

London Symphony Orchestra

Mitch Hampton, piano

Roger Briggs • Brynmore Llewelyn Jones



Emilia Lou Diemer
Santa Barbara Overture

Roger Briggs
*Tarot: Three Movements
from the Major Arcana*

Greg Bullen
The Parable of the Blind

Ray Bokhour
New York, 1999

Mitch Hampton
Symphony No. 1



London Symphony Orchestra

Emma Lou Diemer

1 *Santa Barbara Overture*[†] 11:10

Roger Briggs

Tarot: Three Movements from the Major Arcana

2 *Magician* 3:44

3 *Moon* 5:48

4 *Chariot* 5:23

Greg Bullen

5 *The Parable of the Blind* 6:36

Ray Bokhour

6 *New York, 1999* 11:08

Mitch Hampton

Symphony No. 1[†]

7 *The Great Experiment* 6:04

8 *Serendipity and Struggle* 1:43

9 *Blues for Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin* 3:53

10 *Rock* 3:26

Mitch Hampton, piano

Roger Briggs, conductor †Brynmor Llewelyn Jones, conductor

Santa Barbara Overture

According to Emma Lou Diemer, her *Santa Barbara Overture* is a musical expression of the diversity of the wondrous city of Santa Barbara. An opening, rhythmic crescendo leads to a loud and joyful theme of deliverance inspired by seeing the Pacific Ocean and Santa Barbara the first time after crossing the desert and enduring the clogged freeways and smog of Los Angeles. Ostinato figures alternate between strings and brass, accompanied by mallet percussion, piano, and harp.

A placid interlude ensues, using pentatonic scale figures reminiscent of Asian music. This respite doesn't last long and a second theme enters, *ff* and jaunty and upbeat. Diemer calls it "intimations of ragtime filtered through a honky-tonk piano in a gold miners' saloon in a Hollywood movie." The volume drops down to *f*, whereupon it gradually transforms into a native American melody, played against a jazz backdrop. Here Diemer demonstrates her sense of humor, as she springs a series of musical puns on Spanish and Mexican music, perhaps even

Aaron Copland's 1936 composition *El Salon Mexico*. In the final section, she builds a haunting melody using the bells of the Old Mission of Santa Barbara. She then inserts an organum in 4th, which she imagined the mission friars to have sung. The opening melody then recapitulates with renewed vigor. Diemer skillfully and gradually builds musical tension in the finale, again using the highly rhythmic figures in the mallet percussion, piano, and harp. The coda is a colorful outdoorsy tutti, which ends the piece with panache.

A native of Kansas City, Missouri, **Emma Lou Diemer** received her degrees in music composition from the Yale School of Music (BM, MM) and the Eastman School of Music (Ph.D.). She studied further in Brussels on a Fulbright Scholarship and at Tanglewood. She is Professor Emerita at the University of California, Santa Barbara where she taught composition and theory from 1971 to 1991. She has been composer-in-residence with the Santa Barbara Symphony, and is organist emerita at First Presbyterian Church in Santa Barbara.

Diemer has received annual ASCAP

awards since 1962 for performances and publications. Other recognition includes a Louisville Orchestra Student Award, a Ford Foundation Young Composers Grant for a two-year composer-residency in the Arlington, VA schools, an NEA fellowship in electronic music, a Kennedy Center Friedheim award for her *Concerto in One Movement for Piano*, the American Guild of Organists Composer of the Year award, and a Mu Phi Epsilon Merit Award, plus numerous commissions.

In publication since 1957, her music includes works for orchestra, band, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, voices, and electronic pieces. She has received numerous commissions from schools, churches, and professional groups. Her music is published by Oxford University Press, Hildegard Publishing Company, Boosey & Hawkes, Carl Fischer, The Sacred Music Press, Ars Press, Plymouth Music Company, and others. Recordings include piano and chamber music on the Vienna Modern Masters label (*Encore*), *North/South Consonance* (Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, and Cello; *Catchurian Toccata for Flute and*

Piano), *Living Artists* (String Quartet No. 1), *Leonarda* (Fantasy for Piano--also on Fleur de Son Classics), *Josara Records* (Four Chinese-Love Poems), RBW Record Co. (organ with instruments), and recently-recorded orchestral works on the Contemporary Record Society label (*Suite of Homages*), MMC Recordings (*Concerto in One Movement for Piano and Santa Barbara Overture*).

Tarot:

Three Movements from The Major Arcana

This curiously-titled composition by Roger Briggs begins with low notes on brass and piano, accompanied by ominous insistent rhythms on percussion, ones that seem to be competing with each other. A furious sequence of chords with a repeating melody on top concludes the movement. What is happening here?

"In 1998," says Briggs, "I wrote a dance score based on characters from the ancient Tarot card deck. I studied the history and meaning of the Tarot deck. Later I extrapolated some of the material, reworked it, and developed a new con-

cept. Each movement is based on a single card from the Major Arcana of the ancient Tarot deck."

Thus the first movement, *Magician*, creates the "wild, sometimes deeply deceptive, sometimes trivially deceptive creative energy of the Tarot Magician."

The next movement, *Moon*, is less furious in tone. Two insistent melodic lines coexist, and several times the movement raises and lowers its volume with an insistent beat. "Moon is the beauty, the fear, the light of the dark, and the unconscious controller of all life."

The third movement is *Chariot*, which signifies "a life-force that must be perceived and molded." Dramatic timpani resound, accompanied by a percussive piano. Pummeling staccato rhythms are then joined by the brass. Soon three lines of music are happening at once, but not chaotically—"molded." The intensity increases amidst dramatic *crescendos*. A triumphant theme appears on the brass and woodwinds, one that Shostakovich may have admired. The piece ends as it began, percussively, with aggressive tom toms and piano.

Roger Briggs, a native of Florence, Alabama, attended the University of Memphis where he received top honors in both piano performance and composition. At the Eastman School of Music he studied conducting with Gustav Meier and composition with Pulitzer Prize winning composer Joseph Schwantner. There he received both the prestigious Bernard Sernofsky Award and the Lois Lane Orchestral Award for excellence in composition. Since those formative years, Mr. Briggs' compositions have been performed throughout the world. Premiere performances include New York's Carnegie Recital Hall, Chicago's Cultural Arts Center, London's St. John's Smith Square, Warsaw's Fredric Chopin Academy, and Moscow's Glinka Hall. Awards include international and national composition prizes, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Arts Council, the Indiana Arts Council, Meet the Composer, the MacDowell Colony, and ASCAP.

Mr. Briggs' conducting experience include many chamber ensembles in Memphis and at the Eastman School of Music and eleven years at Saint Mary's

College, Notre Dame where he conducted the Michiana New Music Ensemble for 6 years in South Bend, Indiana and guest conducted the South Bend Symphony Orchestra. Since his appointment at Western Washington University in 1989 as coordinator of the Composition Program, Mr. Briggs has established the Contemporary Chamber Players, was appointed conductor of the Western Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 1993 and is the Conductor of the Whatcom Symphony Orchestra. He has also served as Guest Conductor of the London Symphony and the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

The Parable of the Blind

How appropriate that the opening bar of this score is marked "dark: without haste." Composer Greg Bullen was inspired by the famous painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, the *Parable of the Blind* (1568). In the painting, a line of blind men in peasant dress wander across a country landscape. The leader has already fallen and the man behind him is stumbling. The moody adagio opening on double bass and bass clarinet underscores

the sense of woe and bewilderment these curious travelers experience. Several orchestral tuttis even suggest the men falling. A plaintive melody on the strings ensues, marked "plodding: gradually pressing forward." A sense of sadness permeates this section, one that is nearly all-pervasive. Yet soon the strings rise in intensity with percussive accompaniment and the theme becomes dignified, determined. A brass melodic line coexists with that of the strings, providing momentum. In the coda, a *diminuendo* but sprightly flute continues the march into the distance, punctuated by a single chord on the timpani. As a programmatic piece, *The Parable of the Blind* transcends both the painting and the biblical story, both of which portray them as foolish. Bullen musically paints their humanity, their acceptance of their suffering.

A composer of orchestral, chamber, and choral music, **Greg Bullen's** interest in music composition dates back to his early teens. An accomplished performer and composer, his first serious foray into music came at the age of seven when he began studies in piano. Since that time,

his full career has encompassed classical, jazz, folk and popular music styles. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts and Smith College, Mr. Bullen's compositional mentors include Robert Stern, Charles Fussell, Donald Wheelock, Ronald Perera and William Thomas McKinley. His orchestral works have been recorded by the London Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, and the Slovak Radio Orchestra. His *Elegy Eroica*, for orchestra, is available on the MMC Recordings label (MMC New Century: Volume V). Trio for violin, cello and piano was premiered at Jordan Hall in Boston, and is available on CD (MMC: Solati Trio). Scherzo for orchestra, recorded by the Seattle Symphony, Gerard Schwarz, conducting, is in production. *Pictures from Brueghel*, a song cycle for soprano and violoncello octet set to the poetry of William Carlos Williams; *Men*, two settings for women's chorus of poetry by Kate Clanchy; and *Six Studies in Jazz and Blues* for String Quartet were all premiered at the North London Collegiate School in London, England where Mr. Bullen was composer-in-residence. *Chaco Canyon*, a work for solo flute, was premiered at

Carnegie Hall by Michael Finegold. *In Black and White* was premiered at Carnegie Hall by the Berlin Saxophone Quartet. Mr. Bullen's choral works have received performances by the Amherst College Choir, Da Camera Singers, the Gregg Smith Singers, the Pioneer Valley Cappella, and the University of Massachusetts Chamber Choir. His secular cantata, *Vesper Adest*, won the Virginia Choral Society's 60th Anniversary Choral Composition Competition. The Director of Choral Music for many years at Deerfield Academy, in Deerfield, Massachusetts, Mr. Bullen is a specialist in arranging music for a cappella ensembles. He is currently the Director of the Arts at the Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore, Maryland.

New York, 1999

Ray Bokhour says he named this composition *New York, 1999* because that's where he was when he finished it. He hints at the autobiographical nature of the piece, saying "this is where I've come to in my life, here in New York by 1999."

There is more to this piece than a musical portrait of New York. What appears to engender images of the Big Apple in early weekday morning, the languid *adagio* opening and the rising tempo on strings, is more an evocation of his own infancy. The *ostinato*, allhustle andbustle, could be the busy discoveries of early childhood; the melody on the brass and woodwinds infusing the piece with propulsive sense—the rush of teenage years. The highly percussive accompaniment andstring *pizzicato* (at same tempo) with the vivid coloration andexuberant *tutti*s, all produce the effect of convulsive growth. The simultaneous melodic lines complement each other, indicating that many events are taking place at once. The music slows down to an ethereal interlude and there is an affecting melody on strings. Throughout this piece, the personal element is never far behind. “It’s about the trip from innocence to... wherever we get to when we leave that behind,” says Bokhour. Dotted rhythms on brass and strings pick up both tempo and volume. Soon snares assume the percussion in an oddly off-beat semi-martial sequence.

“My first compositions, from age eleven, were written in 7/4 time. It just came out that way from my young unbalanced mind. Early on in the writing of this, I found myself doing it again and took it as a clue to what I might be writing about. My own personal ‘Rosebud.’” As if to confirm Bokhour’s assertion, another idyllic melody interrupts the rhythmic section, even more nostalgic than the first. The brisk finale is sandwiched between two dominant dramatic *tutti*s.

Ray Bokhour began playing guitar at age 5, and by age 11 his original jazz-fusion music was being produced in the studio by legendary jazz drummer Lenny White. Throughout these early years, he performed with his brothers at clubs around New York City. At 17, he entered New England Conservatory of Music where he studied jazz composition with William Thomas McKinley. He simultaneously attended Tufts University, where he discovered a deep love for theater, and began acting as well as composing for plays.

Upon graduation in 1988, he began an engagement as resident composer for

the acclaimed Albany based theater company, the Actors Shakespeare Company, which he pursued even as his acting career began to thrive.

From ‘92 to ‘95, he studied acting at one of London’s top theater conservatories, The Central School of Speech and Drama. While studying acting, he also managed to complete his first composition for full orchestra, *Angel Butcher*, which was subsequently recorded by the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra for MMC.

He has appeared in feature films including Milos Foreman’s *Man on the Moon*, Danny Aiello’s *18 Shades of Dust*, *Changing Lanes* with Samuel L. Jackson, and Michael Mann’s upcoming biopic, *Ali*. Television work includes *Ed*, *Third Watch*, and *The Job*. Among many other stage productions, he played the title role in Portland Stage’s hit production of Rameau’s *Nephew*, and sang the role of Amos Hart in the first national tour of the Broadway production of *Chicago*.

His quintet, *Death of an Actress*, was performed at the Carnegie Recital Hall in 1999, by the Thüringer Salonquintett. He lives in New York,

where he writes songs and lyrics for the precocious sketch comedy group, Mr. JumpyPants.

Symphony No. 1

Mitch Hampton’s *Symphony No. 1* is an abridged history of the evolution of American popular music, a jazz symphony. Each of the four movements has a programmatic title dealing with a pivotal era of popular music.

The first movement, *The Great Experiment*, begins on a solemn four-note motif. Its low strains are based on Negro spirituals or like a work song, where the dominant mood is darkness and pain. Within this gloomy theme, this surprise appears as counterpoint arising in the strings and piano. The movement ends in synthesis, its four-note motif played in a higher key on woodwinds.

A flood of steady rhythm invades the second movement *Serendipity and Struggle*, as new energy and technology enters the cities. The word serendipity implies surprise, something unexpected. Staccato chords spring from the orchestra and dramatic percussion simulates an

insistent dance rhythm. Gradually the frenetic tempo slows, and a lyrical interlude ensues, supplying a bridge to the third movement.

Blues for Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin is a tribute to those eponymous Tinpan Alley composers, the earliest practitioners of commercial music theater. It features a trademark walking bass. Hampton quotes—and in some cases subtly alters—songs of the era like Kern's "Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine," Andy Razaf's "Memories of You," and some ragtime stride songs of Eubie Blake. In some bars, the composer uses polytonality (F-major and A-flat major) to blend the motifs into a cohesive whole. "I want the listener to focus on the music, rather than be overwhelmed by it," says Hampton. "That's why I use simple motifs rather than complex variations."

The fourth movement is *Rock*, which Hampton marks as "Heavy metal funk feeling." Jittery and jumpy, this section is also chromatic like the jazz compositions of John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner. "Here is where the music became less harmonically complex," says Hampton. "In this piece I want to listener to go on a time

travel journey. I wanted extremes, to go from harmonic music to the very static." Like a Gustav Mahler symphony, the piece starts slow and ends slow, with the same four-note motif on doublebass.

Mitch Hampton has a bachelors degree in jazz piano and a M.M. in composition from the New England Conservatory where he was a student of Jazz Pianist Stanley Cowell and composer William Thomas McKinley. As a jazz pianist he has performed with a jazz sextet, his own trio, and popular singers. At NEC he had the opportunity to work with George Russell and perform Russell's composition with an ensemble at Jordan Hall. Ensemble directors George Garzone, Dominique Eade, and legendary saxophonist Jimmy Giuffre also coached him.

As a composer he has had works premiered by the Ciompi String Quartet in North Carolina at Duke University, and premieres at Carnegie Recital Hall. These included a flute and piano suite for Joseph Trent as part of a flute festival led by Robert Stallman, two songs for the Maryland Bach Aria group and a jazz saxophone quartet, *Jazz Taxonomies* written

for the Berlin Saxophone Quartet. The Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble under the direction of David Stock premiered his *Night Creatures*. In 1997, his *Concerto For Improvised Jazz Piano and Orchestra* featuring Hampton as solo pianist was recorded by the Czech Radio Orchestra under the direction of Vladamír Válek (MMC2032). His debut jazz recording, *Mitch Plays* (MMC2007) was released in December of 1994 on the MMC label featuring both solo piano and a trio with Billy Hart on drums and Rufus Reid on bass. *Mitch Swings* (MMC2052J), his second jazz recording was released in 1998. Hampton's vocal chamber work, *Swoon* for which he wrote text as well as the music, was premiered in May of 1997 by the Helios Quartet in New York City at Merkin Hall. On November of 1997, he premiered and performed his *Dark Dancing: Variations On a Theme by Arthur Schwartz* for Improvised piano and orchestra for the New York Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Gerard Schwarz at Lincoln Center. His String Quartet No.1 was given a Boston premiere by the Boston Composers Quartet on WGBH national public radio in Bos-

ton. An accomplished writer as well, he writes essays on film, music, philosophy, and other arts for *Organica*, a journal dedicated to the arts and humanistic sciences.

—Peter Bates

Peter Bates is a free-lance writer from the Greater Boston area. He has written program notes for concerts, classical CD liner notes, and CD reviews for CLASSICAL disCDigest, CLASSICAL.NET, and Audiophile Audition. He lives with his Siamese cat Charlie, named after his violinist grandfather.