

# NED ROREM

## Nine Episodes for Four Players

### Dances

### Spring Music

## CONTRASTS QUARTET



PHCD 163

PHCD163

CONTRASTS QUARTET

NED ROREM

# NED ROREM

## CONTRASTS QUARTET

Ayako Oshima, clarinet  
Monica Bauchwitz, violin  
Ariane Lallemand, cello  
Evelyne Luest, piano

### WORLD PREMIER RECORDING

#### Nine Episodes for Four Players

1. HIDE AND SEEK 2:28
2. ONE ANSWER TO FOUR QUESTIONS 1:32
3. 1-1-3 1:04
4. 99 NOTES TO THE MILLENNIUM 1:22
5. WAITING TO GET WELL 0:29
6. A QUICK BERCUSE 0:42
7. ANOTHER CONVERSATION 3:43
8. WALTZ, PRAYER, CRASH 6:54
9. CLOSING PAGES

### WORLD PREMIER RECORDING

#### Dances (1983)

FOR CELLO AND PIANO

10. PRELUDE 2:31
11. VALSE RAPPPELLÉE 1:10
12. ADAGIO 2:05
13. PAS DE DEUX 1:16
14. THE MIRROR TOCCATA 2:12
15. SCHERZO 1:27
16. THE RETURN 3:52

### Spring Music (1990)

FOR VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO

17. ALTRADE 3:08
18. TOCCATA 5:03
19. FANTASIA 10:33
20. BAGATELLE 2:10
21. PRESTO 3:54

© © 2005 Phoenix USA. Recorded July 2004  
CONTRASTS QUARTET  
PRODUCED BY: Joseph Patrych and

Assistant: Ana Mihosavljevic and  
Oskar Espina Ruiz

Recorded, Edited and Mastered by

Joseph Patrych

Cover Design and EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Jeffrey Kaufman



Visit us at: [www.phoenixcd.com](http://www.phoenixcd.com)

File Under Classical/Rorem



0 94829 31632 1



PHCD 163

Born to Quaker parents in Indiana in 1923 and raised in Chicago, **Ned Rorem** has been an important fixture in American music for over half a century. In 1964 *Time* magazine called him "probably the world's best composer of art songs," the kind of ringing encomium that most composers can only dream of—and one he has understandably quoted ever since. Rorem has continued to write memorable songs, but the *Time* accolade came at an odd moment. Something was changing in Rorem's music, an evolution that would be most pronounced in his purely instrumental compositions.

There were reasons. After nine years spent living in Morocco and in France, Rorem returned in 1958 to full-time residency in the United States, a country whose artists, musicians, and architects were grappling with the historical imperatives of modernism. These aesthetic gusts had swept in from Europe, of course, but Rorem had spent his sojourn there as part of the conservative circle of Poulenc and Auric, sheltered financially by the patronage of Marie Laure, the Vicomtesse de Noailles. (Rorem seems to have functioned in her wealthy, hypersophisticated household much as the young William Walton did in the company of the Sitwells.) Many lovely and lasting works—such as the Second Piano Sonata, the *Whitman Songs*, and the First Symphony—were produced during those years, but their sweet tooth was pronounced. Rorem now needed to become a very American animal, the "professional's professional," and he must have realized that a more restrained and flexible style was called for. Contrasts were heightened, forms became more abstract; harmonies grew more chromatic, and the effortless melodies of the wonderful songs of the late forties and fifties were sharpened into tighter, more angular gestures. (He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for *Air Music*, one of his most astringent orchestral works.) Rorem was discovering his International Style, but he was doing it on American shores.

It was natural that this new rage for order would eventually give rise to a rich expansion of Rorem's chamber music catalog, including the three works recorded here. The grandest of them is *Spring Music*, written on commission from the Carnegie Hall Corporation for the Beaux Arts Trio, which premiered it on February 8, 1991. It came in the midst of a bounteous Indian summer of Rorem's career, a spate of major commissions that included such important works as the String Symphony (for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, 1985), the Third and Fourth String Quartets (for the Guarneri Quartet, 1991, and the Emerson Quartet, 1994), and the evening-long song cycle *Evidence of Things Not Seen* (for the New York Festival of Song, 1997). For all of Ned's fabulous Frenchness, the expansive

moods of *Spring Music* are reminiscent of the C Major Piano Trio of Brahms—a big, well-timbered piece simultaneously public and private, objective yet inscrutable.

The work is in five movements. In the opening *Aubade*, the strings lay out three long-limbed melodies, exquisitely diatonic and appropriately dawn-like, alternating with ripples of twelve-tone filigree (marked "Freely") in the upper reaches of the piano; the three melodies are then more or less repeated, with the keyboard responses now coming out of the depths in A major. Rorem's twelve-tone writing is not organic like Schoenberg's, lyrically discrete like Barber's, or complexly integral like Babbitt's; the *Aubade*'s rows are broken up into patterns of different lengths which, in the vigorous *Toccata*, can be overlapped in the three instruments—say, an eight-note chain in the violin, a six-note chain in the cello, and a seven-note chain in the piano. The tense harmonic relationships they create—perfect fourths, tritones, and minor seconds—are pleasantly dissolved by molding them into swooping gestures that are terraced like Baroque sequences, or by stretching them out into larger note values to make melodies which the strings can sing out over nervously static piano accompaniments. The effect is vivid, swift, and a little confusing: a glittering two-dimensional play of surfaces, not unlike the post-Impressionist painting of another deeply Gallic American, Whistler.

The *Fantasia* is a surprisingly substantial slow movement full of solo cadenzas, an expansion of the stark contrasts built into the *Aubade*; the broad, trilling gesture of the opening returns at the close, emotionally heightened by the expansive lyrical flights, plus a crisp fast section, that occur in between. The *Bagatelle*, is, if you will, "classic" Ned, a touching evocation of 1950's French pop songs cast in a deceptively simple meter (what sounds like two measures of waltz music are actually only one) that allows for a broadening, impassioned climax. The *Presto*, which employs both the *Toccata*'s note patterns and the grand trills of the *Fantasia*, is a quick and vital jiguc.

The *Nine Episodes for Four Players* come from a later, more difficult stage of the composer's life. Rorem lost his longtime partner James Holmes to AIDS in 1999, and the enormous amount of time devoted in care and worry exhausted him and decreased his productivity. The offer extended by the Contrasts Quartet, which commissioned the work along with the SOLI Chamber Ensemble, St. Paul's Music in the Park Series, and Pacific

Serenades, was part of a reawakening to composition, and what we hear are the chiseled, economical gestures of an artist in winter—a savoring of truths, of musical emblems carried across the decades. (The Contrasts Quartet gave the world premiere of the piece on January 29, 2002 at New York's Merkin Concert Hall.) Rorem's note is succinct:

Some of the movements were first written as piano solos on special occasions. For instance, *1+1=3* was conceived when my friends Jennifer Bilfield and Joel Friedman were expecting their first child... *99 Notes for the Millennium* was for the Friends and Enemies of New Music [concert series] to celebrate the new year. "*Waiting to Get Well*" was an exercise for Eugene Istomin during a convalescence. *Another Conversation* was for Jim Holmes' birthday...The others, composed in Nantucket and New York, all saw the light of day between October 2000 and March 2001.

Of those "others," two deserve special mention. The central panel of *Waltz, Prayer, Crash* is an unusually concentrated example of the kind of tender melody that Rorem has written for decades, a gently repetitious clarinet tune accompanied by downward-moving French harmonies; the finale, *Closing Pages*, works out the knots of energy from the previous eight movements into long stretches of sublime lyricism floated over a desolate piano accompaniment.

In the earliest of these works, *Dances* for cello and piano from 1983 (which, like "Nine Episodes," is receiving its first recording here), Rorem's characteristic devices are molded to a lighter, more occasional purpose. A commission from the Music Study Club of Metropolitan Detroit, it circumscribed Rorem into using one "bowed instrument" and piano; he settled on the cello since he had never written for such a combination before. Rorem was in the final stages of completing *Picnic on the Marne*, a delicious suite of waltzes for saxophone and piano, when the Detroit commission came, and he continued his dancing bent in a brisk but affecting suite of seven movements. It was premiered by the cellist Jonathan Spitz and the pianist Frederick Moyer on May 6, 1984.

—Russell Platt

*Russell Platt is a music editor at The New Yorker and a noted American composer.*



CONTRASTS QUARTET

*Sunday* radio program. Their concert tours have taken them from San Francisco to Spain. The ensemble has also been invited to participate in many residencies, including Norfolk Summer Festival in Connecticut, the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, Music in the Park Series in St. Paul, Minnesota, Penn State/Erie, Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, Bowdoin College in Maine and the Fitchburg Public Schools and Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts.

The group, on the Phoenix USA label (PHCD142), has recorded a CD of the works of Aaron Jay Kernis, all premiere recordings. The Ensemble has been honored with awards and grants from the American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, the Fromm Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music and Chamber Music America.

Acclaimed for their exhilarating performances of old and new repertoire, the **Contrasts Quartet** is a group of four extraordinary virtuosi whose instruments include clarinet, violin, cello and piano. The group chose its name to describe the contrasting timbres of their instruments, as well as the variety of their repertoire. The ensemble performs a mix of duos, trios and quartets, presenting innovative and entertaining programming designed to appeal to a broad range of audiences. The Contrasts Quartet has worked with many living composers and has commissioned and premiered works of Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Torke, Ned Rorem, Scott Johnson and Derek Bermei, among others.

The Quartet has been invited to perform in Europe and across the United States. Concert appearances have included performances at Carnegie's Weill Hall, Merkin Hall and live appearances on New York's WNYC Radio and the nationally syndicated *St. Paul*

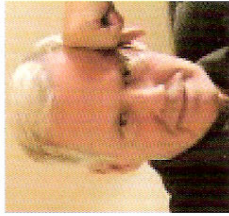
Pianist **Evelyne Luest** is an accomplished soloist and chamber musician and has performed and toured in Europe, South America, Asia and the United States. She has won several competitions, including the Artists International Competition in New York as soloist in addition to many awards with the Contrasts Quartet. Ms. Luest has performed as soloist at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds in Italy and on the *St. Paul Sunday* National Radio Show. Recent performances include festivals and concert venues in Norway, France, Japan, Spain, California and Minnesota. Her list of premieres includes compositions by Joan Tower, Jing Jing Luo, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Ben Weber. Ms. Luest's recent CD releases include solo and chamber works on CRI, Phoenix Records, North/South Recordings, and North Pacific Music. She studied with Gilbert Kalish at SUNY/Stony Brook, where she received an M.M. and D.M.A. in piano performance. She lives in New York City with her husband, Aaron Jay Kernis, and their two children.

Hailed as an "excellent violinist" by the Washington Post, **Monica Bauchwitz** performs extensively in chamber music, orchestral and solo settings. Ms. Bauchwitz has studied and worked both in the United States and Europe. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the Conservatoire de Geneve, she has held positions with L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Esbjerg Ensemble-the national Danish chamber ensemble. She has toured widely across Europe with classical and contemporary chamber music repertoire and has participated in such festivals as Great Irish Houses Music Festival in Ireland and the Schleswig-Holstein Chamber Music Series in Germany. She has performed as soloist with orchestras in Scandinavia, Central Europe, and the New York region and has recorded chamber music under the Philips label. Ms. Bauchwitz is the founder of the Manhattan chamber music series "Concerts in the Heights" and is co-concertmaster and Artistic Director of the conductor-less String Orchestra of New York City-SONYC.

Hailed by the New York Times as a "splendid performer", French-born **Ariane Lallemand** has performed as soloist and with numerous orchestras in Europe and in New York, including performances in Alice Tully Hall and Merkin Hall and radio appearances on WQXR and WNYC. Performances also include festivals in the United States, Europe, and China. She has collaborated with Paul Tortelier, Gunther Schuller, Lara St. John and

the Meridian and Cassat String Quartets, among others. Ms. Lallemand has been a prize winner in the Epernay Cello Competition, the German Cologne Sonata Competition, the Mendelssohn Competition, the Mannes College of Music Competition and has received the "Bourse Lavoisier" prize from the French Ministry of Culture. She recently recorded Haydn's two cello concerti with the French-American Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Jean-Pierre Schmitt. Ms. Lallemand is a graduate of the Mannes College of Music where she studied with Tim Eddy. She also studied in Europe at the Musikhochschule in Freiburg and the Paris Conservatoire.

Clarinetist **Ayako Oshima** has won numerous international competitions, including the Japan Music Competition in Tokyo, the Winds and Percussion Competition in Japan and the International Jeunesses Musicales Competition in Belgrade, where she also received the "Golden Harp" Award, given to the favorite of the audience and critics. She has performed as soloist with the Hiroshima and Osaka Symphonies and with the Jupiter Symphony in New York City. She has participated in the Sarasota Summer Music Festival in Florida, the Festival Consonances in France and the Kirishima Music Festival in Japan. Ms. Oshima received clarinet training in France, from the Toho School of Music, and as a "special student" at the Eastman School of Music. She is on the faculties of The Juilliard School and the State University of New York at Purchase. With her husband, Charles Neidich, she has written a book on the basics of clarinet technique for the publisher, Toa Ongaku.



Ned Rorem is one of America's most honored composers. In addition to a Pulitzer Prize, awarded in 1976 for his suite *Air Music*, Rorem has been the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship (1951), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1957), and an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1968). He is a three-time winner of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award; in 1998 he was chosen Composer of the Year by Musical America. The Atlanta Symphony recording of the *String Symphony, Sunday Morning*, and *Ezra's* received a Grammy Award for Outstanding Orchestral Recording in 1989. From 2000 to 2003 he served as President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2003 he received ASCAP's Lifetime Achievement Award, and in January 2004 the French government named him *Chevalier* of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Among his many commissions for new works are those from the Ford Foundation (for *Poems of Love and the Rain*, 1962), the Lincoln Center Foundation (for *Sun*, 1965); the Koussevitzky Foundation (for *Letters from Paris*, 1966); the Atlanta Symphony (*String Symphony*, 1985); the Chicago Symphony (*Goodbye My Fancy*, 1990); Carnegie Hall (*Spring Music*, 1991), and the New York Philharmonic (*Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra*, 1993). Among the distinguished conductors who have performed his music are Bernstein, Masur, Mehta, Mitropoulos, Ormandy, Previn, Reiner, Slatkin, Steinberg, and Stokowski.

Rorem is justly renowned for his art songs; his catalog includes more than 500 works in the medium. *Evidence of Things Not Seen*, his evening-length song cycle for four singers and piano, represents his magnum opus in the genre. The New York Festival of Song premiered the cycle at Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall in January 1998. New York magazine called *Evidence of Things Not Seen* "one of the musically richest, most exquisitely fashioned, most voice-friendly collections of songs I have ever heard by any American composer." Chamber Music magazine deemed it "a masterpiece."

Rorem has composed three symphonies, four piano concertos and an array of other orchestral works, music for numerous combinations of chamber forces, nine operas, choral works of every description, ballets and other music for the theater, and literally hundreds of songs and cycles. He is the author of sixteen books, including five volumes of diaries and collections of lectures and criticism.

October 23, 2003 marked the composer's 80th birthday, highlighting a season of international festivities. Chief among them was the Curtis Institute of Music's "Roremiana," a two-week celebration encompassing works in every genre. The birthday season brought a trio of new concertos from Rorem: *Cello Concerto*, commissioned by the Residentie Orchestra and the Kansas City Orchestra for David Geringas; *Flute Concerto*, commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra for its principal flutist Jeffrey Klauer; and *Mallet Concerto*, commissioned for Evelyn Glennie by the Madison Symphony Orchestra and the Eos Orchestra. *A Ned Rorem Reader*, Rorem's latest book, is a collection of essays and short reminiscences, issued by Yale University Press in 2001. His most recent diary, *Lies*, was published by Counterpoint Press in 2000. Rorem has said: "My music is a diary no less compromising than my prose. A diary nevertheless differs from a musical composition in that it depicts the moment, the writer's present mood which, were it inscribed an hour later, could emerge quite otherwise. I don't believe that composers notate their moods, they don't tell the music where to go - it leads them....Why do I write music? Because I want to hear it - it's simple as that. Others may have more talent, more sense of duty. But I compose just from necessity, and no one else is making what I need."