

William BOLCOM
Sergiu Luca, violin
Janet Lyman Hill, viola
Eugene Moye, cello
American Composers Orchestra
Dennis Russell Davies

Violin Concerto in D

- (1) I Quasi una fantasia: Tempo giusto, Allegro elegiaco 9:33
- (2) II Adagio non troppo ma sostenuto 7:10
- (3) III Rondo-Finale 8:38
- (4) **Fantasia Concertante** * 15:03
- (5) **Fifth Symphony** 6:01
- (6) I Pensive/Active 6:38
- (7) II Scherzo/Mortale 6:20
- (8) III Hymne à l'Amour 3:49
- (8) IV Machine

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**VIOLIN CONCERTO
FANTASIA CONCERTANTE
FIFTH SYMPHONY**

**Sergiu Luca
American Composers Orchestra
Dennis Russell Davies**

All three of the works on this recording owe much to Classical-period music. I don't however consider them Neo-Classical in the 1920s -30s sense (which was usually really Neo-Baroque); here I am using some of the formal benefits of Classical harmonic construction, notably the ability to steer a whole form in a new direction on the turn of a musical card - something not usually discernible in a totally chromatic context.

The Violin Concerto in D (D major-minor) was premiered by Sergiu Luca with Maestro Davies and the Saarbrücken Radio Orchestra on the 3rd of June 1984; composing it took most of the previous year. Luca is an old friend; we have worked together since 1972, mostly on commissions for him but also in chamber music performance from Schubert to Schoenberg, and it is always helpful as well as a pleasure to write for musicians one knows well. As few serious-music violinists show much interest in the jazz-fiddle tradition, I was delighted when Sergiu began to play with Joe Venuti, appearing with him several times in public (including a session at New York's Michael's Pub, during which my wife Joan Morris and I did a set with Joe's trio - a wondrous experience for us!). Two Venuti influenced works for Luca followed: the 1978 Second Sonata (during the writing of which Venuti died) and the present work.

The Concerto's beginning movement is a fantasia in the Classical sense, in which the careful juxtaposing of various types of music is the paramount concern. The solemn 5/4 second movement is in memory of the great pianist Paul Jacobs, a close friend who died in 1982; the long Adagio line includes a ghostly discourse between the solo violinist and an off-stage D trumpet. This leads *attacca* to the Rondo-Finale, where the Venuti influence is most apparent. Several styles from popular music (notably ragtime and rhythm-and-blues) are alternated rondo-fashion, up to the soloist's brilliant passagework (*stretta*) which ends the Concerto.

The **Fantasia Concertante** was requested by James Levine as a commission from the Salzburg Mozarteum, to be given its first performance by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at a concert which took place at the Salzburg Festspielhaus on the 26th of January 1986, as part of the Mozart Festival of the same year. The terms of the commission stipulated that the work should: 1) include solo parts for viola and violoncello; and 2) evoke Mozart in some way (previous Festival commissions, I was told, had incorporated musical material by Mozart). The idea of writing, say, variations on "Dove sono" did not attract me; instead I used Mozartean elements - the perennial use of the half-cadence for continuity as it occurs throughout *Idomeneo*, the little rising half-step motive found in that opera's sea-monster scene, and the musical rockets at the end of *Idomeneo's* ballet music - as creative spurs, as well as the general contour and operatic glow of one of my favourite Mozart works, the Sinfonia concertante for violin, viola, and orchestra (K364). The stylistic evocations range from Rossini and Weber to early Verdi - in other words, music that couldn't have existed without Mozart; I emphatically did not want to write bogus Wolfgang.

I liken the Mozarteum commission to that received by the architect who replaced the bombed-out townhouse on 11th Street in New York's Greenwich Village, using facade elements of the surrounding houses but also counterpoising a daringly angled bay-window on the main floor. The "pleasure of the game" here was in being able to play

with Classical, harmonies, teasing harmonic expectations at one end of the spectrum whilst using serial elements and extreme dissonance at the other, always trying to keep the musical fabric intact. Salzburg's is an ultraconservative audience in a musically conservative country, but a nice Salzburg lady complimented me after the *Fantasia Concertante* premiere: "Very nice, even after Mozart!"

What has made my **Fifth Symphony** one of the stranger experiences in my composing life is the unusual way it presented itself. This work was a long time in gestating; over and again I began what I thought would be my symphony, only to find in mid-course that the material was really a *Clarinet Concerto* (to be premiered in 1992 by Stanley Drucker and the New York Philharmonic) or sketches for an opera (*McTeague*, to open in October 1992 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago). When the time came to give the Philadelphia Orchestra its expected commission, I took the onus off by deciding not to write a symphony after all only to find that the piece was becoming a symphony anyway! (The dedicatee was the Philadelphia's manager Stephen Sell, whom I had known since his early days with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; Steve died during the work's composition, and I have to note that a great deal of the music on this disc is eulogistic in one sense or another.) An idea, to be symphonic, must for me have an interesting formal argument to sustain it, and I found the material that generated itself for the *Fifth Symphony* had a two-edged ironic feel, at once sardonic and grieving, like certain kinds of satire. This, together with the duality of two contrasted poles of tonality (tonally dynamic music set against music that is more ambivalent in its allegiance to a home key), gave the armature for the work.

Pensive/Active, the first movement, is essentially a slow introduction followed by a terse sonata-allegro, the less tonal "pensive" opening gradually coalescing into the "active" key of G minor; *Scherzo Mortale*, the companion piece to the *Scherzo Vitale* of my 1979 *Third Symphony* (also written for maestro Davies and for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra), is dedicated to the Viennese composer Heinz-Karl Gruber. In my 1972 *Satires* for madrigal group I'd discovered that the funeral hymn *Abide with me* and the *Wedding March* from *Lohengrin* fit in perfect Irving-Berlin-style counterpoint - a funeral-marriage, Love with Death; the same idea here, plus quotations from *Tristan* arranged in a big-band foxtrot tempo, adds to *Scherzo Mortale's* Pere-Lachaise-cemetery creepiness. *Hymne à l'Amour*, same music as the last of my *Twelve New Etudes for Piano* (written for Paul Jacobs, but not completed until after his death), treats the Love-Death axis from another more tragic viewpoint: Death generated by Love. In the Etudes, the *Hymne* feels like the triumph of the *Ewigweibliche*: here it is in ironic contrast to the rest of the work, particularly to the concluding *Machine*. The impersonal non-human regularity of current dance music is the metaphor of this movement, which begins in G minor and moves to tonal entropy by the end (a mirror of the first movement). Each of the three works in this recording has a strong ending (not everything I write ends with a bang!), but here the noisy conclusion was part of the commission, Dennis Russell Davies having requested something with which to end a concert.

William Bolcom



William Bolcom. Sergiu Luca. Dennis Russell Davies
Photo: Lincoln Russell

WILLIAM BOLCOM

Composer/pianist WILLIAM BOLCOM was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1938. Exhibiting musical talent while still very young, he began (at age 11) private composition studies with John Verrall and piano lessons with Berthe Poncy Jacobson at the University of Washington. He continued to perform extensively in the Seattle area and throughout the Northwest.

Bolcom earned his B.A. from the University of Washington in 1958, studied with Darius Milhaud at Mills College in California and at the Paris Conservatoire de Musique, and earned a doctorate in composition in 1964 from Stanford University, where he worked with Leland Smith. Returning to the Paris Conservatoire, he won the 2e Prix in Composition in 1965. While in Europe he began writing stage scores for theaters in West Germany, continuing at Stanford University, in Memphis, Tennessee, at Lincoln Center/New York, and the Yale Repertory Theater.

Various awards throughout his career include:

a BMI award (1953), two Guggenheim fellowships (1965 and 1968), several Rockefeller Foundation awards, several NEA grants, the Marc Blitzstein Award (1966) from the Academy of Arts and Letters (for **Dynamite Tonite**, an opera for actors written with his long-time collaborator, Arnold Weinstein), two Koussevitzky Foundation Awards (1976 and 1993) for the **First Piano Quartet** and the **Lyric Concerto for Flute and Orchestra** - written for James Galway, the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1988 for **12 New Etudes for Piano**, the 1977 Henry Russel Award (the highest academic prize given by the University of Michigan) followed 20 years later by the prestigious Henry Russel Lectureship (awarded to a senior faculty member) in March 1997 at the U of M, the Michigan Council for the Arts Award the Governor's Arts Award from the State of Michigan the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1988 for **12 New Etudes for Piano**, investiture in the

American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1992, honorary doctorates from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Albion College, and the New England Conservatory, and the New School University/New York the Alumnus Summa Laude Dignatus Award from the University of Washington in 2003, the 2006 Grammy Award for “Best Classical Contemporary Composition” for **Songs of Innocence and Of Experience**.

Commissions have come from:

Orchestras: Philadelphia, St. Louis, Seattle, Saint Paul, Saarbrücken (Germany), Vienna (Philharmonic), Baltimore, National/Washington, DC, Pacific Symphony, Boston, The MET Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Orchestra and from organizations: the American Music Theater Festival of Philadelphia, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, the Western Wind, Orpheus Chamber Players, Chamber Music Northwest, Aeolian Chamber Players, Carnegie Hall, Aspen Music Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Pacific Northwest Ballet and numerous soloists and chamber music organizations worldwide.

DENNIS RUSSELL DAVIES

Dennis Russell Davies was born in Toledo, Ohio, and graduated from The Juilliard School where he studied piano with Lonny Epstein and Sasha Gorodnitski and conducting with Jean Morel and Jorge Mester. Recently, Davies concluded his tenures as Chief Conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (1996-2002), and as Music Director of the pre-eminent American Composers Orchestra (1975-2002). He continues his affiliation with the American Composers Orchestra, which he co-founded 25 years ago, as Conductor Laureate. Davies has had successful tenures as the General Music Director of the City of Bonn (Germany), Principal Conductor/Classical Music Program Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Principal Conductor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. In addition to his North American orchestral guest conducting appearances, Davies has guest conducted some of the most prestigious orchestras in Europe including the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

Davies' prolific recordings, as conductor as well as pianist, number well over 60 and having received numerous awards, can be found on many labels. His recording diversity extends from Mozart, Schubert, Bizet and Satie, to Shostakovich, Glass and Kancheli, to name a few. New World Records has just released the Bolcom opera, *A View from the Bridge*, from world premiere live performances at the Chicago Lyric Opera conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. His newest releases include a recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 with the Bruckner Orchester Linz; with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Hans Rott's *Symphony in E Major* and *Pastorales Vorspiel* on the CPO label; and on the ECM label *Flux*, an all Erkki-Sven Tüür recording. Also current is John Cage's *The Seasons* with the American Composers Orchestra, which won the Japan Record Academy Awards 2000 first prize in the "Best Contemporary Music" category. On Nonesuch, he has recorded many works of Philip Glass, including Symphonies No. 2, 3 and 5.

SERGIU LUCA

Described in the Washington Post as a "a fiddler's fiddler," he is a concert personality who has enjoyed a worldwide career. He combines an unparalleled diversity of repertoire with inspired virtuosity as a soloist with orchestras and in annual recitals at major music centers around the world. A native of Rumania, Luca made his debut with Israel's Haifa Symphony at the age of nine. Following his studies in England and Switzerland, he came to the United States to study with the legendary pedagogue Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute. Soon after his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1965, he was chosen by Leonard Bernstein to play the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the New York Philharmonic for a special CBS television network tribute to the Finnish composer. He has subsequently performed with many of the world's leading orchestras in Europe, Israel, Latin America, and the U.S., including the Cleveland, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Houston, Baltimore, Atlanta, and National Symphony Orchestras and the Israel Philharmonic, New Philharmonia of London, and the Zurich Tonhall Orchestra. Sergiu Luca's many recordings attest to his sensitivity for varied styles and periods of music. He made a sensation with his recordings of the complete unaccompanied works of J.S. Bach, the first rendering on an original instrument. Subsequent recordings of music by Bartók, Schumann, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Tartini, Janacek, and William Bolcom, as well as orchestral recordings with Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Symphony and David Zinman and the Rochester Philharmonic, earned international acclaim. As a recitalist, Sergiu Luca has performed in Europe, Mexico, Japan, and throughout North America. He has collaborated with such keyboard artists as Emanuel Ax, Albert Fuller, Anne Epperson, Joseph Kalichstein, Peter Serkin, and Malcolm Bilson. He is the Dorothy Richard Starling Professor of Violin at the Shepherd School of Music.

Partial funding for this recording has been provided by the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation and The Aaron Copland Fund for Music. The recording was made at the New York State University Performing Arts Center in October 1990, using Neumann M50, TLM 170, KM84 and Schoeps MK2S microphones, and B & W Loudspeakers.