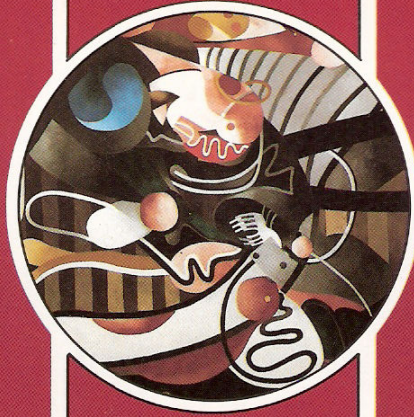


Ezra Laderman

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

Benjamin Britten

DIVERSIONS ON A THEME, OP.21



LEON FLEISHER, PIANO
BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
SERGIU COMISSIONA, CONDUCTOR

Sergiu Comissiona

Sergiu Comissiona, after studies in violin, composition, chamber music and conducting became one of the principal conductors of the Rumanian State Opera and the Rumanian State Philharmonic. After his appointment in 1959 as musical director and conductor of the Hafslund Symphony, he made several tours of Europe and in 1963 in America. This was followed by his appointment as musical director of the Göteborg (Sweden) Symphony Orchestra.

After an appearance in New York as Director and Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony, Harold Schonberg wrote in the New York Times, "It was a fine concert from a first-class orchestra and a gifted, interesting conductor. Mr. Comissiona knows his business; he has temperament, control and authority... and under Mr. Comissiona the Baltimore Symphony can be counted one of the better American ensembles."

This kind of success wherever he has gone accounts for his being in great demand throughout the world. He has appeared in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Hong Kong, Madrid, Vienna, and with American orchestras from New York to San Francisco.

Leon Fleisher piano

Leon Fleisher, who, in 1952 at the age of 24, became the first American to win the Queen Elizabeth of Belgium International Competition, made his New York Philharmonic debut in 1944 and again appeared with that orchestra in 1964 when he gave the New York premiere of the piano concerto written especially for him by Leon Kirchner, under a Ford Foundation Grant.

In a performance with the New York Philharmonic, under Pierre Boulez, the New York Times wrote, "He (Fleisher) was always a powerful virtuoso and his performance of the Ravel Concerto was absolutely brilliant... Mr. Fleisher played the work with immense authority — technical and musical authority."

Mr. Fleisher has served as associate conductor of the Baltimore Symphony for the 1973-1974 season. This appointment follows a conducting career that has included the Pittsburgh Symphony at Ambler Festival, the Cincinnati, Vancouver and San Francisco Symphonies.

Mr. Fleisher has also served as Professor of Music at Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, Maryland.

DIVERSIONS ON A THEME, OP. 21 for Pianoforte and Orchestra

by Benjamin Britten
Leon Fleisher, piano

Theme;
Variation I, Recitative: Variation II, Romance:
Variation III, March: Variation IV, Rubato:
Variation V, Chorale: Variation VI, Nocturne:
Variation VII, Badinerie: Variation VIII, Ritmico:
Variation IX a., Toccata I: Variation IX b., Toccata II:
Variation X, Adagio: Variation XI, Tarantella

“*Diversions*” was written in Maine in 1940 for left-handed Viennese pianist Paul Wittgenstein. Britten had known of the performer’s courage and skill in overcoming insuperable difficulties and was attracted from the start by the compositional challenges offered by the commission. “In no place in the work,” Britten commented, “did I attempt to imitate a two-handed piano technique, but concentrated on exploiting and emphasizing the single line approach... Special features are thrills in the Recitative, widespread arpeggios in the Nocturne, agility over the keyboard in the Badinerie and Toccata, and repeated notes in the final Tarantella.”

Benjamin Britten

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) was born in East Anglia, Suffolk, England. Britten spent his entire life immersed in all facets of music. He was a practicing musician of great breath and versatility who excelled as a pianist and conductor of other’ music as well as his own, a concert improvisor, and a composer as comfortable with a film score as he was with virtually all serious musical forms. Moreover, he lived to see many of his own works enter the international performing repertoire, a rare privilege for a contemporary composer. He composed more than fifteen operas, one of which, *Peter Grimes* (1944), has become one of the most popular of contemporary operas; *A Ceremony of Carols* (1942), for treble voices and harp, has become a Yuletide classic; *Les Illuminations* (1939) and the *Serenade* (1943), for tenor, horn and strings, are among the best-known of contemporary song cycles; his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* (his most important teacher), composed in 1937, and the *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1940) hold permanent places in the orchestral repertoire; and when his *War Requiem* was introduced in 1962, it had an international impact that extended from the musical to the political sphere (especially when its first recording featured Galina Vishnevskaya, Dietrich Fisher-Dieskau and Peter Pears as soloists.)

Britten was able to achieve this wide appeal by means of a broad, eclectic musical style that centered around what might be called a classically reserved lyricism. He was able to adapt this style with great flexibility to the varying demands of widely differing subject matter. This gift, along with a natural sensitivity to the mood of the times and the interests of his audience, gave his works a great immediacy.

Britten’s concern with bringing music to children is reflected in *Ler’s Make an Opera*, an “entertainment for young people” which opened the Aldeburgh Festival in 1949, and the *Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra* (1945, which is probably his best-known work of all, as effective as a piece of music for adults as it is an educational device for children.

Britten himself gravitated toward music spontaneously at an extraordinary early age. He began to compose when he was five, and, although his official Opus 1, the *Sinfonietta* for winds and strings, was not composed until 1932, by 1927, when he was fourteen, he had already composed some hundred pieces, including six string quartets, twelve piano sonatas, a tone poem called *Chaos and Cosmos*, a gigantic symphony, an oratorio, and reams of songs and chamber music.

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

by Ezra Laderman

Sections—Moderato Variations—Andante Combinations—Presto

The “*Concerto*” completed in February 1968 resulted from a joint commission by the Minnesota Orchestra and The National Endowment for the Arts. The score bears the title “*Concerto for Orchestra*” because it treats, in the tradition of the Baroque Concerto Grosso, single instruments, ensemble groups, and entire sections within the orchestra as soloist.

“*Concerto for Orchestra*”; in three movements, is a highly charged, dramatic explosive for the virtuoso orchestra. The first movement, “Sections”, explores the four groups of the orchestra (strings, winds, brass, percussion) while bringing into ever clarifying presence the main thematic structure of the concerto. Sections of high concentration and dynamism are countered by lyrical statements from the clarinet, cello and solo violin. The second movement, “Variations”, juxtaposes pairs of woodwinds (variation one: English Horn and Bassoon) against divisi strings that develop the main theme. This is offset by chorale variations in the brass which are in turn interrupted by percussion variants. The three elements move closer and closer together until they merge in a strong and vibrant final variation. A soft transparent ending illuminated by the solo violin, vibraphone and percussion brings the movement to a quiet questioning conclusion. The third movement, “Combinations”, is in the form of a rondo, with the returning theme initially played by the strings, interwoven with contrasting sections using combinations of instruments. There is a headlong, propulsive quality that dominates this final movement and yet, carefully controlled, the layers of heightened excitement keep the movement projected along its course with dramatic precision.

Ezra Laderman

Ezra Laderman (born Brooklyn, New York, now living in Teaneck, New Jersey) began to compose music while a student at the High School of Music and Arts in New York City. Upon graduation he won first prize for a piano concerto. After serving with the United States Army during the Second World War, he again took up his studies, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from Brooklyn College and a Master of Science from Columbia University. His teachers include Stefan Wolpe, Paul Henry Lang, Otto Luening, and Douglas Moore.

Laderman's long list of honors and awards include three separate one-year Guggenheim Fellowships, grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, and a Prix de Rome, Judith Raskin, Erica Morini, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Julius Baker, Eugene List and Samuel Baron are among the leading artists who have made special requests for works. Important commissions have also come from the New York City Opera Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, and the New York Philharmonic. For the latter he wrote “Magic Prison” a work for two narrators and orchestra, which was premiered by Andre Kostelanetz at a Promenade Concert in June 1967. His collaborator was Archibald MacLeish and the text was assembled from the poetry and correspondence of the nineteenth century American poet, Emily Dickinson, as well as the recollections of T.W. Higginson. For CBS-TV he contributed the oratorio, “The Trials of Galileo” with libretto by Joe Darton. The diversity of Laderman's output is illustrated by the score for the Oscar-winning film, “The Eleanor Roosevelt Story”, and the “String Quartet No.3”, presented for the first time at a concert of the New York Chapter of the International Society for Contemporary Musicians.