.

Already a well-known conductor and composer in his native Poland, Skrowaczewski made his United States debut in 1958 with the Cleveland Orchestra at the invitation of the late George Szell. During the next two years he conducted again in Cleveland and also with the New York Philharmonic and the Pittsburgh and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras. In 1960, he became Music Director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Since then Skrowaczewski has conducted most of the major orchestras of the world.

THOMAS STACY

A native of Arkansas, Thomas Stacy began his pursuit of music at an early age. He began with the piano, then the violin, then the oboe; in junior high school he bought his first English horn. He graduated with distinction from the Eastman School of Music in 1960. He also has performed with the San Antonio Symphony, the New Orleans Symphony, the Santa Fe Opera and the Aspen Festival.

Following his New York Premiere of the Skrowaczewski Concerto, Harold Schonberg reviewed for the New York Times: "there was interest in the wonderfully accomplished playing of young Mr. Stacy. He must be the Heifetz, or maybe the Kreisler, of the English Horn, and he solved all problems with ease of technique, so unflinching a lip, such innate musicality, that he swept all before him." Mr. Stacy is currently Solo English Hornist with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.